

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

APRIL 2, 2020

LEVI LINCOLN ROOM, ROOM 309 – CITY HALL

Commission Members Participating: Mark Wamback, Chair
Randolph Bloom
Diane Long
Tomi Stefani
Janet Theerman
Erika Helnarski, Alternate

Commission Members Not Participating: Devon Kurtz, Vice-Chair
Cathryn E. Jerome-Mezynski, Alternate

Staff Members Participating: Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning and Regulatory Services
Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning and Regulatory Services

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 23, 2020 Order, as amended, imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting was conducted through remote participation. The meeting was livestreamed from the City of Worcester website and via the local cable access channel and is available for streaming online. Public participation was facilitated through a call-in number, 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 730323290#), which was publicized on the posted meeting agenda and during the video broadcast.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

February 20, 2020 – Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted 4-0 to approve the February 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes, with Commissioners Wamback and Bloom not voting due to their absence at the February 20, 2020 meeting.

March 19, 2020 – Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted 4-0 to approve the March 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes, with Commissioners Helnarski and Stefani not voting due to their absence at the March 19, 2020 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Building Demolition Delay Waivers

1. 154 Main Street – HC-2020-022 (MBL 02-028-16+21)

Petitioner: Hugh Meehan

Year Built: 1831

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; State Register (SR); National Register Individual (NRIND); National Register Multiple Resource Area (MRA), FKA Elwood Adams Hardware Store

Petition Purpose:

- Restore brick, granite, and mortar, restore exterior signage
- Replace existing windows
- Restore cornice detailing and install copper flashing at coping
- Remove and replace existing gutters and downspouts
- Replace doors with replicas
- Add new precast caps at parapet wall

BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline: April 20, 2020

Hugh Meehan, occupant, and Hugh McLaughlin, building owner, spoke on behalf of the petition. Mr. Meehan stated that the intent is to turn the former hardware store into thirteen apartments. He explained the proposed project, as petitioned. He said all the work would be done in-kind.

Chair Wamback stated that he appreciated that the applicant's proposal to preserve the building and keep its historical elements. He asked for some clarification on the windows. Mr. Meehan stated that all the windows will be replaced in kind and will look the same.

Commissioner Theerman asked for assurance that the plaque on the building would be retained. Mr. Meehan stated that it would be removed during construction, but would be restored and put back up. She also asked about the Elwood Adams sign. Mr. Meehan stated that it was scoped to be restored. Mr. McLaughlin stated that he thought it would be confusing if a sign that indicated a hardware store was on an apartment building. He said that the sign was put up in the 1980s and is not historic, and he had thought of donating the sign. Commissioner Bloom asked if the applicants had thought of changing the sign from "Elwood Adams Hardware" to "Elwood Adams Building." Mr. McLaughlin stated that they could do that.

Commissioner Long stated that she was looking for some clarification on which sign was being discussed. The applicant clarified that the sign that is horizontally across the building would be restored and put back on.

Commissioner Bloom asked what was happening on the first floor. Mr. Meehan stated that there would be one apartment at the back of the first floor, and there would also be a mechanical area, lobby, and work space. Commissioner Bloom asked what material would be used for the windows. Mr. Meehan stated that they would be aluminum, double-hung windows to match what is there. Commissioner Bloom stated that originally, the windows were likely six-over-six, and the two-over-two sash would have been added later in the nineteenth century.

Commissioner Stefani asked if the recessed entrance would be retained. Mr. Meehan stated that it would be maintained as it.

No public comment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition of the building at 154 Main Street is not detrimental to the historic or architectural resources of the City and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver, including the change of the front sign to read "Elwood Adams Building".

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated February 11, 2020, received February 13, 2020.

Exhibit B: Postponement form, received February 27, 2020.

Exhibit C: Postponement form, received March 17, 2020.

2. 305 Belmont Street – HC-2020-029 (MBL 57-004-B1-01)

Petitioner: Craig L. Blais, New Garden Park, Inc.

Year Built: ca. 1900

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; State Register of Historic Places (SR); National Register District (NRDIS); Worcester National Register Multiple Resource Area (MRA), FKA Worcester State Hospital Nurse’s Building

Petition Purpose:

- Demolish building

BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline: April 25, 2020

Julie Holstrom, Senior Project Manager for the WBDC spoke on behalf of the petition. She stated that the WBDC has gone through a number of different exercises, including a code review, structural review, and historic review to try to identify a reuse for the building. The WBDC has also issued an RFP to try to identify developers that could reuse the building. She stated that all of those exercises have led them to ultimately request a Building Demolition Delay Waiver so that they could progress in preparing pad-ready parcels for development of a biomanufacturing campus. They have had a number of interested parties reach out to them about the parcel that the Hale Building is on.

