

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

**May 27, 2010  
LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL**

**Commission Members Present:** Peter Schneider, Chair  
Thomas Constantine  
Timothy McCann  
James Crowley

**Staff Present:** Edgar Luna, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**MINUTES**

Mr. Luna informed the Commission that the April 22, 2010 and May 13, 2010 minutes will be submitted for the June 10, 2010 meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. 95 Grand Street (HC-2010-023) – Building Demolition Delay Waiver:** Dennis Hennessy, Director of Neighborhoods and Housing Development Division, presented the petition on behalf of the City of Worcester. Mr. Hennessy stated that the City of Worcester was seeking Building Demolition Delay waiver approval to demolish all structures located within the 95 Grand Street parcel. He stated that the City was seeking the Demolition Waiver due to the advanced state of disrepair of the structures on site, of which he indicated many have already collapsed, specifically the roofs. Mr. Hennessy stated that the City acquired the 95 Grand Street parcel in 2005 through tax title, and indicated that shortly after acquiring the site the City began making efforts to identify potential developers for its restoration and redevelopment. He stated that given the strong housing market at the time the parcel was acquired, the City issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for 95 Grand Street in 2007 and again in 2008. Unfortunately, he indicated that all proposals were rejected because they were not financially feasible without significant government subsidies and grants. Mr. Hennessy further stated that one applicant affirmed the poor condition of the buildings on site through his RFP response proposal to completely demolish the structures citing un-resolvable structural damage. In addition, he indicated that due to the poor and deteriorating physical condition of the buildings and the lack of sufficient public or private resources, it was no longer practical

to restore the buildings for productive use; consequently, he stated that there was no reasonable likelihood that either the City or some other entity is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate, or restore the buildings at 95 Grand Street. Chair Schneider asked if there were any sections of the structures on site that could be saved. Mr. Hennessy indicated that according to an Existing Conditions Deficiencies Summary prepared by Weidlinger Associates in November of 2005, all the buildings at 95 Grand Street were severely damaged. He also indicated that according to an assessment conducted by John Kelly, Acting Building Commissioner, the buildings on site had outlived their usefulness. Mr. Hennessy also indicated that based on the poor and deteriorating condition of the buildings on site, and unsuccessful RFP proposals from private developers, the City had determined that the best alternative for redevelopment of the area was complete demolition, and indicated that to date, the City had identified \$700,000.00 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to accomplish such demolition. Chair Schneider stated that, in his opinion, complete demolition was not the only economic viable alternative; nevertheless, he indicated that in this case, delaying the demolition waiver would be useless. Commissioner Crowley asked Mr. Hennessy if the demolition funding was time-sensitive. Mr. Hennessy indicated that the funding was one-time funds, and must be obligated before September 2010 or they will be recaptured and re-programmed by the Federal Government. Commissioner Crowley indicated that if the Demolition waiver was approved, he would suggest as a condition of approval that the petitioner submit one (1) set of black and white photographs documenting the exterior architectural details and profiles of the three facades visible from public ways to the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services, Massachusetts Historical Commission and Preservation Worcester. Mr. Hennessy indicated that the City would accept and comply with such condition of approval. Upon reviewing the request submitted and the evidence provided, the Worcester Historical Commission voted 1-3 (Commissioners Schneider, McCann and Crowley voting no) that the proposed demolition would not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester. The motion failed and the Historical Commission considered the petitioner's waiver based on undue economic hardship. Upon reviewing the request submitted and the evidence provided, the Worcester Historical Commission voted 4-0 that the petitioner had demonstrated undue economic hardship; therefore, the Building Demolition Delay Waiver was granted with following conditions:

- **Submit one (1) set of black and white photographs documenting the exterior architectural details and profiles of the three facades visible from public ways to the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services, Massachusetts Historical Commission and Preservation Worcester.**

2. **15 Chestnut Street (HC-2010-024) – Building Demolition Delay Waiver:** Dennis Gray, representative for Verizon Communications, Inc. petitioner, presented the petition. Mr. Gray stated that the petitioner was seeking Building Demolition Delay Waiver approval to make the following changes to the building on site: (a) remove the existing limestone veneer and attachment steel and replace it with pre-cast concrete panels to match all profiles and details of the existing limestone and to be supported with new stainless steel anchors, (b) remove two hundred and fifty (250) steel windows and replace

them with aluminum windows to match the existing profile and color and (3), remove the existing membrane roofing and replace it with new membrane roofing. Mr. Gray stated that some of the existing panels have been falling off due to age and poor attachment mechanisms, which he indicated was concerning to the petitioner due to the height of the building, proximity to residential neighborhoods, and pedestrian use of the sidewalk. Mr. Gray indicated that the petitioner was proposing to replace the existing four (4) inch limestone veneer and attachment steel with new pre-cast concrete panels to match all profiles and details of the existing limestone and to be supported with new stainless steel anchors. He also stated that the proposed aluminum window replacements would match the existing profile windows in profile and color. Mr. Gray further indicated that new steel columns would be added inside the walls to add reinforcement to the walls. Commissioner Crowley stated that, in his opinion, the proposed materials would not alter or change the exterior appearance of the structure. He also asked Mr. Gray if the petitioner had considered removing the radio towers located on the roof of the building. Mr. Gray responded that the radio towers would not be removed. Chair Schneider stated that the structure on site was an important example of Art Deco architecture in the city. Mr. Gray stated that he concurred with Chair Schneider's comment, and indicated that all efforts would be made to match all exterior details in an effort to preserve its integrity, including the panel depicting an eagle, located at the main entrance of the building. Chair Schneider stated that the door sign located at the entrance of the building was an original and significant historical feature of the building; therefore, he asked Mr. Gray if the petitioner was planning to keep it in place. Mr. Gray stated that there were two (2) of such signs and indicated that both would be saved as they appeared to be original to the structure. Chair Schneider asked if the Art Deco doors would remain, and Mr. Gray stated that they would remain. Peter Duffy, a neighborhood resident, expressed support for the project; however, he stated that following a recent fire on site, the petitioner had installed a six (6) foot fence which, in his opinion, had a negative visual impact on the neighborhood. Mr. Gray indicated that the six (6) foot fence would soon be replaced with a chain link fence, and indicated that the grass area would be replanted with same. Alice Gardner, a neighborhood resident, expressed support for the project and asked when the proposed work was scheduled to start and end. Mr. Gray stated that the proposed work was scheduled to start during the late summer, but indicated that he was not certain when the proposed work would conclude. Upon a motion by Commissioner Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Crowley, the Commission voted 3-1 (Commissioner Schneider voting no) that the proposed demolition would not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester; therefore, the Building Demolition Delay Waiver for this project was approved.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

- 3. Letter of Support for 180 Main Street – The Plummer Building:** Mr. Luna informed the Commission that 184 Main Street Associates, LLC had submitted a request to send a Letter of Support to the Massachusetts Historical Commission to support their application to receive Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits to restore the historic structure at 180 Main Street, formerly known as the Plummer Building. Mr. Luna indicated that the Plummer Building was built in 1890, and was MACRIS-listed. He also

added that the petitioner had indicated that if the application is approved, the funding would be used to restore and redevelop this important architectural asset of the City of Worcester. Upon a motion by Commissioner Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Crowley, the Commission voted 4-0 to send a Letter of Support to the Massachusetts Historical Commission to support the application submitted by 184 Main Street Associates, LLC.

**Adjournment:** Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.