

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
September 20, 2012**

ESTHER HOWLAND CHAMBERS – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present: J. Thomas Constantine, Chair
Timothy McCann, Vice Chair
Kevin Provencher, Clerk
Andrew Shevda
Erika Dunn
James Crowley

Staff Members Present: Joel Fontane, Director, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Nancy Tran, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Marlyn Feliciano, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Thomas Constantine called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

No minutes were approved.

Other Business:

1. Crown Hill Local Historic District Discussion –

Chairman Constantine stated that Historical Commission needs to make a decision on the inclusion of #7 Hawley in the proposed Crown Hill Local Historic District. Chairman Constantine stated the Historical Commission needed to make a decision whether to keep that section or whether they wish to make any further changes in the report.

Joel Fontane stated that what is being referred to is the former 16 Newbury Street and that the district boundary that the Historical Commission had proposed included Newbury Street but since that time it has become part of 7 Hawley. 7 Hawley Street was not included in the district because staff because the property was not historically significant, but for clarification and given that it's now part of 7 Hawley, the Commission needs to vote on whether to include 7 Hawley Street within the proposed district. If it is included, the City will need to notify the property owner that Historical Commission is planning to include part of the property as historical.

Chairman Constantine stated that in his opinion the parcel should be eliminated as it is only a small portion and they have already allowed for some similarly situated parcels to removed, such as parcel at 40 Irving Street.

Commissioner Shevda asked why that parcel was removed.

Chairman Constantine stated there was objection by the owner and it was vacant – an empty lot.

Commissioner Provencher asked whether parcel that address is associated with is vacant.

Mr. Fontane stated portion that was proposed to be in the district is vacant - open space.

Commissioner Dunn asked if 40 Irving was removed due to abutter objection.

Mr. Fontane stated it was initially included, but Historical Commission determined that exclusion would be consistent with the vacant parcels along with Austin Street and Commission noted it was vacant lot at edge of boundary.

Commissioner Dunn stated her concern was that it not fair to remove houses from a historical district as if houses are part of a historical district then they should be included.

Mr. Fontane stated for clarification he would show on the map the areas that were not included for consideration by the Commission. 40 Irving Street was not included as it was vacant, at the edge of the district and due to the property owner objection. That's why the Historical Commission ultimately decided not to include it.

Mr. Fontane stated with regard to #7 Hawley there is no obligation by Historical Commission to remove it as you can have portion of a parcel in a district.

Commissioner Provencher stated he did not believe that much could be developed in #7, therefore did not think it would need to be included and he would support moving the boundary line to 18 Newbury Street and excluding #7 Hawley.

Mr. Fontane indicated that the Board needed to vote on that change.

On a motion by Commissioner Provencher and seconded by Commissioner Mulherin the Commission voted 6-0 to relocate the Crown Hill historic boundary line from Lot #7 Hawley to South to Lot #18 on Newbury.

Mr. Fontane stated staff will make that update before the Preliminary Study Report is sent to the state for their review.

Mr. Fontane stated with regard to the ordinance for the proposed district, Page #29 provides the various items per Chapter 40 C of section 8 of Mass General Laws and explains what Historical Commission scope of review is within the proposed district. There are eight main items and staff, in consultation with the petitioners, the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association, have recommended one item, color of paint, be excluded from the Commission's purview. It is, however, up to the Commission whether or not it wants to see the color of paint excluded and Commission should deliberate and vote on this matter.

Chairman Constantine stated with regard to the color of paint that Commission has talked with members of Crown Hill neighborhood and they wish to keep paint colors as historic as possible so doesn't think there is need to include that item and that applicants could consult with Preservation Worcester.

Mr. Fontane stated that he is aware of the technical services provided by Preservation Worcester and if the ordinance excludes color then consulting with Preservation Worcester will be entirely voluntary. If Commission includes paint then the Commission can suggest that applicants consult with Preservation Worcester's historically accurate paint color information.

Mr. Fontane indicated that that if the Commission voted to exclude paint color then it would require an amendment to the ordinance to change and that would need to go before City Council for approval.

