

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

May 29, 2008

**CHASE BUILDING, 44 FRONT STREET, WORCESTER
SUITE 300 – CONFERENCE ROOM**

Commission Members Present: Peter Schneider, Chair
Thomas Constantine, Vice-Chair
Janet Merrill

Staff Present: Joel Fontane, Planning and Regulatory Services
Ruth Gentile, Planning and Regulatory Services
Edgar Luna, Planning and Regulatory Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:40 P.M.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Local Historic District Creation/Expansion - Crown Hill

Thomas Johnson, James Marcotte and Mark Tuminski, representatives from the Crown Hill Neighborhood presented their plan for creating a local historic district in the Crown Hill area. As a justification for the creation of the district, Dr. Johnson stated that the area is part of a National Register District and that the neighborhood association has been in existence for over 30 years. Mr. Tuminski described their method for informing the landowners, by sending out an introduction letter, a frequently asked questions information sheet, a survey, a follow-up phone call or an in person visit, a mailing, and a map for them to mark up with suggestions for the local historic district boundaries. Chair Schneider questioned that only one third of the 90 properties targeted have responded and Commissioner Constantine stated that he believes that all of the landowners need to be in favor of the idea. Dr. Johnson responded that there have been no negative comments. Chair Schneider questioned the applicants as to what holds the potential local historic district together. Dr. Johnson explained that there are multiple decades represented as you travel up the hill. Commissioner Schneider questioned how a Certificate of Appropriateness could be issued in the cases of some of the properties that have already been altered by vinyl siding or some other changes to the structures and what guidelines would be used. He further stated that he did not believe that this area could be held to the same standards as the existing local historic districts. Chair Schneider stated that the Historical Commission has invited Chris Skelley from Mass Historic to a meeting as there are questions that the commission needs answered such as: 1) is there a limit to

the number of local historic districts in a community, 2) how many members are allowed, 3) can a local historic district create its own guidelines and 4) can a local historic district have different characteristics within its boundary. Dr. Johnson questioned what the Commission as a study committee needs in order to continue with the creation of the local historic district. Chair Schneider stated that he believes the Form B for all properties is needed so that there is a formal statement of what is in the district and a signed commitment from the property owners that they are in favor.

- 2. Local Historic District Creation/Expansion - Massachusetts Avenue** Sheila Killeen, Nancy Jeppson and Kristina Spillane presented the plan Ms. Killeen stated that there are 21 homes in the Massachusetts Avenue Local Historic District and that the expansion would include 60 homes. The concept has been discussed at the Hammond Heights Neighborhood Association meeting and feedback for the expansion of the district has been positive. She further stated that the group realizes that they must inform homeowners via a letter and door-to-door. Chair Schneider questioned if this new area is an expansion of the Mass Ave Local Historic District or a new Local Historic District. He further stated that the possible new additions are different from the existing Mass Ave Local Historic District. He said that the study committee and the City Council have to be convinced and that everyone must sign on. He indicated that the architectural information on the properties is necessary. Ms. Jeppson stated that she believed the group needed to find out if the homeowners are in favor before they could move forward. She also was concerned that the neighborhood was too varying and that a local historic district was not possible. Chair Schneider stated that the original reason for a local historic district is for the preservation of its architectural and historic significance and not for protection. Mr. Fontane stated that the Division of Planning & Regulatory Services has few resources to dedicate to the creation of new local historic districts. He estimated that there may be \$3,500 to \$5,000 available for these efforts and recommended that these funds be used as a match for a State grant to fund a historic property survey. Mr. Fontane stated that the last survey conducted by the Commission cost ~\$12,000 (\$6K city match \$6K state grant) and included about 100 properties. He indicated that it may be necessary for the groups to raise additional funds to conduct the recommended survey in both proposed districts, or the Commission will need to decide which district to implement first. The application period for the grant ends in the fall with awards being announced and funds becoming available in the winter. Mr. Fontane recommended that both groups conduct outreach efforts with all property owners in the proposed districts and that they inform their district councilor.

Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 7:25 P.M.