

# WORCESTER HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

August 4, 2005

Worcester Historical Museum

30 Elm Street, Worcester

## MINUTES

**Members Present:** Michael Theerman

Tom Johnson

Peter Schneider

Jeanice Sherman

Sally Jablonski

Tom Constantine

**Staff Present:** Edgar Luna, Planning Division

### Regular Meeting (4:15 PM)

- 1) **Call to Order:** Michael Theerman called the meeting to order at 4:15 pm.
- 2) **Approval of the minutes:** Upon a motion by Tom Johnson and seconded by Jeanice Sherman, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of July 7, 2005.

### Continuations:

- 3) **Demolition Delay Hearing, 280 Highland Street:** Michael Theerman stepped down as chairman, and requested Tom Johnson to assume the chairmanship. Atty. John Shea requested clarification regarding Mr. Theerman's decision not to chair the meeting. Mr. Theerman explained that he is a member of the Hammond Heights Neighborhood, an organization that does not support any other uses for this neighborhood, except single housing residential uses. He stated that his decision to step down was taken in order to avoid the perception of being biased against this project. Mr. Shea responded that this demolition delay hearing had nothing to do with a different use, since the building will continue to be occupied as a residence. Afterward, Sally Jablonski also recused herself from the meeting, citing conflict of interest, as she is a client of Atty. John Shea. Mr. Shea proceeded to make a presentation regarding this project and indicated that the demolition of the existing garage was necessary in order to build a handicapped ramp in the back of the building. Mr. Shea stated that this location was the preferred choice due to its minimal impact on the integrity of this historic structure, and followed these statements by submitting plans showing the

handicapped ramp in detail. Mr. Shea indicated that the current garage could not be repaired because the decorative cement blocks used are no longer available. Atty. Kathleen Windsor spoke in opposition of this project, and indicated that the neighbors would prefer to see this historic structure repaired instead of being demolished. She stated that had located a company in Washington State that continues to produce this type of decorative blocks at a cost of approximately \$14.00-\$17.00 each. Ms. Windsor also highlighted the historic importance of this garage by indicating that 22 homes in this neighborhood have similar garages. Mr. Shea responded to these statements by indicating that the garage needed to be demolished due to safety reasons. He stated that the garage was in an advanced state of deterioration not only because of the damaged blacks but also because the roof supports were rotten and had partially collapsed, the floor was damaged beyond any possibility of repair, and the interior side of the blocks at floor level were beginning to crumble. Chris Comeaux spoke in opposition to this project and requested that the petitioner consider replacing the cement blocks with like-materials. Johanna Evans also spoke in opposition to the project and stated that this garage added an important characteristic to the neighborhood. Following these comments, Jeanice Sherman requested Atty. Shea to submit a cost estimate to repair the garage in order to consider possible hardship for the petitioner, and he agreed to do so. Tom Johnson requested Atty. Windsor to provide additional information regarding the company in Washington State that still produces decorative cement block similar to the ones found in the garage in question, and Ms. Windsor agreed to do so. Tom Johnson asked Mr. Shea if the petitioner had ever considered building the handicapped ramp in anther location of the property, to which Mr. Shea responded that in fact the idea had been considered but asserted that this option was the most accessible for a handicapped person. Following these statements, Atty. Shea requested the Commission to continue the hearing to October 6, 2005 in order to allow both parties additional time to provide the information requested. Upon a motion by Jeanice Sherman and seconded by Peter Schneider, the Commission voted 4-0 to continue the meeting to October 6, 2005.

- 4) **Demolition Delay Hearing: 24 Brattle Street.** Petitioner Christine Profit made a presentation on the proposed project, and provided Commissioners with written information requested by the Commission at the previous meeting. The information provided included the following: (a) Project Description, (b) Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory Form Contact information with Phillip Bergen, c) Preservation Planner for the Mass. Historical Commission, and a conversation recap regarding affect of the project on NRHP and the MACRIS status. After a careful review of the information provided, Tom Johnson made the following motion: The Commission finds that the proposed demolition and replacement of the back ell, with similar structure in size, design and materials will not be detrimental to the historical heritage of the City of Worcester. Jeanice Sherman seconded the motion, and the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the petition

- 5) **Report on 7 Crown Street Residence:** Tom Johnson stated that he had spoken to the owner of the residence and had highlighted the historical importance of the building.
- 6) **Report on 13 Montvale St:** Edgar Luna stated that the owners of this residence had submitted information regarding their plans to paint the inside of this residence.
- 7) **Brochure of Local Historic Districts:** Jeanice Sherman indicated that she continues researching information regarding this project, and plans to update the Commission at a future meeting.
- 8) **Local Historic Districts Maps:** Edgar Luna provided Commissioners with maps showing the boundaries of both Local Historic Districts.
- 9) **Local Historic Districts Signs and Logo:** Edgar Luna indicated that a project was being considered to create signs for both Local Historic Districts. He indicated that he would provide additional information at a later date.
- 10) **Historical Commission Meeting location for 2006:** Edgar Luna proposed that most of the 2006 Historical Commission meetings take place at the headquarters of the Division of Planning and Regulatory Services. He indicated that several individuals had complained of holding meetings at different locations throughout the City. He requested that this subject be continued for discussion at future meeting.
- 11) **Historical Commission Members Information:** Edgar Luna presented Commissioners with an updated list of personal information, and requested them to review it for accuracy.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.