Commissioner Shveda stated in his opinion the two other Historical Districts do include paint so therefore would not be fair not to exclude paint in this proposal. Commissioner Shveda stated that Commission would review the paint color but not necessarily say anyone would have to paint their house a particular color.

Mr. Fontane stated that paint color was not a highly debated topic within the other two historic districts, but just wanted to let the Commission know what its purview was.

Commissioner Dunn stated she believes paint should be included as the paint color should be consistent with rest of homes in the neighborhood and maybe someone from Preservation Worcester could guide applicants through the paint selection process.

Commissioner McCann stated he believes paint should be excluded as Historical Commission should not be in business of determining the paint color as it is too subjective for the Commission.

Commissioner Provencher stated he believes paint is just as important part as the architectural features and would like to see it included.

Commissioner Mulherin stated she would like to see it included for sake of consistency.

Upon a motion by Commissioner McCann to exclude paint color and seconded by Commissioner Provencher the Commission voted 2-4 to exclude from the Crown Hill Historic District Ordinance the provision for design review for paint color. Chairman Constantine and Vice Chair McCann voting to exclude, and Commissioners Provencher, Mulherin, Shveda and Dunn voting to include. Motion failed which means paint color will be included within the purview of the Commission's review in the proposed Crown Hill Local Historic District.

Chairman Constantine stated on page 31 of the report is the wording for the ordinance itself and the main difference will be that it states that paint color will be included and that a member of Historical Commission must be from Crown Hill District.

Mr. Fontane stated staff will make that change in the ordinance to reflect the Commission's vote regarding paint color.

Mr. Fontane requested that the Commission vote to allow staff to send the preliminary study report, with changes as voted, to the State as required to begin the formal consideration process.

Upon a motion by Chairman Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Shevda the Commission voted 5-1, Commissioner Provencher voting against, to submit the report to the State.

Commissioner Provencher stated they had made just made amendments to report and that would need to be reflected in the wording of the motion and vote.

Upon a motion by Chairman Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Shevda the Commission voted 6-0 to submit the preliminary study report to the state with amendments as approved by the Commission at its September 20, 2012 meeting.

Mr. Fontane stated the report will need to be sent to state review and comment and that Commission cannot hold a public hearing on the matter until state has confirmed that the report is complete and 60 days passes. The 60 period begins when the state deems the report is complete.

Mr. Fontane recommended a 45 day comment period during which the report will be posted on-line and property owners will be notified that they can view the report on-line or by coming into the Planning Office.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Provencher and seconded by Commissioner Dunn the Commission vote 6-0 that report be posted on-line on the city's web-site and be available for viewing at the Planning Department during regular business hours.

Exhibit A: Crown Hill Local Historic Preliminary Study Report dated September, 2012.

New Business:

2. 30 Elm Street (HC-2012-051)

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Worcester Historical Museum
Present Use: Worcester Historical Museum
Year Built: Circa 1928
Historic Status: MACRIS-listed property (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System)

Petition Purpose: Remove three sets of wooden double exterior doors (on the building's eastern elevation) and replace them with two sets of black metal & glass doors and one set of matching windows

Thomas Constantine: Okay, new business. We have one petition for 30 Elm Street. Come on right up and use the desk.

William Wallace. This is good. I just need the clicker. While it is getting set up I will introduce myself. I am Bill Wallace the Executive Director of the Worcester Historical Museum and we have with us lots of members of our team tonight. David Nicholson is the President of our Board. Mark Shelton is one of our Vice Presidents. Marguerite Paris is a Board, member. Janice Seymour is our Development Officer, Virginia Ryan is one of our key volunteers and John Wadsworth is our architect for the project that you have before you and I'm sure at some point they will all want to speak and if they come up and correct what I'm saying I will not be offended and I will encourage them to take part of the opportunity. We are here tonight as the Worcester Historical Museum to ask you, to bring you up to date on the project we have spent a year and half working on and to ask you for a waiver of the one year demolition delay provision in the city ordinances so we can move ahead with this critical project which will replace the original wooden doors at the Worcester Historical Museum, 30 Elm Street and replace the doors and the transom with black metals doors with substantial glazing. The goals in doing this are, access for audiences of all ages, accessibility, if you look at the doors no single door meets current code. The goals are visibility, improve environmental controls, increase security, improve marketability of the museum and essentially revamping, rebranding of this property. A little bit of the history of the corner, it has been a corner of change for 100 years. This is the building that preceded that building on the corner. It was deemed inappropriate. It was deemed inappropriate for the Horticultural Society. It did not meet their needs of this great Greek revival house and was torn down with plans for a 1920, announced in 1926, for what we know, what we

