

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

**SEPTEMBER 28, 2006  
418 MAIN STREET, SUITE 400**

**Commission Members Present:** Peter Schneider, Chair  
Thomas Johnson, Vice-Chair  
Michael Theerman  
Thomas Conroy  
Thomas Constantine  
Sally Jablonski

**Staff Present:** Lara Bold, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)**

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

The Commission tabled discussion of the August 10, 2006, August 24, 2006 and September 14 minutes.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- 1. 20 Marble Street (HC-06-23):** Dan Hogan, representative for Seven Hills Foundation, petitioner and owner of property at 20 Marble Street, presented the petition. Mr. Hogan indicated that Seven Hills Foundation wishes to remove and replace the existing rear decks and stairways with new pressure treated wood. In addition, Mr. Hogan indicated that the decks would be rebuilt with the same dimensions. He also stated that the current stairways are rotting and pose safety concerns. Commission Schneider stated that the decks and stairways did not appear to be original to the building and that they are not visible from the street. *Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, the Commission found that the proposed removal and replacement of the rear decks and stairway would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester* and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 5-0.

Sally Jablonski arrived at 5:30 p.m.

Dan Hogan informed the Commission that the property may apply for a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for future exterior work on the columns, railings, and balusters and requested clarification on the Commission's preferences. Commissioner Schneider stated that the Commission prefers historically compatible materials and design. Mr. Hogan stated that it may be difficult for Seven Hills Foundation to replace the railings or any other renovations that may require custom-made materials. In addition, he stated that the railings, which curve downwards, may not meet current height requirements. Commissioner Schneider requested that the petitioner present authenticated cost estimates as part of any future Building Demolition Delay Waiver applications. He also informed the applicant that the cost difference between providing historically appropriate materials and design and inappropriate materials and design is not as prohibitive as many people think. Mr. Hogan indicated that the cornice brackets and lattice would remain the same or be replaced with like materials and design. He also stated that the building already has vinyl siding and an asphalt roof. Commissioner Constantine stated that samples and pricing lists are helpful for the Commission. Mr. Hogan stated that he did not know whether or not the balusters were square or turned in the front.

2. **1 Ionic Avenue (HC-06-24):** John Andrews, Herb Johnson, Dan Craig, and Westbrook Spaulding, representatives for the Worcester Masonic Charity and Educational Organization, presented the petition. Mr. Andrews stated that the organization was seeking approval to stabilize deteriorating infrastructure on the southeasterly side of the building above the third floor. In addition, Mr. Andrews stated that he was unaware of the building's historic status until recently. Mr. Spaulding, the professional engineer who had conducted a structural assessment of the building, informed the Commission that water damage has occurred in the building, causing the splines which support the weight of the tiles and the cornice to rust and expand. Mr. Craig, a contractor with Liberty Construction, Inc., informed the Commission that the applicants seek to remove part of the splines, paint the steel, remove the terra cotta and then brick up the southeasterly corner to match the existing brick. Mr. Craig also stated that the cost to complete these repairs is approximately \$30,000 less than a "like for like" restoration with fiberglass. Mr. Spaulding clarified that twelve linear feet on the front of the building (facing Ionic Avenue) would be repaired in addition to the proposed work on the southern side of the building for a total of eighty (80) linear feet to be repaired.

Commissioner Conroy stated that the building was clearly visible from Southbridge Street and that the details the applicant seeks to remove are significant architectural features of the structure. Mr. Spaulding indicated that the splines cannot be removed without also removing the terra cotta. He also informed the Commission that there is a risk that the tiles may collapse. Mr. Andrews stated that nothing has fallen off the building, yet. Commissioner Theerman stated that the weight of the tiles on the splines appears to be an inherent design problem. Commissioner Schneider indicated that the Commission would like to see a preventative maintenance program in place for the building to ensure the preservation of other important exterior features of the building. Mr. Andrews indicated that recent repairs to the roof cost the organization \$50,000 and had significantly depleted their savings for capital improvements projects. Mr. Spaulding indicated that there was no evidence of similar cracks on other side of the building. Mr. Craig stated his crew had attempted for a number of hours to salvage tiles for future reuse but had not been successful. He stated that the tiles chip

and break at an angle. Commissioner Schneider suggested that they seek funding from the larger parent organization. Mr. Andrews indicated that there were no funds available from the Grand Masonic Lodge of Massachusetts for historic preservation. Commissioner Johnson expressed concern that the structure may appear before the Historical Commission in the next 3-5 years if the building is not maintained. Commissioner Schneider suggested the applicant consider applying another course of bricks to mimic some of the current detail of the building. Commissioner Conroy indicated that he preferred that the applicants work on preserving the façade for the future and not focus on trying to mimic current architectural features with additional brickwork. Commissioner Jablonski stated that the applicants are eligible for matching funds because the building is on a nationally listed historic property. Mr. Craig indicated that the flat brick surface they are creating on the side and part of the front of the building would be a suitable surface to recreate the architectural features in the future. He also stated that the organization has access to the original blueprints for the building. Commissioner Conroy stated that the Commission would appreciate a copy of the original blueprints for the file. *Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Johnson, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed work would be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, the Commission found that the issuance of a demolition approval is necessary to avoid an undue economic hardship to the property owner and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 6-0 for the proposed demolition as shown in the site plan dated August 29, 2006 prepared by Liberty Construction, and submitted on file with the City of Worcester.*

Commissioner Johnson requested that staff mail a copy of the Department of the Interior's Standards for Historical Preservation to the applicant.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

- 3.) **Minutes:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, the Commission approved the August 24, 2006 minutes and continued a vote on the August 10, 2006 and September 14, 2006 minutes until the next meeting.
- 4.) **17 Southgate Place:** Commissioner Johnson requested an update on efforts to secure and winterize the Armory Building. He also requested that the unfinished items remain on the agenda under Unfinished Business.
- 5.) **Fire Alarm Telegraph Building:** Commissioner Johnson requested an update on efforts to secure historical items as discussed on the previous tour as well as an update on efforts to install flashing on the ridgeline and repair the gutter.
- 6.) **Preservation Worcester notification:** Commissioner Johnson stated that Preservation Worcester has effectively notified 2,000 households on the MACRIS list of their historic status by way of their recent mailing.

- 7.) **Special Assessment for Historic Properties:** Commissioner Johnson requested staff follow up with the question to the Law Department regarding the possibility of special assessments to assist in financing repair of historic properties.
- 8.) **Invitations to openings of buildings:** Commissioner Conroy expressed concern that he was unable to attend an open house at the Worcester Vocational School Opening because it was an invitation-only event. He requested staff research the possibility of the Historical Commission members receiving invitations to future events and openings in the future.
- 9.) **Historical Guidelines:** Commissioner Johnson requested staff check with the Law Department on their review of submitted historical guidelines.
- 10.) **MACRIS listed properties along Route 146 and Blackstone River Road (formerly Millbury Street):** Commissioner Jablonski requested staff research how historical properties on Blackstone River Road are categorized in the MACRIS list to ensure that Building Demolition Compliance Forms are not filled out incorrectly.
- 11.) **Trigger Building Permits** – Commissioner Schneider requested staff compile information regarding what specific events trigger building permits and, thus, the check for historical status.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.