



The City of
WORCESTER

Historical Commission

Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice Chair
Steven Taylor, Clerk
Devon Kurtz
Donald Northway
Erika Helnarski
Tomi Stefani
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

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

Thursday, November 2, 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*
Donald Northway
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

Commissioners Absent: Devon Kurtz
Tomi Stefani
Steven Taylor

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

Call Commission to Order – 5:30 PM

Approval of Minutes

March 9 & 23, May 4, June 1, 15 & 29, July 13 & 27, August 10 & 24, September 7, October 19, 2023

Approval of minutes was held until the next meeting.

New Business

Certificate of Non-Applicability

1. 10 Regent Street (20-014-00007) – CNA-23-30

Petition purpose: Repave driveway in-kind

Ms. Johnstone stated the petitioner was going to join online.

David Welch o/b/o Massachusetts Gamma Sigma Alumni Association stated the plan is to redo the driveway. Hasn't been done in 50 years and needs to be done. Will not be a full scrape, but a partial and thin layer of asphalt will be put down on top from the sidewalk to the building.

Chair Long clarified that the driveway will be repaved with in kind materials.

Mr. Welch answered correct.

The commissioners had no questions.

Upon a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 10 Regent Street are not under

the jurisdiction of the Commission. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the request for a Certificate of Non-Applicability was approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by David Welch and received July 19, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions.

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 129 Dewey Street (06-022-00028) – BDDW-23-53

Petition purpose: Replace windows, close in select windows

Benfred Owusu-Amo, Petitioner, stated that this is an old building and it was abandoned for about ten years before the petitioner purchased it. All of the windows are rotted and the petitioner is trying to fix it as many break ins have occurred. Started doing research about the historic nature of the building. Understood that the windows need to be the same type, however, would like to use vinyl for safety and cost. There are additional windows behind the boarded up windows from before the building was converted to a warehouse that serve no purpose and would like to seal those three windows. Will be keeping the windows on Dewey street and adjacent street. For those windows, the cost of wood windows is very high and would like to change to aluminum instead.

Ms. Johnstone added that the applicant is proposing aluminum windows on the Dewey Street side and vinyl windows on the secondary elevations.

Mr. Owusu-Amo said yes. The windows will look the same – the aluminum and the vinyl.

Ms. Johnstone said she met with the applicant on site and there are missing windows and in an advanced state of deterioration. The windows that are looking to be closed in are not easy to see from the public right of way. There is a private street along a side elevation.

Chair Long asked how the windows will be closed in.

Mr. Owusu-Amo said they will be closed in with the same rock face cement blocks/materials the building is made.

Vice Chair Theerman asked what the appearance of the windows will be.

Mr. Owusu-Amo stated they will look the same as current conditions.

Ms. Johnstone stated a twelve light on top. They will either have twelve or one on the bottom – depending.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 129 Dewey Street, consisting of replacement of some windows and filling in of some windows 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 129 Dewey Street was thus approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Benfred Owusu-Amo and received September 29, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions.

3. 54 Mason Street (06-020-00019) – BDDW-23-54

Petition purpose: Demolish building

Don O’Neil, attorney, on behalf of Polar Views, LLC, owner, presented that the building has been significantly altered, windows have been replaced, the siding has been replaced, and it looks like there have been multiple additions as well. The appearance of the buildings is such that it would qualify for a complete demolition.

Chair Long said that the commission will have to decide if the house has an opportunity to be listed. As you can see from the photos, there are asphalt roof shingles, vinyl siding, and not in a historic district. If the commission does not believe the house can be listed at any time, the commission can grant a Leave to Withdraw or move forward with a review and vote.

Commissioner Northway stated that based on the age of the house, is hesitant, but it seems it will never make a listing.

Vice Chair Theerman and Commissioner Andre agreed.

Public Comment – None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed for a Leave to Withdraw Without Prejudice at 54 Mason Street because the building no longer has the architectural integrity to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Leave to Withdrawn Without Prejudice for 54 Mason Street was thus approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Donald O’Neil and received October 4, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions.

