

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
July 13, 2006
418 MAIN STREET, SUITE 400**

Commission Members Present: Peter Schneider, Chair
Tom Johnson, Vice-Chair
Thomas Conroy, Clerk
Michael Theerman
Thomas Constantine
Jeanice Sherman

Staff Present: Joel Fontane, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Lara Bold, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Ruth Gentile, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Peter Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 4-0 (Chair Schneider and Commissioner Sherman abstained) to approve the amended June 22, 2006 minutes.

The Commission tabled discussion of the May 25, 2006 minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- 1. Member appointment:** Joel Fontane informed the Commission that a new alternate Historical Commission member would be appointed by the City Manager by July 18, 2006.

- 2. 17 Southgate Place / South Worcester Industrial Park Project:** Timothy McGourthy, Division Director of Economic Development, presented an update on the South Worcester Industrial Park project as it relates to the historically significant Armory Building. Mr. McGourthy indicated that the City is fully committed to hiring an engineer to research the possibility of taking down all or portions of the building and re-assembling and incorporating it into the modern light industrial park. He stated that the Armory Building's long, thin design makes it difficult for industrial re-use, but that it may have potential as office space. Mr. McGourthy noted that the proposed timeline for any demolition and/or removal and replacement of the Armory Building at 17 Southgate Street would take place in Spring/Summer 2007 as part of Phase II of the project. Mr.

McGourthy stated that current efforts are focused on the removal of the building at 25 Southgate Street as well as road improvements and marketing of structures that are ready for lease. He indicated that the roof on Section 1 of the Armory Building, identified by its stucco façade, constructed in 1854, has collapsed. In addition, he noted that Section 2 of the Armory Building, a stone structure, formerly known as the Jordan Marsh Woolen Mill, has also sustained damage on the east side of the roof, and there is concern that leakage in this building may affect the adjacent building. He also indicated that Section 3 of the Armory Building, a brick structure, formerly known as Worcester Woolen Mill, is currently being utilized. Chair Schneider inquired as to what the engineer's specific responsibilities will be. Mr. McGourthy stated that the main goal of the engineer would be to analyze which portions of the building can be maintained and incorporated as part of the industrial park. The secondary goal, he stated, would be to analyze the possibility of moving all or portions of the Armory Building off-site. Mr. McGourthy stated that he would like input from the Commission regarding which sections of the Armory Building should be prioritized to be saved. He stated that he believes that some parts of the building can and should be saved and incorporated into the South Worcester Industrial Park. Chair Schneider stated that the Commission could wait for a tour of the building until after the engineer's report. Commissioner Constantine inquired as to whether or not the City was planning on repairing the leaks in Section 2 of the Armory Building and warned the City against allowing the buildings to be "demolished by neglect." Mr. McGourthy responded that the City is working with the neighboring property that is possibly affected by leakage in Section 2 of the building (Jordan Marsh Woolen Mill). Chair Schneider suggested that the City consider protecting the building with a tarp or membrane to reduce exposure to rain and snow. Commissioner Johnson indicated that some Commission members had previously visited Section 2 of the Armory Building and the northern portion of Section 1 of the building and felt the buildings were surprisingly intact. He requested that Mr. McGourthy work with Richard Trifero, Acting Director of the Division of Code Enforcement, to provide a report to the Commission describing how the Armory Building can and will be stabilized.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING

3. **93 Grand Street (HC-06-12):** Samuel DeSimone, representative for Sion Mills Limited, owner of the property, presented the petition along with Alberto Cardenas, architect for the project, and Stephen Teasdale, executive director of the Main South Community Development Corporation, a partner in the project. Mr. DeSimone informed the Commission that the applicant seeks to convert the former Crompton and Knowles building into 109 loft-style residential units. As part of the rehabilitation of the structure, the applicant seeks to remove two accessory brick buildings that are currently attached to the garage, in order to provide a courtyard for the residences. Additionally, the applicant seeks to replace the windows of the proposed residential units. Chair Schneider inquired as to whether or not the bridge between 93 and 95 Grand Street would be removed. Mr. Cardenas stated that the structure at 95 Grand Street is in very poor condition and may need to be demolished along with the bridge. Mr. DeSimone stated that the applicant would have to appear before the Commission at a later date once plans are finalized for

