



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

Thursday, May 4, 2023

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

Commissioners Present: Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice-Chair
Erika Helnarski (participated remotely)
Devon Kurtz
Donald Northway
Tomi Stefanie (participated remotely)
Steven Taylor
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)

Call Commission to Order – 5:30 PM

Approval of Minutes

Approval of minutes was held.

Leave to Withdraw

5. 45 Cedar Street (02-046-0055A) – BDDW-23-15

Petition purpose: Demolish storage shed

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed to withdraw the application for 45 Cedar Street without prejudice.

New Business

Certificate of Non-Applicability

1. 3 Irving Street (03-022-00004) – CNA-23-17

Petition purpose: Replace roof

Manuel Cunin joined the meeting remotely. He stated that he had replaced the roof at 3 Irving Street.

Ms. Johnstone stated that the city’s Building Commissioner had issued an emergency permit to replace the roof because it was experiencing severe leaking, but that the roof is flat and not visible from any public way.

Commissioner Taylor asked if the roof would be replaced in kind. Ms. Johnstone stated that some sections of the roof were still tar and gravel prior to the replacement, but that none if it is visible from the street.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

Upon a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the changes that have already occurred at 3 Irving Street, consisting of replacing the roof, are not under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the request for a retroactive Certificate of Non-Applicability was approved.

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 7 Circuit Avenue East (14-018-00007) – BDDW-23-12

Petition purpose: Replace front door, relocate one window, replace a section of non-original porch railing, replace porch ceiling in-kind, replace two existing vinyl windows with a new sliding door

Quoc Bui, the owner, participated in the meeting in person. He described the project, which would consist firstly of the replacement of the front door, which is not historic. He stated that he intends to use an existing 40x82 solid wood interior door. As part of the front door project, he stated that it would be necessary to move one historic front window, with leaded glass, to the side of the building, as well as replace the stair railing. Additionally, he plans to replace the porch ceiling with new painted beadboard and replace two existing vinyl windows with a slider or French doors to allow for easier access.

Ms. Johnstone suggested that the Commission take the project step-by-step and reviewed each step of the project.

The Commission asked clarifying questions on the railing work, specifically whether any of the historic portion would be removed. Mr. Bui stated that the historic portion would remain.

Chair Long noted that the historic window that would be moved to the side of the building was wider than the existing window it was proposed to be installed as a transom for. She asked what would be done where the window originally was located next to the front door. Mr. Bui stated that it would be closed in and covered with siding. After an additional clarifying question from Commissioner Andre, Mr. Bui also noted that the entire original window, including the pane beneath the leaded glass transom, would be moved to the side of the building.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 7 Circuit Avenue East, consisting of eliminating a window next to the front door, replacing the front door with a wider door, relocating a window from its location next to the front door to another location, replacing a section of non-original porch railing with an appropriate product, replacing the porch ceiling in-kind, replacing two vinyl windows with a door, and enclosing one historic door from the inside, would not be detrimental to the historical or

architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 7 Circuit Avenue East was thus approved.

3. 88 Webster Street (27-032-00004) – BDDW-23-13

Petition purpose: Construct an addition & selectively replace bricks, concrete blocks, windows & window grates

Donald O’Neil, attorney, appeared at the meeting in person on behalf of Tony Nguyen, the principal of Worcester Affordable Housing, the owner of the property. He stated that the project as proposed in the application would be scaled back, but that they wanted to discuss some of the renovation work.

Mr. O’Neil stated that he hoped to get approval for the renovation work proposed outside of the additions, as well as get feedback from the Commission regarding the additions and window replacements.

Chair Long asked if the replacement windows could match the existing windows.

Ms. Johnstone asked if there has been a window survey done. Mr. Nguyen, who was also at the meeting, stated that he would try to match the existing windows for the proposed replacements. Ms. Johnstone shared Google Street View so that the Commission could review existing windows. Ms. Johnstone pointed out existing steel sash windows, aluminum windows, vinyl windows, and wood windows of different sash operation mechanisms and muntin patterns throughout the building. She recommended that the Commission propose a window type for replacement windows for each section of the building.

Chair Long stated that she would like to see windows throughout the building have the same frame color to facilitate uniformity.

Commissioner Stefani stated that the two sections of 88 Webster Street beside the single-story section should be taken together and have the same windows installed to match the existing 18-over-18 sash that currently predominated. He also noted that the one-story addition appears later.

Commissioner Long asked if the applicant had investigated saving any of the windows. Mr. O’Neil stated that the building was proposed to be converted to a residential use and that there were concerns about energy efficiency.

Commissioner Kurtz also noted that he would like to see consistency in the window choice throughout the building, mostly matched to the muntin patterns that predominate on the two taller sections of the building.

Mr. O’Neil stated that he thought it would be helpful to come back with a window proposal.