Roberta Brien of the WBDC also spoke on behalf of the petition. She stated that the building is small – only about 27,000 square feet over four floors. She stated that the code requirements reduce the footprint. She also stated that the interior walls are load-bearing, so demolition of interior walls to allow for flexibility is not possible. She stated that they have walked a couple of tenants through the building and didn’t find any interested tenants. She stated that the cost of the core and shell of the building is about \$300 per square foot to bring it up to code. She said that the numbers just don’t work and they can’t find a redeveloper and haven’t been able to over the past four years, stating that Ms. Holstrom was being modest in the description of her efforts.

Commissioner Bloom stated that the building is extremely handsome and that he was disappointed that no viable reuse had been found. He would have a lot of difficulty allowing the building to just be torn down. He also stated that maybe the proposed use doesn’t fit the building, but could be viable if used for another use.

Ms. Brien stated that they have offered up the building for residential use, office space, common space, conference space, and co-working space. They have not restricted the RFP at all.

Commissioner Bloom asked how much interaction the applicants had had with Preservation Worcester. Ms. Holstrom talked about the interaction that the WBDC had had with Preservation Worcester going back to when the WBDC acquired the building.

Commissioner Bloom stated that this type of situation is exactly what the Building Demolition Delay period is for. Commissioner Long agreed, stating that the Commission had approved demolitions in the past with the hopes that this building would be saved.

Commissioner Stefani stated that this is a beautiful building, and that it’s unfortunate that this is coming so quickly after an RFP was issued. He believes one month is not long enough to receive any responses, and believes the RFP should be extended even longer.

Ms. Holstrom stated that since they took title to the building, the WBDC has brought many prospective tenants through the building to try to find a developer for the building.

Ms. Brien stated that they have put a lot of work into finding developers and they have not had any interest. She said that it would be \$9,000,000 to \$11,000,000 to bring it up to code even before fitting it out. She also stated she was not sure it is structurally sound. She stated that for four years they have looked for a way to include the building in the development and that they believe the market has spoken.

Mr. Stefani stated that he hasn't seen any numbers to back up the applicants' claim for economic hardship. He believes that the building can be integrated.

Commissioner Theerman stated that the applicants need to think outside the box and work harder in finding a viable reuse.

Commissioner Long asked what the difference between bringing the building up to code and demolishing and building new would be. Ms. Brien stated that she did not have that information. Commissioner Long responded that without that information, the Commission would not be able to vote on an economic hardship. Ms. Brien stated that the economic hardship has to do with the rehabilitation costs of this building versus the rehabilitation costs that would be associated with a building without the issues that this building has. Chair Wambach stated that typically when an economic hardship is presented to the Commission, the Commission looks at what it would cost to rehabilitate the building versus the costs associated with demolishing the building and building a new one.

Craig Blais, President of the WBDC, also spoke on behalf of the petition. He stated that the WBDC has not made the decision to demolish lightly. He stated that the decision on this building was made a long time ago when it was decided to demolish the entire hospital campus but save the clock tower. He stated that this building will stick out like a sore thumb in a biomanufacturing park. He stated that the WBDC cannot seek historic tax credits, and that they have not found a developer to reuse the building. He said the decision to put a biomanufacturing park on the site to bring jobs and a tax base to the city was made by the governor's Open for Business and by many people, but not by the WBDC. He thinks it's unfortunate, but that's the conclusion that the WBDC has come to.

Public Comment

Ms. Johnstone read an opposition letter from Deborah Packard of Preservation Worcester into the record.

Ms. Johnstone read an opposition letter from Denis Kennedy of 13 Maplewood Road into the record.

Jonathan Ostrow, a resident of Worcester active with the Save Notre Dame Alliance spoke in opposition of the petition, and offered some alternate uses that the building might be retrofitted for. He asked that every effort be made to save the building, or at least save its façade and work it into a future design, stating that the building is irreplaceable.

Susan Ceccacci, an architectural historian, spoke in opposition of the petition. She hopes more time is taken to find a new use for the building. She thinks that it would make a good centerpiece for other development. She urged the Commission to not grant the waiver.

Ms. Brien stated that the WBDC appreciated everyone's good intentions, but it's all just discussion until a developer comes forward. She said that regardless of creativity, there has been no response. She stated that the building would need to produce revenue, and the WBDC cannot figure out how to make that work. She suggested following up in a few months to see if the Commission has any direction for the WBDC, but she didn't think that nine to twelve more months would yield a different result. She also stated that the building has not been offered for sale, and that the building would be a donation to a developer.

Mr. Rolle reminded the Commission that they had two issues to consider, including the Building Demolition Delay Waiver and the economic hardship consideration. He asked if the applicants were interested in the Commission voting on the issue tonight or if they wanted a continuance.

