

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

February 23, 2017

ESTHER HOWLAND CHAMBER – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present: Andrew Shveda
Randolph Bloom
Robyn Conroy
Mark Wamback

Commission Members Absent: Devon Kurtz
Cheryll Holley, Alternate
Courtney Escobar, Alternate

Staff Members Present: Deborah Steele, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Susan Arena, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

Approval of Minutes

None

Old Business

1. 272 Highland Street - HC-2016-080

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Melinda Pham
Present Use: Single family residence
Year Built: 1890
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, National Register Individual (NRIP), National Register (MRA), fka E.S. Pierce House

Petition Purpose:

- Remove and replace windows
- Repair to siding
- Close first floor window on left north side home
- Eliminate the chimney right south side of home

The petitioner was not available and requested a continuance.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 4-0 to postpone the item to the March 23, 2017 meeting and to extend the BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline to March 26, 2017.

2. 22 Newbury Street - HC-2017-009

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver & Certificate of Appropriateness
Petitioner: City of Worcester
Present Use: Vacant Lot
Historic Status: Crown Hill Local Historic District
Petition Purpose:

- Replace chain link fence
- Fix crumbling retaining walls and concrete circular walkway
- Grading of area and installation of water spigot
- Installation of garden beds, seating areas and landscaping

Charise Canales appeared on behalf of the application.

Ms. Canales reviewed the project history, noting that Worcester Common Ground has entered into a 25 year renewable lease with the City of Worcester to create a public park on the vacant lot. She presented photos of the new fence that was installed along Newbury Street, representing the first phase of the project that was previously approved by the Commission. She continued by outlining the proposed objectives of the next phase, that will be funded by a Community Development Block Grant Program. Included in this phase is a retaining wall made of lock-block, black chain link fence around the remaining perimeter, and some associated grading.

Chair Shveda asked about the presence of hazardous material in the soil. Ms. Canales responded that a company, Toxic Soil Busters, found that one section came back slightly elevated, but still within their comfort levels and they suggested landscaping that area with mulch to create a barrier. Commissioner Bloom inquired about what was found in the soil that was on their radar. Ms. Canales stated that it was along the drip line with the neighboring property so was likely run-off or could be the result of 30 years of people dumping trash.

Commissioner Bloom noted that certain root plants should not be planted in contaminated soil. Ms. Canales responded that they are working with a neighbor, a certified permaculturist, who is assisting with creating an appropriate planting scheme, and placing edibles in raised beds. Commissioner Bloom asked whether the applicant would need to reappear for approval of the vegetation. Chair Shveda stated that yes, for any perennial vegetation.

Chair Shveda noted items such as picnic tables in the rendering and asked whether they were included in this application. Ms. Canales said no, those would be part of the next phase.

Regarding the retaining wall, Chair Shveda asked how tall the retaining wall would be. Ms. Canales stated that it runs along the neighbor's driveway and will be approximately three feet tall at its highest point, at the rear of the lot. It would gradual decrease in visibility toward the front of the lot, as it follows the gradient. The wall will be visible from the neighbor's property, but not from the public way. Discussion continued about the characteristics of the lock-block system. Ms. Canales stated that at this point they do not have a color in mind, but due to budget constraints they'll likely opt for the more basic option. Commissioner Bloom noted the presence of granite throughout the Crown Hill District, and asked about the possibility of getting something that is granite look. Ms. Canales noted that as the wall is not visible from the street, will the stone choice affect the historic impact. Chair Shveda noted that based on the dimensions he believes the wall will be minimally visible. He went on to defer to

Commissioner Bloom in color and texture selection. Commissioner Bloom noted that as it's a vacant lot, he would treat it a little differently, and that this project will be a tremendous improvement for the neighborhood.

Regarding the chain link fence, Chair Shveda asked whether it would be plastic coated or painted. Ms. Canales believes it will be painted. Commissioner Bloom followed up, stating that as it will be black, the fence will somewhat disappear.

Chair Shveda asked about the plan for the water spigot. Ms. Canales stated that the someone who has previously worked on this project had the water line installed at the front of the lot, and that their goal is to run hose to the back to be used for gardening. Chair Shveda asked whether it will be in a locked box, and that as long as it's not a pipe sticking up out of the ground, it should be ok. Ms. Canales stated that her director is focused on preservation and that it would not be handled that way.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 4-0 that the changes proposed to 22 Newbury Street are appropriate for the Crown Hill Local District and approved the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application received January 12, 2017 and dated December 12, 2016.

3. 21 Catherine Street– HC-2016-075

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Advocates, Inc.
Present Use: Rooming House
Year Built: 1848
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, National Register Individual (NRIP), National Register (MRA),
fka The Draper Ruggles House

Petition Purpose:

- Remove existing deteriorated front porch columns, including new concrete pier foundations.
New columns to match existing

The petitioner was not available and requested a continuance.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 3-0 to postpone the item to the March 23, 2017 meeting and to extend the BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline to March 26, 2017, and also note that this is the final extension allowed by the Commission.

New Business

4. 122 Elm Street - HC-2017-015

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver

Petitioner: Elizabeth Stefos
Present Use: Three Family Residence
Year Built: c1904
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, fka Joseph Beaudry House
Petition Purpose:

- Remove and replace porch columns and railings

Mark Wilde appeared on behalf of the application.