The Commission briefly discussed the proposed additions and stated that they would like to see setbacks in the upper story additions to allow for the overall appearance of the varying heights of the rooflines could be retained.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that he liked the variation in the shapes of the window frames and would like to see them retained.

Commissioner Taylor stated that he would like to see the additions pay homage to the existing building, but not try to replicate it.

Ms. Johnstone asked the Commission to give guidance to the Commission as to what material windows they would like to see, and mentioned aluminum clad wood windows, composite windows, or simulated divided light vinyl windows as typical options.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed to continue the hearing to June 15, 2023, and to extend the constructive grant deadline to June 30, 2023.

4. 701 Main Street (03-008-00003) – BDDW-23-14

Petition purpose: Add a side entrance & enclose existing entrances (retroactive)

Joel Malavar, a member of Ebenezer Church, the owner, appeared at the meeting in person. He stated that the church has been renovating the building. He stated that the church proposes a separate entrance for the first floor. He stated that some doors were rotten and needed to be repaired.

Chair Long asked for confirmation that the new entrance was added to allow a separate first floor entrance. Mr. Malavar confirmed. She also asked for clarification on the entrances that had been enclosed. Mr. Malavar stated that the entrances that were enclosed with brick were boarded up with 2x4s on the inside.

Chair Long asked why the project didn't come before the Commission before the work was done. Mr. Malavar stated that they had just submitted the permit application when they learned they would need to go to the Historical Commission. Ms. Johnstone gave some background, stating that a building inspector had discovered workers at the building performing work without a permit.

Commissioner Stefani asked if the storefront system shown on the screen (with a photo ca. 1970s/80s) would be changed in its entirety. Ms. Johnstone stated that the storefront system was bricked over in the 1970s or 1980s.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted seven (7) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and one (1) opposed, with Commissioner Theerman being the nay, that the proposed demolition at 701 Main Street, consisting of adding a side entrance and enclosing an existing entrance would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a majority affirmative vote, the motion passed and a retroactive Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 701 Main Street was thus approved.

Communications

None

Other Business

A. Status update – Elm Park Neighborhood Local Historic District.

Ms. Johnstone stated that on April 25, the report was taken up at City Council and was referred to the Economic Development Committee. She stated that when she finds out the date of that meeting, she would let the Commission know.

B. Discussion with Worcester Business Development Corporation & Epsilon Associates regarding mitigation items for Saint Gobain project.

Roberta Brien, Executive Vice President of the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) was at the meeting in person, joined by Jason Kruckas, Senior Project Manager and Deputy Director of Construction and Facilities for WBDC, also in person, and representatives of Epsilon Associates, their consultant, who joined the meeting remotely.

Ms. Brien stated that in November, the WBDC had come to a Historical Commission meeting to discuss New Garden Park's (a subsidiary of WBDC) acquisition of 51 acres of the Saint Gobain campus. She stated that after the presentation to the Commission and discussions with Preservation Worcester and other groups, it was determined that there was concern over the historical significance of the campus.

Ms. Brien reviewed some of the mitigation measures included in the draft memorandum of agreement that was provided to the Commission, including a preferential ranking system for developers willing to preserve specific buildings and archival photography.

Chair Long asked what process New Garden Park would be employing to ensure that the Administration Building would not be lost. Ms. Brien stated that a communication was distributed to interested developers stating that sections of the campus would be made pad ready but that the Historical Commission identified specific buildings they would like to see preserved. She also stated that there was a historic preservation component in their list of criteria for developers and/or end users.

Commissioner Northway asked if the Administration Building, which contains the Norton Hall murals, would be one of the last buildings to come down. Ms. Brien confirmed that that was true, and that Saint Gobain was working with conservators to investigate whether the murals could be removed from the building and preserved.

Mr. Kruckas reviewed the demolition schedule, which he expects to be complete by 2025.

The Commission reviewed the specifics of the proposed mitigation measures, which includes archival photography of the entirety of the exterior of the site and a preferential rating system for bidders.

The Commission looked at Google Street view images of the site.

Chair Long asked where the archival photography would be kept. Ms. Johnstone stated that the Historical Commission, MHC, and the Worcester Historical Museum would receive copies.

Commissioner Taylor stated he felt that the totality of the site is very important to Worcester's history, and that he would like to see something to physically embody and pay homage to the former Norton Campus.

Brian Lever and Doug Kelleher from Epsilon Associates stated they could include some salvage in the memorandum of agreement.

Commissioner Taylor suggested a small park akin to the one near Polar Park evoking the Blackstone Canal; Commissioner Kurtz suggested before and after photos along the sidewalk, or a public arts fund set aside to help tell the story of the Norton Company. Commissioner Taylor stated that he would like to see a public park or alley incorporated on the site.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted all in favor to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:54 p.m.