



**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
Thursday, February 1, 2024**

Commissioners Present: Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice-Chair
Erika Helnarski
Donald Northway
Devon Kurtz
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

Commissioners Absent: Steven Taylor

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

Call Commission to Order – 5:30 PM

Approval of Minutes - NONE

Old Business

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

1. 42 Somerset Street (02-041-00075) – COA-23-25

Petition Purpose: Replace Roof (Retroactive).

Richard & Dana Luzzo, owners, were present in person before the commission.

Chair Long stated that the owners have submitted additional information including estimates, a request for financial hardship, and a letter from one of the students living in the property. The problem the commission has is that the slate roof was removed and replaced with asphalt shingle without the proper permits.

Mr. Luzzo responded in the affirmative and that they learned at the commission’s last meeting that as of November, the permit was not in place. They were told it was in place by the contractor who wanted to do the job very quickly. Mr. Luzzo asked to see the contractor’s license as well as the building permit and was shown a piece of paper, but does not recall exactly what it was, the contractor told him it was the building permit and the contractor’s insurance. Mr. Luzzo stated that he took the contractor’s word for what the documents were. The job was done on a Thursday and the following week, the Luzzos were contacted and informed that the building permit was only an application and was not approved. The contractor did the job because of the stretch of weather that was happening and problems with leaking of the roof.

Chair Long asked Mr. Luzzo if he had tried to repair the slate roof that was on the house previously.

Mr. Luzzo answered yes and that he and his wife have owned the house since the late 1990s. They have done several repairs to the roof. When they purchased the home, it was in very poor condition and immediately did some repairs to the slate. Along the line, they did two other repairs. Recently, there was leaking that the students

complained about, and patching was attempted as well as sealing the chimney which was a recommendation from a roofer friend. Mr. Luzzo went up on the roof himself to inspect on various occasions over the last year and nothing improved the leaking situation. The roof was patched in several instances over the years as pictures show. There was a mismatch of shingles as well as cracked and broken shingles and missing slates.

Chair Long said that in order to have the work done, there must have been a conversation about what materials were going to be put on the roof and chose the asphalt shingle. Was there a consideration to replace with a slate roof or simulated slate roof.

Mr. Luzzo said that really didn't come into play. They redid a roof in the same neighborhood several years ago and didn't realize there would be any difficulty with slate to asphalt. Many quotes were received and all were quoted for asphalt roofs. It's only since having these conversations that three slate estimates have been sought. The cost was astronomical – anywhere from \$103,000 to \$150,000. The composite slate quotes were 20% less than the slate quotes. The material cost of the composite is less, but the labor cost the same as real slate.

Chair Long confirmed the cost of the asphalt shingle roof that was applied was about \$25,000.

Mr. Luzzo said no, the cost was \$13,000 for the house and the garage was additional. There were other estimates for \$18,000 and \$25,6000. The garage on the property was asphalt always as well as the two porches that were a part of the three-family structure when they purchased the house in the 1990s.

Chair Long noted the garage on the property and the two porches on the main house had already been converted to asphalt roof.

Mr. Luzzo confirmed that is true since they bought the house in the 1990s it had been that way.

Chair Long asked that Mr. Luzzo stated he has another property in this same neighborhood that an asphalt roof was just put on.

Mr. Luzzo responded yes. In speaking with Ms. Johnstone about the building permits, On Top Roofing did pull the proper permit and it did pass through without any problem. When he asked what the difference was, it was because the roof replacement was asphalt to asphalt not slate to asphalt was the reason why.

Ms. Johnstone requested that before the commission take a vote, if the commission could make their intentions clear to see if there is any additional information that can be provided by the Luzzos in your decision-making process. The roof has already been replaced so this issue is not time sensitive. Since this property is in a local historic district, the only action available is for a new roof to be installed.

Chair Long said there are a couple of different issues to discuss within the commission. One is whether the current roof is appropriate for the Elm Park Local Historic District. Unfortunately, the commission cannot inspect the old roof because it was replaced without a permit, and it is retroactive. There are going to be a number of votes if the homeowners want the commission to take the votes tonight. It is whether the current asphalt is appropriate for the historic district, a retroactive building demolition delay waiver, an application of financial hardship – which the commission may want to ask some questions. It looks like the lowest quote for simulated slate was \$89,000, so the difference in cost is about \$75,000 between simulated slate and the asphalt that was used. The commission may not have the information to support the financial hardship from the family. Of course, the commission has voted on financial hardship in the past. There have been petitioners before the commission who had purchased historic homes because of a good price, used every penny to buy the home, and then found out the home was in need of repairs and vinyl siding, or asphalt roofing were not permitted and clearly did not have the financial means.