Ms. Brien stated that if the Commission was interested in voting and having them wait the year, she was hoping for an interim option time period to circle back.

Mr. Rolle discussed the options and process associated with a vote versus a continuance. He stated that whether the petition is continued or not would not affect when the demolition delay period would end. He also suggested that the Commission continue the discussion with the applicant on the economic hardship consideration.

Commissioner Bloom stated that this property checks all the boxes for coming under the Building Demolition Delay ordinance. He stated that the Commission does not have enough information to vote on an economic hardship.

Chair Wamback agreed with Commissioner Bloom, stating that he would want to see actual information from legitimate sources backing up the economic hardship claim.

Mr. Blais stated that they are in very difficult times right now and that it will be a long, slow recovery. He stated that the WBDC fortunately has interest right now. He said that he couldn't disagree more with Mr. Ostrow on how to redevelop the building. He said that the city needs these kinds [biomanufacturing] of developments, and that he feels bad and understands that the building has historical importance and character. He stated that there is no way a developer is going to come forward in the next nine or ten months to spend money to save the building. He pleaded with the Commission to grant the waiver, and asked the Commission to just take the vote.

Commissioner Wamback asked for clarification on whether by saying "take the vote," Mr. Blais meant the application as it stands and economic hardship. Mr. Blais stated that the WBDC has tried to make the case that there is a huge economic hardship but nobody seems to be buying it, so he was unsure of what else they could do.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commissioner voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 0-6 that the proposed demolition of the building at 305 Belmont Street, the Hale Building, is not detrimental to the historic or architectural resources of the City and voted to deny the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.

Mr. Rolle again encouraged a brief discussion on what information would be helpful in taking a vote on economic hardship.

Chair Wamback stated that he had thought that the applicant waived the vote on an economic hardship. Mr. Blais asked what it is that the Commission would be looking for. Chair Wamback stated that typically the Commission would look at a comparison between what it would cost to rehabilitate the building versus what it would cost to demolish the building and construct a new building.

Ms. Brien asked for clarification on what a vote on economic hardship would do. Mr. Rolle stated that a waiver can be granted either by finding that the demolition of a building would not be harmful to the historical or architectural resources of the city, or by finding that not granting the waiver would pose an undue economic hardship to the applicant. He stated that in this case making that determination is a little bit tricky given the plans that the WBDC have for the site, and that what they are proposing versus what is existing is like comparing apples and oranges. He stated that some time should be taken, and that he did not want the Commission to rush into a vote. He stated that he thought it might make sense to continue the economic hardship consideration.

Mr. Blais stated that he would struggle with coming up with numbers that would work for a 27,000 square foot building. He stated that he would want to be able to come up with something that would compare apples to apples. He stated that he doesn't want to come up with something that would be ripped apart. He stated that a 27,000 square foot one-story building would not be done. A developer would build a one-story building with a much bigger floorplate.

Chair Wamback stated that he agreed that this will be a very tough comparison. He stated that he doesn't want to make the WBDC jump through hoops for something that doesn't make sense.

Mr. Rolle stated that part of the discussion should be whether Commissioners need more time.

Commissioner Stefani stated that the information they have available is not enough to make a decision on the economic hardship. Commissioner Bloom agreed, saying that he would find it very difficult to make a decision on economic hardship with so few numbers in front of him.

Chair Wamback asked what good information would be. Commissioner Bloom stated that he was not sure, and that this is one of the most complicated buildings they have reviewed in a long time. He stated that the whole point of demolition delay is to give more time. Chair Wamback agreed that the building has historical significance to the City of Worcester, but asked what they needed to see to prove an economic hardship given that anything proposed would be so different from the existing building. Commissioner Bloom went back to the original purpose of the demolition delay. The other commissioners stated that piece has already been voted on. Chair Wamback stated that he just wanted to know what would be helpful in making a determination on an economic hardship. Commissioner Bloom stated that he thinks the economic hardship wouldn't come into play.

Mr. Blais stated that the WBDC could provide proof that there isn't enough revenue to support the rehabilitation of the building. He stated that they could easily show that.

Commissioner Long thanked Mr. Blais for offering the building for free and that she is sorry that the WBDC cannot find a developer to reuse the building. She stated that she could not vote on an economic hardship, and stated that she didn't want to see the applicants run around for three months when it won't change her mind. Chair Wamback agreed.

Commissioner Theerman asked if nothing was done to the building until a reasonable solution could be come up with, whether or not the area could still be developed. Mr. Blais stated that there is a lot of interest for biomanufacturing in Worcester, and that the WBDC wants to develop the park with pad-ready sites. He stated that he understands the role that the Commission plays, and that the WBDC would continue to try to see if anything could be done with the building.