the bridge. In addition, Mr. Cardenas also indicated that he is still finalizing plans for the garage windows. He stated that they are seeking to eliminate the two accessory structures to the garage to provide green space and access to the lower units, as well as to improve security for the area. He noted that the two accessory structures do not contribute to the architectural pattern or aesthetic of the building. Mr. Cardenas informed the Commission that, relative to the windows, he is proposing to maintain the masonry, granite sills, and brick arch while providing energy-efficient, aluminum windows whose simplicity will compliment the brickwork. Mr. Cardenas showed the Commission a sketch of a single-pane window. Chair Schneider stated that 91 Grand Street had been rehabilitated with multiple, divided window panes. Mr. Cardenas proposed another window option, which showed an additional divider. He indicated that while the developers were aware of the importance of maintaining certain historical elements of the building, they were not looking to install windows with multiple divided panes and would prefer, instead, to maintain a more expansive look that would allow for maximum light flow and ease of cleaning. In addition, Mr. Cardenas indicated that the windows would be operable. Chair Schneider stated that another recent project that had maintained multiple divided panes was the 89 Shrewsbury Street renovation. Mr. Cardenas stated that the project at 89 Shrewsbury Street was different because it was not for residential units. Commissioner Theerman suggested placing additional interior muntins on the windows. Stephen Teasdale stated that all the windows contain asbestos, which will be removed. Commissioner Sherman stated that she agreed with the architect that the proposed window will give the structure a fresh look. Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, ***the Commission found that the proposed demolition of the two accessory structures at 93 Grand Street would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester*** and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 6-0. Upon a motion by Commissioner Constantine and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, ***the Commission found that the proposed demolition replacement of the windows would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester*** and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 4-2 (Commissioner Conroy and Commissioner Sherman opposed). The approval carried the condition that the applicant must install the second window option presented and submitted on file with the City of Worcester that shows the divided pane. Commissioner Sherman stated, for the record, that she would have voted in the affirmative had the motion been made that approval was necessary to avoid undue economic hardship.

- 4. 215 Cambridge Street (HC-06-13):** Denis Leary, Executive Director of Massachusetts Veterans, Inc., presented the petition. He indicated that Massachusetts Veterans, Inc. is seeking to repair 215 Cambridge Street in order to use as transitional housing for their organization. Chair Schneider informed the applicant that the structure is individually listed on the National Historic Register. He also inquired as to whether or not the applicant would consider re-painting the structure as opposed to installing vinyl siding. Mr. Leary indicated that the Board of Directors for Massachusetts Veterans, Inc. was concerned with the cost, which he stated would be approximately \$15,000 for vinyl siding and \$30,000 to scrape and repaint. Commissioner Johnson noted that the Commission would prefer that the unique lintels be preserved and also stated that the rear

porch appears to be in very poor condition. Mr. Leary informed the Commission that the door of the building would be preserved. He also indicated that he did not know if the windows were original. Commissioner Sherman expressed concern that the brackets on the structure may be difficult to preserve if vinyl siding is placed on the building. Commissioner Theerman expressed concern with approving vinyl for a building that it is individually listed on the National Register. Chair Schneider suggested that the applicant return to the Commission at the next meeting to explore the possibility of preserving the following distinctive architectural features of the structure: the cornice brackets, corner boards, front doors, and clapboard and to provide some research on whether or not the windows are original to the structure. Commissioner Sherman commended the applicant on the choice to maintain the slate roof. Commissioner Johnson suggested that the applicant may want to consider volunteer labor to assist with the cost of and suggested that the applicant contact Ron Charette of the South Worcester Community Development Corporation. Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, the Commission voted 6-0 to continue the hearing at the applicant's request the July 27, 2006 meeting in order to allow the applicant time to provide the Commission with additional information relative to the preservation of the structure's historical characteristics as well as the requested information relative to the windows.

5. **9 May Street (HC-06-15):** Yvette Lavigne, representative for Worcester Common Ground, applicant and owner of the property at 9 May Street, and John Hecker, architect for the project, presented the petition. Ms. Lavigne informed the Commission that the building is individually listed on the National Register and will receive 20% tax credits. She stated that the applicant seeks to demolish Building D in order to provide a landscaped interior courtyard for the 46 proposed residences. She also informed the Commission that after a window inventory, it was determined that Worcester Common Ground could salvage and restore sixty (60) of the 424 original windows, using the original sash, frames and brick moulding. She also explained that the salvaged windows will mainly be located on the front of the building and will be double glazed with permanent muntins. Mr. Hecker informed the Commission that the windows would be a blend of six over six panes and other variations of divided panes, following the current pattern of windows. Ms. Lavigne informed the Commission that Worcester Common Ground seeks to maintain the original slate on the front portion of the building and replace other parts of the roof with Dura Slate, a polymer product. She indicated that the dormers will remain. Mr. Hecker informed the Commission that the architectural slate they had chosen had a convincing color and texture. He also stated that the blue and white aluminum siding will be removed from the structure. Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Johnson, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition of Building D at 9 May Street (as shown in the submitted site plan) and the proposed demolition associated with the renovation of the windows and roof, as outlined in the application, would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester* and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 6-0.
6. **21-23 Crown Street (HC-06-16):** Doug Clough, representative for the Abby Kelley Foster House, and Ron Rheault, contractor for the project, presented the petition. Mr.