4. 90 Grove Street (09-32B-00001) – BDDW-23-55

Petition purpose: Replace windows

Dan Benoit, Architect, o/b/o Grove Family Properties, owner, presented that they are looking to replace windows. Forty thousand square foot building that has been vacant for several years and the intent is to renovate for 46 residential units. This is a tax credit project that has already been approved by Massachusetts Historic Commission and is with the National Park Services now for part two approval. They are looking forward to getting started on construction sometime towards the end of this year.

Chair Long said that since this is a tax credit project, those standards will be met. All the windows in the building will be replaced and some of the infilled areas will be opened where windows used to be.

Mr. Benoit shared photos of the windows that will be used. They are universal aluminum windows that are historic replicas.

Commissioners had no additional questions.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 90 Grove Street, consisting of all windows being replaced and infilled areas being opened up and new windows installed 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 90 Grove Street was thus approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Daniel Benoit and received on October 6, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions.

5. 47 Hermon Street (03-003-00024) – BDDW-23-56

Petition purpose: Replace windows, remove fire escape and replace with enclosed stairway addition, remove loading dock door and replace with windows

Don O'Neil, attorney, o/b/o Anthony Rossi, applicant, is looking for permission to replace windows as most if not all of the windows are currently boarded up. They will be replaced with two over two aluminum windows with a simulated divided light. Also looking to remove the exterior fire escape and build an enclosed stairwell. The plan for the property is to renovate it for residential use and currently there is only one access to the building so need to add additional access ways. On the other side of the building there is a loading dock where they would like to remove the garage door and replace with a window configuration to eventually be incorporated into the residential use. There will also be an overall cleaning of the brick and patching where needed.

Chair Long asked about the stairwell that is being replaced for the current fire escape being flat to the current building or pushed out slightly.

Ms. Johnstone said based on proposed elevations, it appears to be set back.

Vice Chair Theerman asked what material was being used to build the stairwell.

Mr. O'Neil said probably a black hearty panel or possibly black aluminum. They are not trying to match the brick as it will be very hard to do so.

The commissioners had no further questions

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 47 Hermon Street, consisting of replacing windows, removing the fire escape and building an enclosed stairwell, and removing the loading dock, enclosing with a glass detail and cleaning the brick detailing 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 47 Hermon Street was thus approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Donald O’Neil, attorney, received October 12, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions and proposed changes.

6. 18 Haynes Street (08-036-00042) – BDDW-23-41

Petition purpose: Replace roof

Richie Cubert, construction supervisor, o/b/o the owner Luis Duran, stated that the house needs a new roof as it is compromised and the insurance company will not insure the house. The roof is currently slate and to replace with in kind materials is a large cost. With modern materials, it could look just like slate, but with asphalt.

Chair Long has not seen an asphalt shingle that looks just like slate.

Mr. Cubert said the new black asphalt shingles look like black slate to him.

Chair Long said that the photo does not look like high quality slate. The commission has seen the different degrees of slate throughout the years and this does look like one of the thinner slates that was used. The roof is probably original to 1915 and asked if the homeowner has tried to repair the roof.

Mr. Cubert said yes, the roof is original. The homeowner making repairs would be constant as leaks would keep popping up because of the age of the roof and the flashing is beginning to become compromised and the lead has started to deteriorate around the chimney. The house is not currently insured.

Ms. Johnstone said the letter from the insurance company is included in commission materials.

Chair Long asked if they priced out a slate roof to replace the current roof.

Mr. Cubert said a new asphalt roof will be about fifteen thousand dollars. A new slate roof is around forty five thousand dollars.

Vice Chairman Theerman asked if the entire roof needed replacing.

Mr. Cubert said yes. Once the new roof is put on, it will be guaranteed.

Ms. Johnstone stated that the commission needs to decide if the loss of the slate roof would be detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Understanding the condition the roof is in and the quality of the material.

Chair Long feels they would be guessing at the quality of the material.

Ms. Johnstone stated that by looking at it, looks similar to the slate used at the Indian Hill residences, a lower quality, less expensive material. It is not as hard as a black slate or a New York red slate would be and doesn’t last as long.

