

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
SPECIAL MEETING
September 30, 2010**

LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present: Peter Schneider, Chair
Thomas Constantine, Vice-Chair
Timothy McCann
James Crowley
Janet Merrill

Staff Present: Edgar Luna, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

The Commission accepted the August 26, 2010 and September 16, 2010 Historical Commission meeting minutes.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. 4 Harlow Street (HC-2010-065) – Building Demolition Delay Waiver:** Jonathan Finkelstein, representative for the petitioner and Michael O'Rourke, petitioner, presented the petition. Mr. Finkelstein stated that the petitioner was seeking Building Demolition Delay Waiver approval to implement the following changes: (a) remove the existing roof and replace it with architectural asphalt shingles, (b) remove the burned siding on the first and second floors and replace it with vinyl siding, (c) remove the original wood shingles on the third floor and replace them with shingle-textured vinyl siding, (d) remove and replace ten (10) fire-damaged windows with vinyl windows. Mr. Finkelstein stated that the proposed changes were necessary to repair the damage caused by a recent fire which destroyed the upper sections of the house and the roof. Mr. O'Rourke indicated that he was proposing to replace the burned siding on the first and second floors with regular vinyl siding, and replace the original wooden shingles on the third floor with shingle-textured vinyl siding. He indicated that the proposed shingle-textured vinyl siding would give the appearance of wooden shingles. Upon a motion by Commissioner Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Crowley, the Commission voted 5-0 that the proposed demolition would not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester, therefore, the Building Demolition Delay Waiver was approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Application prepared by Michael O'Rourke dated August 26, 2010, and received on August 27, 2010.

2. **171 Austin Street (HC-2010-066) – Building Demolition Delay Waiver:** Jacqueline Vachon-Jackson from the City of Worcester Division of Neighborhoods and Housing Development, representative for Wilson and Carmen Veras, petitioners, presented the petition. Ms. Vachon-Jackson stated that the petitioners were seeking Building Demolition Delay Waiver approval to implement the following changes: (a) remove twenty-seven (27) lead-painted windows and replace them with vinyl windows, (b) remove and replace twenty-seven (27) aluminum storm windows, (c) remove and replace five (5) windows located in the basement, and (d) remove and replace one (1) skylight. Ms. Vachon-Jackson stated that the proposed project was part of the Lead-Abatement Program sponsored by the City of Worcester through the Division of Neighborhoods and Housing Development. Commissioner Schneider asked if the petitioner had considered restoring the six (6) front windows instead of replacing them with vinyl windows. Ms. Vachon-Jackson stated that the goal of the petition was to abate lead-contamination on site, and not implement a historic restoration. In addition, Ms. Vachon-Jackson emphasized that the Lead-Abatement Program provided limited funding which would not be sufficient to cover the costs associated with window restoration. Chair Schneider stated that the petitioners had not submitted cost estimates comparing window restoration versus window replacement, to determine accurately, whether or not, window restoration constituted an undue economic hardship for the applicant. Ms. Vachon-Jackson stated that she would be able to provide such information prior to the Commission rendering a vote on the matter; therefore, she requested continuation of the hearing to October 14, 2010 in order to submit cost estimates. Upon a motion by Commissioner McCann and seconded by Commissioner Crowley, the Commission voted 4-0 to continue the hearing to October 14, 2010.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Application prepared by Michael O'Rourke dated August 26, 2010, and received on August 27, 2010.

3. **62 Elm Street (HC-2010-067) – Building Demolition Delay Waiver:** John Shea and Leah Bradley, representatives for Yarock Memorial Housing Inc., petitioner, presented the petition. Mr. Shea stated that the petitioner was seeking Building Demolition Delay Waiver approval to make the following change: (a) remove eighty-three (83) wooden windows, and replace them with vinyl windows. Mr. Shea stated that the windows had deteriorated due to age and neglect, and indicated that most of them had become drafty and/or inoperable. Chair Schneider stated that the windows in place were original to the house, which was built in 1851; therefore, important architectural features of the building. He also indicated that the Worcester Historical Commission strives to protect and preserve original exterior architectural features, and indicated that, in his opinion, the