The petitioner would have to sell the house because they just didn't have the finances to make the repairs. Chair Long felt that the Luzzos may not have provided enough information for the commission to determine whether \$75,000 would be a financial hardship. The Luzzos may want to consider coming back with more information in the future. As for taking the vote for the certificate of appropriateness, do any of the commissioners have additional comments about whether the slate to asphalt is appropriate for the Elm Park Local Historic District. Chair Long stated that her feeling is that it was not appropriate and discussion on this property should have happened before the roof was replaced.

Commissioner Northway stated that he agreed with Chair Long. The fact that the garage and porches were not slate enters into it as well.

Chair Long agreed and stated that was good information the Luzzos brought to the commission tonight.

Chair Theerman did not believe that the commission knew about the porches and garage before tonight and asked the Luzzos approximately what percentage of the roof they would say was asphalt.

Mr. Luzzo referenced Exhibit B (slides shown at the meeting) to speak about the porch on the right hand side of the house over the enclosed porch, the awning over the side access stairs and the garage that is not in the photo were asphalt.

Commissioner Andre asked if the garage was original to the building of the home.

Mr. Luzzo answered as far as he was aware. The house was purchased with the garage with the asphalt roof. In speaking with the Barnard Roofing Company, they were sent the same photo being used tonight so they could look at the slate for reference and they explained it was a monson slate from a quarry that is no longer in operation, it would be very difficult to find and that's why when the roof was patched in the past, many different colors were used. The closest that is in use today would be a black non-fade slate that comes from New York. It would be somewhat similar to the architectural asphalt shingles that were chosen in a grey slate color on the roof currently.

Chair Long asked if the roof on the garage was replaced as well.

Mr. Luzzo answered that the garage roof was also replaced.

Chair Long clarified that the entire house was re-roofed and now everything is consistent.

Mr. Luzzo said everything is consistent, yes.

Commissioner Helnarski said that in a perfect world, it would have come before the commission and the discussion would have taken place at that time about the synthetic slate which ultimately the commission would have loved. The thing that sits not well is that as a consumer, you find a company and you are paying them to do the job and you are duped pretty much thinking that the permit is there and it's not. Once the job is done, it's the homeowners that are having to clean up the mess. That's the most bothersome part of this whole situation. With owning other properties, she feels like the Luzzos would have taken the proper steps and proper discussion based on what the commission would have liked to have seen. It is an eclectic neighborhood. There are shingled roofs everywhere, ultimately, it's not what the commission would want, but it's not the Luzzos fault. Commissioner Helnarski summed that is the part that is pulling her decision more so than the actual aesthetic of the building because it is an unfortunate story for the family as well as the house. Everything is consistent now, which is good. Even a \$75,000 difference, not being aware of the family's financial situation, but that is a lot of money that could go to more

upkeep of the house to keep the house as a whole in good standing as opposed to just the roof. Although it was slate, it was a very patchy mismatched slate.

Commissioner Theerman said in all fairness that historic district is very new, and she thinks the commission anticipated that these problems would arise at the beginning. Hopefully, as time goes by, there will be less and less of it as people become more aware. The Luzzos were asked if they attended any of the formative meetings for the historic district.

Mr. Luzzo stated that he was aware of the historic designation, but this roof was replaced in September before the vote was taken on the district.

Ms. Johnstone added that the reason why the Luzzos have come before the commission is because of the historic district designation and all exterior work will be reviewed. Before, when the house was in MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) database which is a list of properties that have been inventoried for one reason or another that are important for one reason or another. Those properties are subject to Building Demolition Delay and require administrative approval. If like materials are replaced in-kind the commission is not necessary. This is a very recent change with the districting, and now you are aware.

Chair Long said she feels she has an idea where the votes are going, but wanted to make sure this vote is not precedent setting for the properties in that local historic district.