use to know as Horticultural Hall what we now know as the Worcester Historical Museum. A repurposing of the lot for a change of the downtown market. No longer residential at that point it was grand institution with great events. Today it is Worcester Historical Museum which we are a day to day operation and sharing Worcester history with the entire community. This is what the building look liked when it was completed upon construction. When we moved in the 1980's we reconfigured the front steps with full approval and created as you will see here a ramp that in those days at least provided access for people with some limitations to this set of doors which were not compliant and are non compliant now. So it is question of access, it is question of visibility. When you approach the museum you don't know what it is going in on there. It is like having a curtain over the front. We have no communication with the, with our public with what is happening in the building and we are proposing to replace those doors in excuse the bad drop in here with something that respects the original architect of the building, provides us with the criteria that I have outlined before and I never was good coloring in the lines so I apologize. As you see we have maintained the brick exterior, the limestone arches, the stone inserts and simply replaced the doors. The most transient part of the façade of the building with something that meets those, the criteria that I had mentioned before. Now admittedly we don't have these sorts of crowds. This is the cornerstone lane for this building. We don't have those sorts of crowds. What we don't have is a passive audience. We have people who want to come to the museum and they want to be a part of the experience. Now this picture is a little bit exaggerated. This is Pat Fletcher a woman of some limitations and this is from when we announced the project over a year ago last year's Harvey Ball we made a public announcement of the project last year of the project at that point and asked the community to participate in supporting this endeavor and this is one of the photographs for the doors. The doors are difficult to open in the current configuration and in addition to meeting the access requirements. Once you get in and you're on the inside you can't see out particularly well. It has caused numerous instances when people have been whacked by the doors or nearly knocked off the front steps by someone bolting out because they don't have enough of a site line. It all presents a security situation for our receptionist who don't know who is coming into the building. We are a downtown business and it is really important to them to know who is coming into the building so that they are prepared for whatever the situation might be. We had a group of 53 elderly people last week, three staff members spent the time manning the doors or staffing the doors for these people because they had difficulty getting in and out. We have groups of significant, mobility issues and we have lots of wheelchairs or walkers. Again it is a staffing issue. It just doesn't provide the adequate view out to the street. We are a museum. We accept we that and we acknowledge that these doors are part of the original fabric of the building but we also are a resource for the entire community. We are the community's family album and in that role we provide enormous research services to many of the organizations, the Crown Hill folks, Preservation Worcester to the City of Worcester and I show you this picture because of this one that informs of the restoration of the Hanover Theatre or the rebuild of the Hanover Theatre when they came in and got some of the details of what the cityscape looked liked previously from our collection. Previously from what they found in our collection no one anticipated they were going to replicate the façade of the building they were simply they were going to use it to the best of their ability for common contemporary purpose. The same thing of the folks Green Street and Water Street rehabilitation. This is a wonderful picture of Water Street from the 1950's if I remember correctly. It informs of some of the lighting designs from the streetscape design but no one in looking at that expected they were going to replicate signs, doors and the windows exactly as they were because they were applying history to a new a reuse, a contemporary use of the space. So that is our simple request. It is to provide access, visibility and environmental control, security, marketability and help us support the rebranding of the museum. As I said before the project has been under study for nearly a year and half. Has been before executive committees, building and grounds committees, our board, our staff and

working again with our architect John Wadsworth. We believe that replacing the doors serve the best interest of both not only the Worcester Historical Museum but also serves well the architect of the building. It respects the arches; it respects the original construction and again replaces aging only transient portion of the façade. The project has the support of a lot of local funders who are calling Jan regularly asking how we are investing their money. It meets the needs of the community and is completely reversible. I would like to ask John Wadsworth if he would like to make comment about the design of the doors.