Rheault indicated that the applicant is seeking to 1) repair the damaged fascia board on the rear of the building; 2.) re-point and seal a 6'x 40' brick area on the front of the building; 3.) remove and replace the current railings with colonial style, vinyl railings ; 4.) remove and replace the front porch with the same dimensions; and 5.) remove the current columns and replace them with fiberglass columns in a different location, closer to the end of the front stair railings. Chair Schneider stated that the columns were placed in their current location to frame the double entry and that he was not in favor of moving them. Commissioner Johnson stated that the building was constructed in the historic Crown Hill neighborhood and also pointed out that there is a precedent for the current column spacing throughout the City. Mr. Rheault informed the Commission that the roof and lattice work are not original to the building and indicated that he would like to reframe and pressure treat the roof as well as replace the lattice with vinyl, colonial style railings. He also stated that the applicant would prefer to replace the current columns with fiberglass columns with a fluted, tapered base. He also stated that the newel at the end of each stair is in poor condition. Chair Schneider stated that the Commission would prefer that the applicant salvage the original columns, if possible. Commissioner Sherman inquired as to whether or not the applicant would use wood for the railings and informed the applicant that vinyl is not necessarily maintenance free. Susan Ceccacci, architectural historian and Board member of Preservation Worcester, stated that during the period in which the house was built, railings were not used on these types of porches. She noted that while the railings may be important for public safety, they could appear out of place and out of proportion with the rest of the structure and suggested that the applicant choose a railing that will visually "disappear", such as a thin metal railing. Mr. Rheault stated that they could use a metal railing that would attach to the steps. Commissioner Theerman expressed concern with a metal railing. Commissioner Sherman agreed with Ms. Ceccacci that a metal railing would be almost invisible and would maintain the entryway. She also suggested that the contractor choose a stable metal railing. Mr. Rheault responded that he would most likely use fabricated iron, which would be primed and painted. He also indicated that they would salvage the original columns and maintain their current location. Commissioner Conroy requested that the applicant bring cost estimates for the work. Mr. Rheault stated that the fascia board in the rear would be repaired in a similar style. Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Sherman, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition associated with the repair of the rear fascia board and re-pointing the brick area as outlined in the application, would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester* and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 6-0. Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Sherman, the Commission voted 6-0 to continue the hearing on the railings, front porch, and columns to the July 27, 2006 meeting to allow the applicant time to prepare additional plans and obtain cost estimates.

7. **2-4-6-16 Southbridge Street (HC-06-14):** Allison Layne, representative for the Worcester Center for Performing Arts, and Michael Paganao, architect for the project, presented the petition. Ms. Layne explained that the projected was a recipient for historical tax credits. Mr. Paganao explained that the Worcester Center for the Performing Arts was only appearing before the Commission for the demolition of the

current “green room” (waiting area for performers) and for the demolition associated with the proposed addition of new green rooms and the expansion of the stage. Mr. Paganao stated that staff at the Massachusetts Historical Commission had advised them not to re-do the auditorium wall so that will remain the same. He also stated that the wall is a large blank wall and that there are no historically significant features. He stated that the new walls will be steel frame with metal [aluminum] siding. Commissioner Johnson inquired as to why the applicants had chosen to use aluminum. Mr. Paganao stated that the Worcester Center for Performing Arts had worked closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission to design the improvements and indicated that rebuilding the masonry walls would have been costly. Mr. Paganao stated that the Worcester Center for Performing Arts would appear before the Commission at a future meeting to discuss the renovation of the front of the building. Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Sherman, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition associated with the expansion of the stage and the construction of the new green rooms, would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester* and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 6-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 8. 375 Airport Drive – Telecommunications Wireless Proposal:** Commissioner Johnson stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission had reviewed the plan and had no comments and that he had no additional comments on the plan.
- 9. Worcester State Hospital:** Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester, stated that Preservation Worcester had nominated the Worcester State Hospital for the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s 10 most endangered list.
- 10. May 25, 2006 meeting minutes:** Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 4-0 (Commissioners Sherman and Constantine abstained) to approve the May 25, 2006 minutes.
- 11. Tour of Worcester Center for the Performing Arts:** The Commission members suggested Wednesday, August 26, 2006 at 5:30 pm for a tour of 2-4-6-16 Southbridge Street. Michael Paganao indicated that he would confirm the date/time with staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 7:50.