Ms. Johnstone stated that the vote tonight would not be precedent setting. There will be a similar situation coming before the commission at the next meeting. There will be a couple in the beginning that the commission will have to parse out what is really detrimental to the district. One thing to think about is if the house was in MACRIS but not in a local historic district, the commission would be having the same conversations about the mismatch of the slates. It makes it a little more difficult, but the discussion would be the same.

Commissioner Kurtz felt he is more in line with Commissioner Helnarski on the issues with an approval but with discretion.

Public Comment – None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and one (1) opposed with Commissioner Long being the opposing vote for a certificate of appropriateness in the Elm Park Local Historic District.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and one (1) opposed with Commissioner Long being the opposing vote for a retroactive building demolition delay waiver.

New Business

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 185 Salisbury Street (20-014-00010) – COA-24-2

Petition purpose: Repair/Replace deteriorated windows and windowsills, Replace/correct failing brick masonry and stone.

Kristen Balash, Vice President for Finance and Administration for the American Antiquarian Society, *petitioner*, joined by President Scott Casper, Andrew Cariglia, head of buildings and grounds and lead project manager on this project and has been with the society for over two decades, and Neil Rouleaux, Chief Operating Officer at Building Restoration Services (BRS) were present in person before the commission. BRS has provided all the surveys, specs and plans in the exhibits and would be the company taking on this project and they have long experience with historic properties.

Chair Long stated that the commission has received lots of letters of support.

Ms. Balash gave a brief overview of the project which is looking to restore the exterior of the building at 185 Salisbury Street as well as the windows. Everything ranges in age, but some pieces are dated as far back as 1909. As noted in the application, and in the photo exhibits, it was found that the masonry and mortar in the oldest parts of the building is deteriorating, cracking, crumbling, allowing the elements to come in putting the historic collections at risk. The Antiquarian Society collects early American printed documents. Upon further inspection, it was found that areas of marble in the front of the building are shifting because they were not anchored appropriately 'way back in the day". It is a potential safety hazard for the public and the staff if not addressed soon. As presented in Exhibit B (slides shown in meeting) there are large gaps in between bricks and marble pieces and the bulk of the project is related to the exterior masonry. The second piece of the project is to repair and restore pieces of the windows. The petitioner has supplied a detailed window survey. What was found is that many of the windows, particularly in the 1909 portion, are rotting or are having other issue with condensation, water and mold. The historic materials have humidity and temperature requirements that are threatened by these conditions. In the application, they intend to repair and restore the windows where that can be done and in cases where repairs have been done numerous times over the last hundred or so years and are no longer effective, the petitioner is asking to do some replacement with historic wooden replicas from JB Sash as outlined in Exhibit B (slides shown at meeting). As of now, there are storm windows in place in front of many of the windows, which has obscured the view of the windows. Doing this work would allow removal of the storm windows and recapture the original look of the building while preserving the collections at the same time. This project has been awarded grants from the National Park Service under the Save America's Treasures program as well as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mass Cultural Facilities Fund. They went through a section 106 review process by National Park Service and have concluded that this project has no adverse effect on the historic resource and the state historic preservation office has a concurrent opinion. Decisions are included in Exhibits. As a last reference, there is a buildings and grounds committee that serves the society that has many Worcester community members and several of the letters of support are from them. Debra Packard is one such member of the committee from Preservation Worcester.

Chair Long stated that the commission does not want any of the documents damaged either. This looks like a great project. The quality of the window that was chosen is top notch.

Commissioner Helnarski said the purpose of the organization is for preservation so there is no worry that you will make any bad choices when it comes to preserving the building and the contents inside.

Chair Long added that it is nice the storms will no longer be there – it will be even more attractive. The commission has letters of support from Jillian Davis Wade - President of Davis Publishing, John Stowe – Chairman of Lutko, James Donnolly Jr. – Merrick O'Connell, the board of the Antiquarian Society, as well as Preservation Worcester.

Public Comment – None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed approved certificate of appropriateness granted.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed approved a building demolition delay waiver.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & BUILDING DEMOLITION DELAY WAIVER

3. 34 Irving Street (03-017-00007) – (COA-24-1)

Petition purpose: Replace asbestos siding with vinyl siding.