John Wadsworth: I was charged to do all the things that Bill just mentioned. What I like about the design we ultimately selected is that is sympathetic to the original. You have the larger drawing. This one.

Thomas Constantine: No, we have the very small form.

John Wadsworth: I believe. This drawing shows all three openings, the handicapped opening on the right, the main entrance in the middle and what will be a glazed opening on the left hand side for visibility and also for storage use under the height of the window. What I like best about this design it is very sympathetic, a simple reversed arch, upside down arch. It is in harmony with the building in a very contemporary way. Thank you.

Thomas Constantine: Thank you.

William Wallace: Couple more comments and some other people may want to comment on it and I'm sure you may have question that the Worcester Historical Museum believes that it is as Mike O'Brien would say "A city on the move", that we too are progressing in very positive way for the museum. We are rebranding ourselves as an active community space just as we our expecting the opening of Front Street and we welcome audiences of all ages to lots of new things at the museum. We are building a family gallery which will open in December for young audiences and we have lots of people come here. It is not a static building, it is not a one off, not the old days when it flower show and those doors worked properly. It is place where the community gathers for a variety of meetings and interactions and the celebration of everything that is really good about Worcester so in fact our request is to meet those needs to replace the doors with something that is sympathetic to the original building but also allows us to meet the needs of the traveling public. We believe that what we have proposed and I will just back up for a second, what we propose in these doors is not a typical for an update or a rebranding of a an old building. I show you this image from the Copley Plaza in Boston where the Back Bay Historic Commission approved the replacement of a window with a similarly designed; although ours probably better design that they are more substantially constructed door to provide access on the façade of their building but also the important visibility to the street. It is part of the communication. It is part of the branding of the institution. So we believe what we are requesting of you is a very sympathetic approach to an old building. Again, we are maintaining the arches, we are not touching the stone, we are simply proposing that we remove the doors respecting that great original architecture and we replace them that will rehabilitate the building not restore. That is not our intent. Our intent is to make it a vibrant, lively place on the Worcester landscape in the most sympathetic and attractive fashion that we possibly can. John has shown you the plan. This plan is a result of an additional design work since we submitted based upon meetings with Preservation Worcester which they asked us to replicate the double leaf approach on the doors. You will see that this door there is a slight difference here and here. They match on these sides. This door on the left has a couple of styles added to it so this left hand door would be fully compliant with current access codes we have discussed with the Disability Commission folks and we will work with them to have it, have it button activated so we

have engaged in additional conversation with appropriate community groups since we submitted and what it does is helps make the Worcester Historical Museum more of a part of a contemporary streetscape. It is part of our rebranding and part of our new thirty. That is the end of our images and I would like to ask some of our folks here would like to make comment about our plan or the need or the need to improve access or how this supports the mission of the museum. Unless you have questions.

Thomas Constantine: Well, we have a very limited time this evening because this room is going to be used at 6:30 so I have to move the discussion a little faster than we normally like to.

William Wallace: Okay.

Thomas Constantine: Okay, first I'm going through and see what the Commissioners have to say and if we have a few minutes we will take a few more comments from the audience.

William Wallace: Perhaps, they can help answer comments and questions.

Kevin Provencher: Where do I begin. I think you have made a lot of compelling arguments about how your proposed renovations is important to the mission of the museum and making the appropriate accommodations for your visitors but what I haven't heard any discussion on how the proposed replacement effects the historic value of the façade of the building and I think these doors are very, very compelling component of the historic nature of the building and I find it ironic that an institution that is devoted to history would approach a project in this manner and so I would like to hear you know what your thoughts on how this design is proposed, proposed design addresses the historic nature of the door that you are proposing to remove.

