



The City of **WORCESTER**

Historical
Commission

Devon Kurtz, Chair
Diane Long, Vice-Chair
Janet Theerman, Clerk
Randolph Bloom
Tomi Stefani
Mark Wamback
Erika Helnarski, Alternate
Steven Taylor, Alternate

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER

Thursday, December 9, 2021

Worcester City Hall - Levi Lincoln Chamber,
with remote participation options available via Webex online at
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/historicalncommissionwebex> and
call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1608081191).

Commissioners Present: Devon Kurtz, Chair
Diane Long, Vice-Chair
Janet Theerman, Clerk
Randolph Bloom – *Participated remotely*
Tomi Stefani – *Participated remotely*
Erika Helnarski, Alternate – *Participated remotely*
Steven Taylor, Alternate

Commissioners Absent: Mark Wamback

Staff Present: Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS) – *Participated remotely*
Michelle Smith, DPRS

Call to Order

Chair Kurtz called the meeting to order at approximately 5:30 PM.

New Business

1) 27 Chandler Street (HC-2021-062) – Request for Building Demolition Delay Waiver

Attorney Adam Ponte of Fletcher Tilton, on behalf of Chandler Owner LLC, spoke in regards to the application. He gave a background of the property and of the intent of the applicant to demolish the building. He stated that the building is unsafe, not habitable, and unusable. He described some of the existing issues in the building, including roof and structural issues. He also stated that the owners have engaged in efforts to look for developers to partner with to reuse the building, which were unfruitful. It is the position of the owner, he stated, to have a secure vacant site and do something productive on the site in the near future.

Public Comment

Susan Ceccacci, architectural historian, of Holden, gave public comment. She reviewed the history of the

building. She voiced her opposition to the issuance of a Building Demolition Delay Waiver; and that there should be a prudent effort to preserve and reuse that building.

Deborah Packard, Executive Director of Preservation Worcester, gave public comment. She stated that she was interested to hear what damage mitigation measures have been undertaken since the owner purchased the property. She voiced her opposition to the issuance of a Building Demolition Delay Waiver, especially considering that there is no plan for the site, and offered to work with the developers to identify a use for the building.

Mr. Ponte briefly described remedial tasks that owner has undertaken to mitigate further damage, including repairs to doors and locks, plumbing repairs, and activities to ensure water doesn't get into the building. He stated that he would be happy to discuss further with Preservation Worcester.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that he would have liked to see further documentation as to why preservation is economically infeasible. Ms. Johnstone encouraged the Commission to assess the item under Building Demolition Delay, and that should the request receive a denial, the applicant can come back to the Commission at a later date for consideration under financial hardship.

Commissioner Taylor stated that he didn't understand why Benedict Canyon purchased the property if they felt that it was beyond repair, and noted that it is dissimilar to other properties owned by the company.

Commissioner Stefani noted that while the wrecking ball is quick and cheap, it comes at the cost of losing a classical historic commercial building. He also voiced his disappointment at the lack of a market study on what the building could be revitalized in to.

Commissioner Bloom shared the sentiments of other Commission members. He stated that it is especially concerning that there is no plan for the site after demolition, and that he feels like this is the perfect use for demolition delay. Commissioner Kurtz agreed that demolition would make for a sorry loss.

Jonathan Ostrow of the Save Notre Dame Alliance gave public comment. He seconded comments made by other members of the public, and noted that many items that the applicant stated are damaged are repairable. He gave input on ways that the building could be repaired and reused and noted that he opposes demolition.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 7-0 to close public comment.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 0-7 that the proposed demolition at 27 Chandler Street would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having failed to have received a majority of yea votes, the motion failed and the Building Demolition Delay Waiver was denied.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Building Demolition Delay Waiver application form, dated and received October 27, 2021.

2) 24–26 Clement Street (HC-2021-063) – Request for Building Demolition Delay Waiver

Ray Barbera, property manager for 24–26 Clement Street, on behalf of his daughter Alison Barbera, the owner, spoke in regards to the application. He stated the intent of the application, which was to replace the

left side of the slate roof with architectural shingles. He noted that numerous attempts had been made to repair the roof. He noted that the situation is urgent, and that the roof is actively leaking.

The Commission asked for clarification on the portion of the roof to be replaced. Mr. Barbera reiterated that the left side of the slate covered roof would be replaced.

Commissioner Bloom asked when the property was purchased. Mr. Barbera stated he has owned it since 2006.

The Commission had a brief discussion about the condition of the slate, and the quality of the materials used, being a soft slate versus a hard slate.

Public Comment

Deborah Packard of Preservation Worcester asked if there was an estimate prepared on repair versus replacement. Mr. Barbera stated that it has been difficult to procure roofers.

Jonathan Ostrow of the Save Notre Dame Alliance gave public comment. He stated that he has never heard of a slate roof that couldn't be repaired. He stated that he hopes the applicant considers saving the slate roof.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 7-0 to close public comment.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-1, with Commissioner Theerman being the nay, that the proposed demolition at 24–26 Clement Street would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a majority of yea votes, the Building Demolition Delay Waiver was approved.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Building Demolition Delay Waiver application form, dated and received November 3, 2021.

Communications

- A. Request from Epsilon Associates for letters of support for Massachusetts Rehabilitation Tax Credit allocations for Walker Shoe Factory, 28 Water Street; Worcester County Institution for Savings, 365 Main Street; Second State Mutual Company, 340 Main Street; Ransom Taylor Block, 526-536 Main Street; Kane Furniture Company Building, 204 Main Street; Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church, 50 Richland Street; Sargent Card Clothing Company, 300 Southbridge Street.

On a motion by Commissioner Kurtz and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted 7-0 to issue updated letters of support for Walker Shoe Factory, 28 Water Street; Worcester County Institution for Savings, 365 Main Street; Second State Mutual Company, 340 Main Street; Ransom Taylor Block, 526-536 Main Street; Kane Furniture Company Building, 204 Main Street; Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church, 50 Richland Street

On a motion by Commissioner Kurtz and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted 7-0 to issue a new letter of support for Sargent Card Clothing Company, 300 Southbridge Street.

Adjournment

On a motion by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 7-0 adjourn at 6:28 PM.