



The City of **WORCESTER**

Historical
Commission

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

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

Thursday, September 29, 2022

61 Sever Street, Room 210

with remote participation options available via Webex online at
<https://cow.webex.com/meet/historicalncommissionwebex> and
call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1608081191).

Commissioners Present: Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice-Chair
Steven Taylor, Clerk
Erika Helnarski
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

Commissioners Absent: Devon Kurtz
Tomi Stefani

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

Call Commission to Order – 6:30 PM

Other Business

A. Public hearing regarding the proposed creation of a new local historic district to be known as the “Elm Park Neighborhood Local Historic District.”

Chair Long stated that this meeting is solely to take public comment regarding the new local historic District for the Elm Park Neighborhood Local Historic District and no vote on the item will take place.

Ms. Johnstone reviewed the following items with participants:

- What is a Local Historic District?
- Why are Local Historic Districts important?
- What do Local Historic Districts do and not do?
- What’s proposed for the Elm Park Neighborhood and why?
- What do property owners need to do if the Local Historic District is established?
- Permitting process

September 29, 2022

Public Comment

Sharon Norton, stated that she has a slate roof and asked with this new Historic District would she would need to come before Commission. Ms. Johnstone stated that if it is “like for like” material the home owner could do a Certificate of Non-Applicability which is a much shorter process.

Ms. Norton stated that she does like the idea of a Local Historic District for the area.

Terry Field of Somerset Street asked if someone is doing work to a home how will it be enforced if they don’t come before the Commission. Ms. Johnstone stated that if the home is in a Local Historic District the Commission can require that homeowner correct the illegal work as it is much higher level of oversight if home in a Historic District.

Ms. Johnstone stated that if people see anything she would encourage them to call her office and she can follow up.

Cheryl LaFourtune asked how this effect Solar Panel installation. Ms. Johnstone stated that there is a section in the law that that requires Historical Commission to consider solar panel installation and stated that the panels should be in the portion of the house that is not visible from house.

Ms. LaFourtune asked about fees to apply to the Historical Commission. Ms. Johnstone stated currently there are no fees but there may be fees in the future.

Ms. LaFourtune asked if houses that currently in area would have to correct historical violations they did in the past once they become part of the District. Ms. Johnstone stated no that the law cannot authorize the Commission to make corrections to homes that did work prior to the creation of the Historic District.

Ms. LaFourtune asked about trees in a Historic District that are removed and not replaced. Ms. Smith stated that is reviewed by the Worcester Parks Department. Ms. Johnstone stated that the Historical Commission had no purview of vegetation.

Ms. LaFourtune stated that she believes creating a Historic District will create higher taxes for the area and doesn’t see much advantage to creating one.

Anna Santos Restivo stated that her family lives on Fruit Street and stated that she thinks that this long overdue and asked about adding additional homes to the District. Ms. Johnstone stated that the District had to stop somewhere and reviewed the boundaries proposed for the District.

Lara (didn’t say last name), a WebEx participant, asked Ms. Johnstone to review the boundaries again and asked if any funding would be available in future for homeowners to help with historical property repairs.

Ms. Smith stated there are some programs from Preservation Worcester and the sometimes the City Housing Program may have some grant funding available but depends on type of work and there are income requirements and there is some information on the City’s housing development web site regarding that.

Jonathan Ostrow, stated that he thinks is a great proposal and wish there were more historical districts being proposed.

Deborah Packard, Preservation Worcester, stated that they are in support of the new district and stated that there should be more districts in the city including single building historic districts.

Ms. Packard stated that Preservation Worcester has a revolving loan fund to help with historical property repairs and stated that in this November there will be a Community Preservation Act initiative that voters can vote on and if it passes funding would be available to help with historic properties.

Chair Long thanked everyone for coming and stated that the Commission will review all the comments made.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion made and duly seconded the Commission voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.