Derrick St. George, owner, was in person before the commission. Explained that when the property was purchased the exterior of the building had been neglected for years as well as some of the interior. The proposal is for new siding that will keep with the current color scheme. The proposal is for a wedge wood blue with white accents. All the corbels will remain and be cleaned up and paint them. They want to preserve the visual integrity of the property in keeping it with the same color scheme but revitalize and bring it back to life. They feel it will not only help the property but lend value to the historic district.

Chair Long said the assumption is that you are covering over rather than removing the asbestos.

Mr. St. George stated that the plan was to encapsulate the current siding as well as wrap the fascia – not the corbels but the fascia – with a white aluminum.

Chair Long stated it would be quite expensive to remove the asbestos.

Mr. St. George said it is a dangerous process. He has a friend that works for an asbestos removal company in western Massachusetts and although they take all the proper precautions, when it is an exterior environment, there is no real way to insure when you rip off the asbestos that the harmful ingredients are not making their way around the property.

Chair Long asked if Mr. St. George looked into covering the house with clapboard or any other material other than just vinyl.

Mr. St. George said the owners discussed with the contractor about the cost difference between the two and looking at that area of the neighborhood, the two abutting properties are sided with vinyl. It was the thought process that going with a wedge wood blue and having other properties within the direct area having vinyl siding that would help bring continuity to that area.

Chair Long said this is the very outskirts of Crown Hill Historic District, it's not in the center of it, that is true.

Commissioner Theerman asked what the roof material was realizing the petitioner is not asking for the roof.

Mr. St. George said that they are not doing anything to the roof and hoping they will not have to for the next twenty years. There are asphalt shingles and a flat roof and there are no plans to touch any of that unless there is a leak.

Commissioner Theerman clarified that there is no slate on the roof.

Mr. St. George is not aware of any slate on the roof.

Commissioner Andre asked if the petitioner knows the dated year of the siding, if the asbestos was tested, or if the petitioner is assuming the siding is currently asbestos.

Mr. St. George said that during the inspection of the house it was sited that it is asbestos siding. There were a couple of bad storms a few months ago, referring to exhibit B (slides shown at meeting), above the deck pieces dislodged from the house. It was verified by the inspector that it was asbestos siding.

Public comment

None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

Ms. Johnstone clarified for the commission that the wrapping of the fascia was not included in this application so if the petitioner would like to move forward with that piece of work, they will have to submit an addition application and come before the commission again.

Commissioner Andre asked if the petitioner looked into hardy board siding. They make an exact replica of the asbestos siding now – GAF makes a version – so the house will look more similar to what it looks like now as opposed to vinyl siding.

Mr. St. George deferred to Nate, the contractor for the project on the cost difference.

Nate stated that they did talk about that. The cost is about double the price, which wasn't in the budget.

Ms. Johnstone offered that if the commission was interested in seeing this project as a financial hardship, commissioners may ask for more information depending on the timeline of the project. It will be difficult to vote on a hardship if there is no documentation to evaluate the hardship.

Mr. St. George stated that since some of the siding was already missing, and the weather being what it is, they were hoping to be able to proceed for their tenants and expeditiously as possible. The area around the door is actually taped up currently because a tenant was getting water in their unit. Underneath and around the current fascia there are holes which is adding to the rot. This project is about revitalizing the building so that it lends itself to the community and the tenants best interests in mind as well because the exterior of the building has been falling apart for quite some time. It is best to encapsulate it to prevent further problems.

Chair Long asked if water was currently getting into the house.

Mr. St. George said that was patched. The pictures shown at the meeting do not to the house justice as the missing and broken pieces are not visible and damage is trying to be mitigated ongoing.

Chair Long asked if Mr. St. George would like the commission to discuss which way the vote is leaning or if commissioners would like more information. If the approval is based on the cost, the estimates were not provided so that vote is unable to happen tonight. The vote that would happen tonight is for the appropriateness of the vinyl siding in the crown hill local historic district.

Commissioner Theerman asked if where the siding came off, if Mr. St. George is able to tell that the asbestos siding was the original siding or was there something else prior to that.

Mr. St. George said that nothing was seen under the asbestos siding when it was patched. In the damaged locations, wooden shakes or other substances are not present.

Ms. Johnstone said the asbestos would not be original. Most likely what happened was that the clap that was underneath was removed before the asbestos clap was installed. Asbestos like that was not made in the mid to late 19th century.