Mark Shelton: My name is Mark Shelton and I live at 80 Salisbury Street and I am Vice President of the Board at Worcester Historical Museum and one of the things is that we have talked about this over the past year or so it has come at a time when we have been investing in a large portion of the community is investing making the museum and it is collection as a consequence the history of the City and the region more accessible, more available, more vibrant, more interesting. So the way having an open door metaphorically in the case of restoring the doors literally is actually something that is key to our mission. We are mindful that we our in beautiful building that is not immediately contemporary. It is a building from the 20's and as a consequence the history that it represents is actually the history that is contained inside by the collection and contained in the programs that we put on and having the ability have visitors come in and out, see in and out and have the museum have the ability to protect and preserve it's collection and programs is actually key to our mission. The current circumstance. The current door, the current design actually limits us on our ability to do some of those things and over the course of the past year we have had individuals, foundations, members, corporations who have been enthusiastically embraced some of the things we have been doing and towards that end we take steps to make the museum more immediately meet the needs of the people trying to share the interesting history of the region. So that is how I would answer that.

Andrew Shevda: I went and inspected these doors a couple weeks ago and what seems to be the issue here and I understand it and completely sympathize with your desires for this project but the doors themselves our not the problem in my opinion. It is the hardware. The door hardware that is presently there is failing causing the doors to be difficult to open. These doors are hung on off set pivoting hinges and sealed. They are original and I think that is probably causing the problem for resistance in opening the doors. The doors themselves appear to be in

exquisite shape for mahogany doors. Of course I went on a Sunday so I couldn't open but I could see photographs on the inside. I have to, I just can't, really see the justification for the removal of these doors when it appears and we haven't heard anything about any studies about refinishing the doors, can they be refinished, if they can be salvaged. I don't think you have to go particularly far to make these operable for accessibility requirements. There are some drawbacks to that of course. The visibility and I understand that issue. It might be something that you are going to have to look at different options. Maybe a closed circuit television camera on the outside for people, the receptionist to see people approaching the building but there are other options than removing these doors because quite frankly these doors are the face of this building in my opinion. I just, I don't think we should just approve any demolition delay waiver for these doors.

Kevin Provencher: I echo Andrew's comments, I think there are technical solutions to a number of the issues that you have to the doors with the obvious exceptions of increasing the visibility of the interior of the museum to the street and I understand one of your goals here in this project but the purview of this Commission addresses the historic value of the component of the building that you are proposing to remove. We really can't vote on your mission and I think as a citizen and as a person I certainly support your mission but as a Commission member I don't think there is any way I can support this proposal because I think the removal of this door is a desecration of the building that I consider to be one of Worcester's finest landmarks. You really have something here that is very special and very significant and very meaningful to the City.

Erica Dunn: I just have question. Was there ever a plan or is it even possible to maybe keep the original doors on the ends and just do the middle as being handicapped accessible with the visibility being apparent?

John Wadsworth: It is possible. Certainly it is possible but it will look very patched, it will look very second rate to an extraordinary building done in the 1920's and one of the issues that wasn't covered very completely that the fact the museum continues to put an extraordinary amount of money into the operation of these doors to make them work. To make them functional. To make them look nice and respecting what they are but the fact is that they are not code compliant. They are heavy, they are difficult to use and they cause patron issues for exiting and entering the building.

Erica Dunn: I do understand that. I frequent the building often and I'm tiny and those doors are very heavy. I do understand that. They just are beautiful doors. I love them. I do understand everything that your saying and I do agree with the mission completely but being on the Board it would it would very, very much be detrimental, you know, it just makes the building in my personal opinion.

John Wadsworth: We agree that they are beautiful doors and respecting that the intent is to remove them and as Bill said they are replaceable if someone wanted to do something in the future. What I personally find extremely offense is the idea of modifying those doors and cutting a section out to make them compliant 3/4 width. It would look awful and it would be completely disrespectful to the historic value of the building.

Erica Dunn: I agree.

Thomas Constantine: I would kindly suggest that since we are very limited on our time tonight would you be interested in a continuation of this meeting until the next meeting?

William Wallace: Absolutely, we would like to have more discussion because we are, it is beyond the issue of just the doors opening and closing. Obviously, the hinges can be replaced but it doesn't address the other needs of the institution and that is what keeps the building lively and part of the landscaped so absolutely we would like to continue the conversation because there is much more to the issue than re-hinging doors.

Thomas Constantine: Okay. The petitioner is requesting a continuation of this hearing and due to our limited time I would suggest that we approve it. If someone would make a motion please.