Commissioner Andre expressed a reservation that the petitioner has not looked at synthetic slate as an option.

Mr. Cubert said looking at the house historically, it has already been vinyl sided.

Vice Chairman Theerman asked how long the current home owner has owned the home.

Mr. Duran responded two years. The insurance company came out to inspect the property and decided not to renew the policy until the roof is replaced.

Mr. Cubert added that if a contractor were to go and repair a current leak it would probably cost close to a thousand dollars and the repair wouldn't be guaranteed.

Ms. Johnstone said that if the commission feels they can't come to resolution tonight, let the applicant know what you would like to see and the item can be continued. Sometimes in situations like these it is helpful to do a site visit if the commission would like.

Commissioner Helnarski is torn as the commission would want to home to be insured and bad weather is coming on the flip side, the commission needs to see the numbers. What would a synthetic slate roof cost as opposed to the asphalt shingle. This is an urgent repair but the commission shouldn't make a brash decision. This house has a very big roof that could make a very big impact and the commission should see the numbers.

Mr. Cubert stated that the numbers stated are the numbers.

Chair Long said that the commission usually required the quotes submitted in writing. The filing was not for financial hardship, the filing was for a Demolition Delay Waiver. The job of the commission is to determine if the loss of the slate roof would be detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the City of Worcester.

Commissioner Helnarski said that the labor intensiveness of replacement of original materials is why a lot of historic homes in Worcester are now covered with vinyl siding. The job of the commission is to preserve the historic architecture.

Mr. Cubert said that a site visit should be done and the commission will see that the house was vinyl sided years ago without a permit and destroyed the historical value of the house.

Commissioner Andre said that the hard part if that Mr. Cubert is saying the asphalt will look like slate but did not provide any examples of materials. Are there pictures the commission can see.

Ms. Johnstone said if the commission would like more information, let the petitioner know what you would like to see.

Commissioner Andre would like to see a picture or something of the shingles that look like slate material.

Commissioner Helnarski would be interested in a site visit.

Commissioner Northway would like a statement of cost for the different options.

Commissioner Theerman agreed.

Mr. Cubert asked if on the site visit, the commission would go on the roof or have an expert come with you or do you just look at it from the street.

Chair Long said they look at it from the street.

Ms. Johnstone said the point is to look at it and assess the architectural value not whether or not it can be fixed. What it sounds like the commission would like to see are product samples of the roofing materials to be used and a cost breakdown for different options available from roofing companies. There is a supplemental form for a financial hardship. A narrative of why this work is unable to be financed must also be provided.

Mr. Duran stated that right now he is unable to insure the property until the roof is replaced so that is the hardship. If anything were to happen, it would be a situation.

Chair Long expressed concern for the insurance too and reiterated that the commissioners have asked for certain documentation before a vote is taken. The commission could take a vote tonight, but it does not sound like it will be positive.

Mr. Cubert asked if the commission can provide a letter so that the homeowner can submit that to his insurance company to state that the roof is being addressed.

Ms. Johnstone said the homeowner can give his insurance company his application or the insurance company can call the Planning Division Office. This is not the first time this has happened to a homeowner.

Chair Long said that the homeowner is asking the commission to approve the removal of a historic slate roof based off of a picture and the commission needs more information.

Mr. Duran said that they have submitted everything required. The insurance company had asked for a repair to be made and it was done, then they asked for another repair and it was done, then they said they would no longer insure the home.

Chair Long stated that the homeowner can come back for the next meeting with the estimates requested.

Ms. Johnstone said that the commission has explained the documentation to provide for the next meeting so we will move forward with a request for a continuance of this item until the next meeting.

Chair Long asked for the petitioner to request a continuance until the next meeting and when they return to please bring the estimates.

Mr. Cubert stated that they will come back with the estimates but feels that the commission is prolonging the replacement of the roof.

Commissioner Helnarski stated that the responsibility of the commission is not to the insurance company or the homeowner, but to the City of Worcester and preserving the architectural heritage.

Ms. Johnstone made sure everyone understood the expectation, so the documentation needed and told Mr. Duran to stop by the office if there was any question.