Commissioner Helnarski asked if hardy board could go over the asbestos or if the asbestos would need to be removed first. This effects the decision because having to remediate the asbestos rather than encapsulate is a whole other ballgame.

Ms. Johnstone said any siding can be installed over it, it just needs insulation. It would be more difficult than vinyl.

Commissioner Helnarski continued that if this house changes hands and someone wants to remove the siding and replace with hardy board, they would still have that option. This house is on the outskirts of the district, and which is a very eclectic district. With this being asbestos, it is concerning.

Commission Northway, who lives in the neighborhood, said that hearing vinyl is not desired. The house is still in the historic neighborhood, even on the outskirts. As for the date of the home, it's not like it is barely historic, anything but vinyl would be preferred. The neighborhood meets at least monthly and the minutes from tonight will be discussed.

Mr. St. George said they tried to look at the neighborhood as a whole and there is a lot of vinyl siding, but it is not just the comparison. With three properties in a row having siding, that would create continuity and the new siding would brighten the edge of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Northway said he heard Mr. St. George's thoughts and does feel some of the neighbors would think the house will stick out if it's not vinyl.

Commissioner Helnarski confirmed it would stick out in a good way.

Commissioner Northway answered yes, sticking out in a good way.

Chair Long asked Mr. St. George if he would like to provide estimates for different sidings and come back for the certificate of financial hardship petition versus having the commission take the vote tonight.

Ms. Johnstone clarified that the commission can do both. Even if the certificate of appropriateness is denied, Mr. St. George can return for the hardship petition.

Commissioner Helnarski clarified that the commission would be looking for siding estimates that mimic the look of what the siding is now.

Commissioner Andre agreed. She stated that GAF makes a product and there are other vendors as well that matches almost exactly to asbestos siding.

Commissioner Kurtz said that he doesn't believe it needs to look like the asbestos siding, because originally the house would have been a clapboard siding. If anything, the vinyl would be closer to looking like the clapboard than anything else.

Commissioner Helnarski said that the commission should take the vote and then ask for more information.

Nate added that the house would look a lot different with the hearty board because all the windows would need accent pieces. The windows would have a lot of white around them. Whereas the vinyl siding wouldn't be as dramatic a difference.

Ms. Johnstone clarified that is because when you add layers to the exterior of the house, the windows will appear sunken into the house.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted three (3) in favor (Commissioners Kurtz, Helnarski & Long) and three (3) opposed (Commissioners Northway, Andre & Theerman) the certificate of appropriateness for the proposed siding is appropriate for the crown hill local historic district is denied as there is not a majority vote.

The commission asked for Mr. St. George to submit a couple of different cost estimates for different sidings so the commission can look at a possible financial hardship approval of the vinyl versus something else.

Commissioners Kurtz and Helnarski asked for a samples of what the siding would look like as well.

Mr. St. George asked if samples for the windows should be provided as well.

Commissioner Helnarski confirmed samples for the project as a whole should be submitted.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to continue the Building Demolition Delay Waiver vote to include a Certificate of Hardship until the February 15, 2024 meeting with a Constructive Grant Deadline of March 1, 2024.

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

4. 53 Houghton Street (18-003-00192) – BDDW-24-1

Petition purpose: Replace 2nd and 3rd floor windows, remove sliding doors and replace with windows, foundation repair, install dryer vent.

Shawn Durgin, City of Worcester, o/b/o Penelope Aponte, petitioner, stated that the windows on the house will be redone. Currently, no work is going to be done on the first floor because those windows are all currently vinyl replacements. The second and third floors are a mix between vinyl and wood. The proposed project will use an Anderson 400 window. It is a vinyl exterior, six over 1, divided simulated light, wood interior trying to keep it consistent with the house. There will also be a white vent cap on the exterior of the house added a vent for the dryer on the third floor.

Chair Long said that all the windows will be consistent now across all three floors.

Mr. Durgin stated they will all be vinyl now. The upper floors will be six over ones and the first floor is just one over one. There are no grids on the first floor currently.

Chair Long asked if there was a reason that all three floors were not going to match.