Chair Shveda reviewed the project, noting that six columns and four sections of railings were to be replaced, as well as the railing on the stairs. Mr. Wilde confirmed, and added that the owner had some previous work done by another contractor that included redecking of the porches. Mr. Wilde stated that he inspected it and all appears in good condition.

Regarding the condition of the columns and balusters, Mr. Wilde stated that some are starting to rot and pull away and that this is more of a safety issue. Chair Shveda asked whether the columns were structural, and Mr. Wilde said yes, they support the upper porches. Due to this, permacast structural columns were selected for the replacements. Commissioner Conroy noted her approval that the petitioner is not here to request to tear down the porches. Mr. Wilde responded that the owner grew up in the area and owns the three houses in that stretch.

Chair Shveda queried whether the columns are original. Mr. Wilde stated that he didn't know about testing 100 year old wood, but observed that they are worn and in need of replacement. Chair Shveda observed that the proposed railings appeared to closely match what's being removed. Mr. Wilde agreed, saying it was his goal to select a reasonably priced option that looked appropriate. Chair Shveda noted that the existing columns are fluted, but the replacement are smooth. Commissioner Bloom wondered whether those would be original, that fluted columns are unusual. Mr. Wilde stated that the columns on the other two houses were already replaced and are smooth, and this choice is to provide consistency. Chair Shveda stated that the point they have to determine is whether the removal of the flutes is detrimental to the integrity of the building; he does not believe it is. Mr. Wilde said the fluted replacement option would be a bit more costly, but could probably happen if that's what's necessary. Chair Shveda said his preference would be to replace in kind, but that the Commission's purview ends at what's being removed.

Commissioner Bloom asked if the columns are compromised; and could they be repaired. Mr. Wilde said they are showing signs of rot and wear; that the appeal of the composite replacements is less maintenance in the future. Chair Shveda stated that should the Commission approve of the waiver, he would encourage the applicant to explore the possibility of a fluted column. Mr. Wilde was agreeable to this and would discuss it with the option and their goal it to do the work right. He said he hadn't considered this factor and is willing to look into it. However, Chair Shveda stated that he'd rather see the work down now, before the condition is beyond saving. Commissioner Conroy agreed, saying they'd seen many cases where the porches were removed.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Wambach and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application.

5. 2 King Street - HC-2017-016

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Commonwealth of MA, DCAMM
Present Use: Former Hospital Buildings
Year Built: 1920
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, National Register District (NRD), National Register (MRA)
fka Worcester State Hospital

Petition Purpose:

- Demolition of four cottages on southeastern portion of site
- Redevelopment of Hale building

Stephen Melcer appeared on behalf of the application.

Mr. Melcer stated that the aluminum replacement windows that are currently present, and were installed in the 1980s when the building was converted to Section 8 housing, are no longer serviceable for HUD subsidized standards and require replacement. Chair Shveda asked for confirmation that none of the windows are historic and asked if there would be any removal of historic material. Mr. Melcer agreed, and went on to state that their goal is to remove and replace just the sashes, with no impact to the sills or framing. He allowed that though this is their goal, without physically getting into the units the conditions could not be known.

Commissioner Bloom asked if there was any information about what the original windows looked like. Mr. Melcer stated that through online preliminary research he was unable to find any photos. Commissioner Conroy stated that she didn't find any photos in the Museum's collection either. Discussion continued about what a handsome building it is.

Chair Shveda introduced the possibility of voting on the project as being non-applicable because the material being removed is not historic, or they could vote on the demolition delay waiver as they usually do. Commissioner Bloom stated he would need more information about the impact on future projects. Ms. Steele suggested continuing as they usually do, and addressing the non-applicability clause at a later date. Commissioner Bloom went on to lament the fact that they're reviewing replacement of units that are only a few decades old.

Ms. Steele asked for confirmation that the applicant plans to do the work over a 10 year span, but the building demolition delay waiver is only valid for a year. Mr. Melcer stated that they could start at the front and afford 20 windows per year. Chair Shveda stated that they'll vote now to allow work to begin, but when the applicant is ready to do the next round, they should check in with the building department to see whether, under the new Preservation Plan, the work will need approval. If the motion passes, the applicant will have free reign to replace what they can, but that in the future, this work may not require a hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application received January 24, 2017 and dated January 23, 2017.

6. 65 Laurel Street - HC-2017-017

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Mohammad Semrin
Present Use: Two Family Residence
Year Built: c1900
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, fka Lovell Baker House / Armenian Church of America Rectory

Petition Purpose:

- Lead abatement: work on doors, windows, columns and rear porch

James Brooks appeared on behalf of the application.

Mr. Brooks stated that the owner was cited by Inspectional Services and given an order to correct for de-leading violations. The owner then submitted an application to the Housing office and was deemed eligible for HUD lead-paint funding. The building was inspected for lead paint and qualified through a bidding process for the work to be completed. Mr. Brooks went on to further explain the scope of work, noting that the main area affected will be the rear porch; and that work consists mostly of wrapping or scraping and painting identified areas.

Chair Shveda observed that it appeared that no historic material was being removed. That any original material is already covered by siding, and that it appears that the location of the majority of work appears to be on a section that is not original.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Bloom, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application received February 1, 2017 and dated February 1, 2017.

Communications

None

Adjournment

Upon a motion the Commission adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.