

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
June 28, 2012**

LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present: J. Thomas Constantine
Timothy McCann, Vice-Chair
Kevin Provencher, Clerk
James Crowley
Peter Schneider
Andrew Shveda

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

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Constantine called the meeting to order at 5:33 P.M.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Advisory Review: Elm Park Improvement Plan

Robert Antonelli, Assistant Parks Commissioner, stated that improvements are planned for Elm Park, particularly around the corner of Russell and Highland Streets. Work will be performed on the pond, playground and two main structures – the maintenance/bathroom and skate buildings. Mr. Antonelli stated that the proposed design and plans have been sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, to which they responded there were no significant historical impacts unless work is done near the Robert Kennedy Memorial. He said the Parks Department's goals are to keep maintain the park's historic nature and reduce maintenance difficulties.

Mr. Antonelli said the Conservation Commission voted on April 30, 2012 to issue an Order of Conditions for proposed pond work. The work to be done will address runoff and the migration of material into the pond by installing a new pre-cast stone retaining wall. Other park work include: handicap accessibility improvements, concrete padding under picnic benches, new benches similar to existing (black, not red), additional period-style LED lighting, limestone-colored chip seal surfacing in/around the playground and chip seal concrete walkways. He added that the playground previously had porous surfacing that was not reinstalled and that porous concrete would address runoff issues created by the impervious stone dust walkways.

Commissioner Schneider suggested that Mr. Antonelli incorporate park improvements into the original park designs by Olmsted.

Commissioners Schneider and Crowley suggested that the use of pre-cast stone retaining walls be limited and as much of the original stones are retained as it is a historic feature of the park.

Mr. Antonelli stated that the pond's stone retaining wall will be replaced with matching pre-cast stone to prevent the pond edge from falling in. He explained that the Parks Department considered keeping original stones as an option but found that was too costly in terms of available time and cost – especially since there is a deadline to use the \$800,000 federal grant.

Commissioner Schneider left the meeting.

Mr. Fontane clarified that the Commission has an advisory role in the park improvement plan. He stated that the Commission's suggestions can be in the form of verbal or written feedback for the Parks Department.

Deborah Packard, Executive Director of Preservation Worcester, stated she had met with Mr. Antonelli on several occasions to address historical preservation concerns. She said that she believed the planned use of rubberized surface and pre-cast stone retaining wall are inappropriate materials for Elm Park. She also stressed the importance to reconstruct the pavilion to reflect the previous wood structure.

Mr. Antonelli said the playground previously had porous surfacing and that the Parks Department would reinstall what was previously there.

Mr. Fontane said the Commission's advisory review is not required by the State for §106 review unless federal funding is involved. He clarified that there has not yet been an official request for Commission review.

Chair Constantine stated that since the Commission's role is to provide advisory review and not enough information is provided, the Commission should revisit the project at a future date in order to take a vote.

The Commission took no action on the item.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT:

The Commission voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 PM.