windows in place were important not only to the building itself but also to the Elm Park National Historic District in which the building is located. In addition, Chair Schneider stated that in order to maintain the historic significance of the building and preserve the streetscape of Elm Park Historic District, the petitioner should consider, at a minimum, restoring the front windows. Mr. Shea stated that Yarock Memorial Housing Inc. was a non-profit entity dedicated to serving homeless individuals in the City; therefore, the organization's funding is limited. He also indicated that perhaps the Commission should consider the petition based on undue economic hardship, since the petitioner would not be able to afford restoring the windows, and/or, replace them with wooden windows due to the high cost estimate. In addition, Mr. Shea stated that although the petitioner had made efforts to find the necessary funding to restore the windows with wooden windows, the efforts were not successful. Chair Schneider stated that an alternative solution would be to inventory how many windows were in good condition and could be repaired, since restoration is often less expensive than installing new windows. Mr. Shea responded that the project's contractor had already checked and evaluated all windows and determined that window replacement was the best alternative due to the low cost. Commissioner Merrill stated that the windows in place were original architectural features of the building and indicated that, in her opinion, the petitioner should consider preserving and restoring as many windows as possible to protect the integrity of the building. She also indicated that the next owner may appreciate purchasing a building with original windows. Chair Schneider asked if the windows had been evaluated for possible lead-paint contamination. Mr. Shea stated that he was unaware if such an evaluation had been completed by the petitioner or not, but acknowledged that it was possible that the windows may contain lead-paint. Chair Schneider stated that the petitioner may consider contacting the City of Worcester, Housing Division to request an evaluation of the site, and indicated if determined to be positive, Yarock Memorial Housing Inc. may qualify for additional funding to restore the windows. In addition, he stated that in order to further evaluate the petition and render an accurate decision, the Commission would benefit from receiving an assessment describing the condition of each window. Commissioner Constantine stated that, in his opinion, the petitioner had already demonstrated undue economic hardship; therefore, he requested the Commission to render a vote based on the merits of the application and the representative's presentation. Commissioner Merrill expressed concern that the petitioner appeared to be unwilling to consider restoring some windows, specially the front windows. Commissioner Crowley expressed concern that the petitioner's only consideration was window replacement. He also asked Mr. Shea if he knew with accuracy if the proposed vinyl windows would exactly match the windows in place. Mr. Shea responded that he didn't know with 100 % accuracy if the proposed windows would exactly match the windows in place. Commissioner Crowley stated that in order to render a vote on the matter, he would need to know with 100 % accuracy whether or not, the proposed windows would exactly match the windows in place. Mr. Shea stated that he would not be able to meet such requirement, and indicated that, in his opinion, the petitioner had already demonstrated undue economic hardship. Therefore, Mr. Shea asked the Commission to render a vote on the merits of the petition submitted. Upon reviewing the request submitted and the evidence provided, the Worcester Historical Commission voted 1-4 (Commissioners Schneider, Merrill, McCann and Crowley voting no) that the proposed demolition would

not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester; therefore, the Building Demolition Delay Waiver for this project was denied. The motion failed and the Worcester Historical Commission considered the Building Demolition Delay Waiver with respect to the petitioner's evidence related to undue economic hardship. Upon reviewing the request submitted and the evidence provided, the Worcester Historical Commission voted 1-4 (Commissioners Schneider, Merrill, McCann and Crowley voting no) that the petitioner had demonstrated undue economic hardship. The motion failed and the Building Demolition Delay Waiver was denied.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Application prepared by Leah Bradley, dated September 3, 2010 and received on September 3, 2010.

OTHER BUSINESS:

- 4. Ken Burns Bridge Replacement Report:** Mr. Luna informed the Commission that Jeffrey Shrimpton from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation requested to hold a joint meeting with the Worcester Historical Commission and the Shrewsbury Historical Commission to make a final presentation of the proposed Ken Burns Bridge design. Accordingly, Mr. Luna indicated that a meeting has been scheduled for October 7, 2010 at 6:30 PM, at Worcester City Hall – Levi Lincoln Chamber.
- 5. Crown Hill Survey Report:** Mr. Luna informed the Commission the Neil Larson has submitted a complete set of surveys for the project. In addition, he reminded Commissioners that a meeting has scheduled for a final presentation to the neighborhood residents on October 14, 2010 at 5:30 PM, and indicated that such meeting would take place at Worcester City Hall – Levi Lincoln Chamber at 5:30 PM.

Adjournment: Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 6:30 PM.