Timothy McCann: I make a motion that we approve petitioner for a continuation to the next meeting.

Erika Dunn: I second that.

Thomas Constantine: All in favor? I would like to apologize to the audience, to the people that are here that haven't had a chance to speak this evening. As I said we are on a very limited time basis tonight and this will also give the Commission more time to consider what you have already told us on these doors. The next meeting is

Nancy Tran: The fourth but you will also need to vote to grant the constructive deadline.

Thomas Constantine: We are going to continuance, with a continuance you also need approve the, what is called the constructive grant date that stops until the next meeting also. Everyone understands that?

William Wallace: No.

Thomas Constantine: The constructive grant date is if we don't take action by a certain date from by the time you file the petition it would go into effective.

William Wallace: I see.

Thomas Constantine: Without taking any action you would be able to do what you want. Your petition would then succeed.

William Wallace: Okay.

Thomas Constantine: But our alterative would be that either you get a continuance and agree to the suspension of that constructive grant date or other possibility is to go ahead and vote and doesn't look like it would pass this evening.

William Wallace: No, we want to have more conversation as we are trying to be part of an active community and leaving this discussion it seems to be based on largely, hinges and on some of the other issues for accessing the museum and would be a tragic delay for the museum because it would simply mean one more year where we are waiting to respond to the community's needs.

Thomas Constantine: Will they need to sign for that?

Nancy Tran: No, you can take a vote on that.

Thomas Constantine: Generally when the constructive grant is changed they to have they acknowledge by signature I believe?

Nancy Tran: Yes, I have that but you to vote for that. I would suggest, October 11.

Thomas Constantine: October 11 is the next meeting.

Nancy Tran: October 4 is next meeting but extending the constructive grant to October 11.

Timothy McCann: I would like to make a motion that we allow the constructive grant deadline for this petition to be extended to October 11.

Kevin Provencher: I will second that.

Timothy McCann: Per the applicant.

William Wallace: I'm sorry, other date options because Mr. Wadsworth will be out of town on your next meeting date.

Thomas Constantine: We can extend it to the following meeting, the 18th but we also have to push the constructive date back further.

Joel Fontane: That is correct. The applicant would need to request a different date then. So, Nancy what would you propose?

Nancy Tran: The 25th the constructive grant.

Thomas Constantine: Okay. Tim can you go ahead and amend that again.

Timothy McCann: I would like to make a motion we approve an extension of the constructive grant deadline to October 25th per the request of the applicant.

James Crowley: I will second the motion.

Thomas Constantine: All in favor. Thank you. We will see you in two meetings from now.

3. **Scrivener's Error: 27-29 Westland Street (HC-2011-101) BDDW Decision**

Chairman Constantine stated that this was decision that needed to be corrected and asked Mr. Fontane if Commission needed to re-sign.

Mr. Fontane stated that's correct.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Provencher and seconded by Commissioner McCann the Commission voted 6-0 that error be reported and recorded.

4. **Received Communication:**

Invitation to Comment

Re: 18 Grafton St; from EBI Consulting; dated 08/23/2012

Re: 19 McKeon St; from: EBI Consulting; dated 08/23/2012

Chairman Constantine stated these are cell phone tower components and Historical Commission can make comments but has not done so in past.

5. **Informational Notice**

Re: 111 Park Ave; from Federal Communications Commission (FCC); dated 08/29/2012

Re: 100 Grand St; from FCC; dated 09/05/2012

Re: 266 Lincoln St; from FCC; dated 09/05/2012

Re: 280 May St; from FCC; dated 09/05/2012

Re: 101 Plantation St; from FCC; dated 09/05/2012

Re: 495 Shrewsbury St; from FCC; dated 09/05/2012

Chairman Constantine stated these were just informational.

Request for Letter of Support – 18 Grafton St (Osgood Bradley Building); from Macrostie Historic Advisors; dated 09/18/2012

Upon a motion by Commissioner McCann and seconded by Commissioner Mulherin the Commission voted 6-0 to provide a letter of support for 18 Grafton Street.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 PM.