Mr. Durgin stated he was amenable to that, but the sox over ones are fairly standard for this style of house. If the windows are changed, they should be changed to the appropriate ones now. When they do the first floor eventually, the windows can match what is being done for this project. The first floor would have been done as well, but they did not qualify as part of this project. There are also three windows in the back. In this style house, they have the barn doors on the porches. Two work well, one needs a little bit of repair, but the owner expressed that they wanted to space enclosed to keep weather out and would like them replaced with a vinyl sliding window. There is no replacement/upgrade for the barn doors, so the windows will match. These back windows would only be visible from the back corner of the property.

Commissioner Theerman asked that Mr. Durgin stated the replacements were sliding windows.

Mr. Durgin said yes, they will be big sliding windows. They have been used at other properties but unsure if they have been used in that neighborhood.

Chair Long said that this is the rear of the house and only one of the three want to change it.

Mr. Durgin said it is in the rear and can be seen a little bit if you are going down the side street. Only one of the three actually work. All three will match with the vinyl new sliding windows.

Ms. Johnstone added that the windows are what was approved for this house previously in June 2023, this vote tonight would essentially be granting an extension as that decision is set to expire in June 2024. Ms. Johnstone showed a photo of the rear of the house on the screen so the commissioners could see the barn doors.

Commissioner Helnarski asked for a photo on the barn doors. That is the best part of three deckers and it's sad that they are disappearing.

Commissioner Andre asked if the stairwell windows were stained glass.

Mr. Durgin stated those are not being changed. Fixed windows are not being touched.

Commissioner Kurtz asked if the entire area of the barn door would then be changed to glass.

Mr. Durgin answered that it will either be a double slider where both sides can slide or it will be three panes and the middle pane will be fixed. If the windows are closed, it will be more light than the current barn door.

Chair Long said it looks like this group of homes still have the original barn doors. It doesn't look like they have been replaced.

Commissioner Helnarski asked if the barn doors have windows in them like the one on the corner of the picture does

Mr. Durgin said that they are identical to the one on the corner.

Ms. Johnstone zoomed in on the houses to inspect the backs of the houses.

Public comment
None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed for the building demolition delay waiver for the window replacement, dryer vent installation and foundation work.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted two (2) in favor (Commissioners Kurtz, Northway) and four (4) opposed (Commissioners Andre, Helnarski, Theerman, & Long) for the building demolition delay waiver for the replacement of the barn doors on the rear porches.

5. 46 Millbury Street (05-015-00001) – BDDW-24-2

Petition purpose: Remove garage door and block in with windowed wood frame wall, Undertake renovations on façade

Katherine Tsigas, President of Café Neo, Inc, owner of Café Neo and petitioner, are before the commission for permission to renovate the façade on the Harding Street side of the building. Photos were shown of before and as work commenced on the façade. The pervious façade was not appropriate for a restaurant. Owners were unaware they needed a building demolition delay waiver. It was found to be the case when the contractor tried to obtain a permit. Ms. Tsigas then emailed the landlord/owner of the building and found out that three years previous, there was a petition for the Millbury Street side of the building, but that had expired. All work has been stopped.

Chair Long asked why the work was started without a permit.

Ms. Tsigas stated that they didn't know they needed a permit.

Chair Long clarified not just for the Historical Commission, but for the work in general.

Mr. Tsigas stated they hired G&L Construction and they went to the building department and found out the building needed a building demolition delay waiver, but Mr. Tsigas told them to finish the job because the wall had been removed.

Chair Long confirmed the work had started before a permit had been secured. The original façade does nothing for Café Neo.

Ms. Tsigas said wait until it's done – it's going to be beautiful. The historic metal cornice with the brick surround has not been touched – our design is to integrate them. It will enhance the whole neighborhood.

Commissioner Northway asked when the garage door was installed.

Ms. Tsigas said she has no idea.

Mr. Tsigas believes it was a couple of years ago and it was not the right size for the space needed.

Ms. Johnstone added that the commissioner can see in the google street view of the property and look at the history (shown at the meeting), it shows when it was changed. The garage opening was probably original and a new door was installed. In 2007 is the original wooded garage door and at some point prior to 2017, the garage door was changed.

Ms. Tsigas explained that where the garage door was and the rest of the façade, they are installing two doors and four windows.

Commissioner Krutz said that the removal of a garage door isn't going to be a detriment to the neighborhood.

Public comment
None

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed for a building demolition delay waiver for the proposed work on the façade of the building.