Mr. Duran said that the next time this item is presented, it will be easier.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to continue this item to November 16, 2023 with a constructive grant deadline of December 1, 2023.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application received from Luis Duran, homeowner, received July 24, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions.

Certificate of Appropriateness

7. 38 Monadnock Road (20-002-10+14) – COA-23-22

Petition purpose: Replace roof

Mary Ann Grigg, owner, requesting to replace the roof. There are currently two rooves on the house. One was put on around 1975 and the other around 1995. Photos of proposed replacement shingles were shown.

Chair Long clarified that asphalt shingles are on the roof now.

Ms. Grig said yes, two layers.

Commissioners had no questions.

Public comment: None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 38 Monadnock Road, consisting of removing the current roof and replacing with architectural roofing material, are appropriate for the Montvale Local Historic District. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 47 Hermon Street was thus approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Mary Ann Grigg, homeowner, received October 3, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions and proposed shingles.

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

8. 21 Crown Street (03-023-09+10) – COA-23-23

Petition purpose: Remove a chimney

Brian Lever, Epsilon Associates, o/b/o Abbey's House stated this is an ongoing project that has been before the commission previously. As part of the project some bowing at the rear of the building was noticed and they would like to do some structural ties. The chimney shown on existing condition photos in the rear of the building is in the way of this work. The proposal is to remove the chimney from the roof up. Currently, the chimney is reinforced with stucco/concrete and originally would have been exposed brick. There are four chimneys on the house. Two in the front, integral to the character of the house and two

rear chimneys that were kitchen stacks. This chimney is one of the kitchen stacks. It is visible from the street but not a significant feature of the building. The proposal is to remove it.

Commissioners had no questions.

Public comment: None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed change at 21 Crown Street, consisting of removal of a rear chimney, is appropriate for the Crown Hill Local Historic District. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Certificate of Appropriateness for 21 Crown Street was thus approved.

Also, on a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed change at 21 Crown Street, consisting of removal of a rear chimney, 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 21 Crown Street was thus approved. The commission now has 30 days to comment on this plan.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Julie Orozco o/b/o Abby's House received October 10, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides shown of current conditions with chimney in question circled

Communications

A. Final draft of Saint-Gobain MOA from EPA.

Chair Long stated that they did a very good job of preserving the requested historical features.

Ms. Johnstone went over the memorandum of agreement and read the final agreement. One of the items in the MOA is for Saint-Gobain to prepare an architectural salvage plan. They have shared photos of all things the commission has called out and prepared a memo stating what will happen.

Commissioner Northway asked about a mural on a wall that was seen.

Ms. Johnstone stated that wall is not part of the MOA because the murals were not a part of the purchase of the building. Ms. Johnstone shared photos of items the commissioners saw on their site visit that could be included in adaptive reuse in other locations on site and asked for any feedback from commissioners.

The commissioners asked to add purple windows and parts of the railroad spur if possible.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to accept the architectural salvage plan with a request to look into keeping a purple window and some of the inset railroad elements.

Other Business

A. Design review guidelines discussion.

Chair Long stated how great the report is as a reference.

Peter Benton said the report has been a pleasure to work on and lots of fun to get to know Worcester. Mr. Benton talked about the historic districts and his research and stated they are working to finalize the text. Draft text without photographs or illustrations was submitted at the end of September. Ms. Johnstone has been making edits and Jenn Doherty at the Massachusetts Historical Commission has done a review and provided comments. Now, revisions to the text are being made. Once there is a sign off on the text, they will move to adding photographs and illustrations.

Commissioner Helnarski asked if this report would be posted on the City of Worcester website and could it be handed out to folks that fill out applications.

Ms. Johnstone said absolutely it can be provided electronically or there can be a couple of sections identified to be given in paper form. It will be given to historic homeowners as good knowledge to have.

Mr. Benton said it is intended to be a resource for any property owner also so they have advance information before they come before the commission and know what to expect.

Ms. Johnstone told the committee that usually conversations are had with homeowners before any building permits are pulled.

Chair Long enjoyed the chapter on the steps that folks go through to come before the commission and found it extremely helpful.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted five (5) to zero (0) to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:44 p.m.