Communications

None

Other Business

A. 36 Butler Street LHD Preliminary Study Report.

Two weeks was not enough time to complete this study. At this point all of the research is completed with three hundred of so documents related to the building. What has been found so far is that the house was constructed in 1858 for Ransom C Taylor from the original deed. The national register nomination and contemporary discussions about this building refer to it as Larchmont, however, it is not believed to be named Larchmont. There are issues of the "Worcester Spy" where Ransom C Taylor's daughter in law said that she was having card parties at Larchmont, but it is believed that she invented the name so that the house had a name. Before her, there were no references to Larchmont as the name of the house.

Commissioner Helnarski said she was driving home this weekend through New York and saw highway signs for Larchmont and wondered if there was any affiliation.

Ms. Johnstone said there were articles where Mrs. R F Taylor (Ransom C Taylor's daughter in law) had a lot of visitors from New York – so maybe. The report will not refer to the house as Larchmont as there are no historic references that could be found. It will be called the Ransom C Taylor Estate for naming purposes. Does the commission have an opinion.

Commissioner Helnarski said she liked it, but Preservation Worcester references Larchmont in tours. There are many things in the past that weren't called those names in the past, they were given those names in the future. It should be his name, but perhaps a reference as that is what people are calling it now.

Ms. Johnstone said there would be a section in the report that addresses the naming conventions. In speaking with residents of the neighborhood, they have also never called it Larchmont.

Commissioner Helnarski added maybe not putting all the focus on the house being called Larchmont, but maybe a notable mention.

Commissioner Northway noted that on the inventory form, it did reference Larchmont

Ms. Johnstone said yes, but it didn't have any sources. The only source was an 1866 photograph from the family, but it is unclear if it said Larchmont on the photo and there was no copy of the photo to be seen. The house was mentioned in a "Biographies of Worcester Residents" under Ransom C Taylor but did not say Larchmont anywhere. The building is important whether it is called Larchmont or not.

Commissioner Kurtz said the name made the daughter in law happy. His house's name is Windy Corner.

Commissioner Helnarski agreed that it must have been for sentimental purposes. Maybe this house mimics or replicates a house in Larchmont, New York.

Commissioner Kurtz said she could have read it in a book somewhere. It could have nothing to do with anything at all.

Ms. Johnstone said that attention will be called to it in the study, but she doesn't think the house can bear the name, unfortunately. Ransom C Taylor purchased the land in 1857, the house was built in 1857 or 1858, he lived there until 1883, then he moved to 770 Main Street. His two sons moved in after Ransom moved out and subsequently got married and raised their families and retained ownership of the house until 1915 when the estate was sold to a Swedish undertaker. That undertaker used a storefront at 11-13 Green Street as his business and living at 36 Butler Street. Over time, all operations moved to Butler Street and remained in the same family until 2003. For such an old house, it has a very short history. The history has been fascinating. The Swedish assimilation seems to have happened extremely fast compared to other ethnic groups in Worcester. They arrived in the mid to late 19th century and by 1940/1950 there were articles that the Swedish accent was fading in Quinsigamond Village. The study will be presented, and the report will be ready by the meeting on February 15, 2024. There are representatives for the new buyer online if any of the commissioners have any questions for them. They would like to be here at the next meeting as they have some development concerns.

Chair Long asked if the house at 770 Main Street is still there.

Ms. Johnstone said it sure is. The Levi Dowling House.

Chair Long asked where that house is located about on Main Street.

B. Letter of Support for Planning & Survey Grant

The local historic district design guidelines are being developed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant and have applied for additional historic inventory to be undertaken on the East side of the city in historically red lined areas. There was a submission for a very similar project with the National Parks Service Underrepresented Communities Grant, but if that is not successful, the work that was planned will still be done with this additional grant submission. If the National Park Services Grant is successful, the Massachusetts Historical Commission Grant will shift focus to the area around Crystal Park, which was not historically red lined, but it is in level 1, 2, or 3 environmental justice blocks which means it has as a population make up a low English speaking/English as a second language population, a high concentration of underrepresented communities, and low income. Historically, there has not been a lot of survey that has been done in that area and those stories need to be told. This item is to ask the commission to vote for a letter of support so this work can be done.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed to write a letter of support for the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted five (5) to zero (0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.