Commissioner Long asked Mr. Blais if they wanted a vote to be taken.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 0-6 that the issuance of demolition approval for 305 Belmont Street, the Hale Building, is necessary to avoid an undue economic hardship to the property owner, and voted to deny the Certificate of Hardship.

Mr. Rolle reiterated that the applicants could repetition the Commission, and that the Commission could reconsider the issuance of the waiver if circumstances change.

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated February 7, 2020, received March 11, 2020.

Exhibit B: Opposition letter from Preservation Worcester, dated March 31, 2020.

Exhibit C: Opposition letter from Denis Kennedy, dated March 31, 2020.

3. 8 Goulding Street – HC-2020-030 (MBL 02-035-00026)

Petitioner: Leonard A. Vairo

Year Built: ca. 1880

Historic Status: MACRIS listed

Petition Purpose:

- Add exterior staircase to second and third floor behind bay window in rear of house
- Replace asphalt shingle roof
- Replace replacement windows
- Replace existing asbestos siding with vinyl siding

Leonard Vairo, the owner, from Holden, Massachusetts, spoke on behalf of the application. He spoke briefly about the condition of the building. He stated that he was working on rehabilitating and remodeling the interior of the building. As part of the interior work, he is proposing to demolish the interior rear stair and construct an external stair on the back of the building. He explained that the stair would be partially visible looking straight-on from the street. He also plans on repair the roof and possibly replace the windows.

Chair Wamback asked for clarification on where the staircase would be constructed. Mr. Vairo provided some clarification based on the photographs he provided in his application.

Commissioner Long asked for clarification as well, asking if the exterior stair would be enclosed. Mr. Vairo stated that it would not be enclosed and would be covered with a roof.

Chair Wamback asked for clarification on the siding issue. Mr. Vairo stated that right now, the siding is asbestos. At some point they will need to dull a full asbestos remediation, and some remediation will need to be done to inert doors to access the staircase on the second and third floors, but re-siding is not something they are thinking about doing right away.

Ms. Johnstone stated that the demolition taking place in this case would be the new doors being cut into an elevation to facilitate the new stair. Mr. Rolle followed up, stating that all items except for the new doors could have been approved through a compliance form, but given that some demolition was taking place, staff members had the applicant include all items in the petition.

Commissioner Stefani asked if the stair would extend to serve the third floor and extend to the roof. The applicant confirmed that it would extend right to the roofline. Mr. Vairo also stated that the stair would be about ten or eleven feet wide.

No public comment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition at 8 Goulding Street is not detrimental to the historic or architectural resources of the City and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.

Ms. Johnstone suggested that the Commission take Item H (listed in Communications) out of order. The applicant spoke briefly on some work that had been done on 6 Goulding Street that had previously come before the Commission and been approved. He shared some updates and photographs on that work.

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated March 12, 2020, received March 13, 2020.

Certificates of Appropriateness and Building Demolition Delay Waivers

4. 1 Montvale Road – HC-2020-024 (MBL 20-007-00025)

Petitioner: Aditya Tibrewal

Year Built: ca. 1918

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; Local Historic District (LHD); State Register (SR)

Petition Purpose:

- Repair roof
- Reside gable peak

Aditya Tibrewal spoke on behalf of the application. He stated that the lower roof of his home had some damage that needs to be replaced and he wonders if since the color of the replacement materials would be different because it is a historic property, whether he should be changing the whole front slope of the roof or the whole roof. He stated that he is looking for a suggestion from the Commission.

Chair Wamback stated that because the applicant's home is in a historic district, the Commission does have purview of the color.

Commissioner Bloom asked for clarification on what section of the roof was damaged. Ms. Johnstone stated that the portion of the roof that was damaged is on the ell. She stated that the two proposals in front of the Commission are the replacement of only the section of the roof that was damaged, or because the replaced roof would be a slightly different color gradient, the replacement of the whole roof.

Commissioner Long asked if the rest of the roof was leaking or damaged in any way. Mr. Tibrewal stated that the roof is functional as of now. He stated that the roof was there when he bought the house, so it is at least 10-11 years old, or maybe 15.

Commissioner Theerman stated it does not look like the house has architectural shingles. Mr. Tibrewal stated that the house has asphalt shingles. Commissioner Theerman stated that the shingles are pretty old. Commissioner Long agreed.

Commissioner Theerman stated it looked like there was a patch of roof that was a different color. Mr. Tibrewal stated that that was where the damage was. Commissioners Long and Theerman stated that if it were them, they would have the whole thing done. Commissioner Theerman stated that she wouldn't just do part and that it wouldn't look good.

Commissioner Bloom asked whether the owner was just reroofing the ell or the entire roof. Commissioner Long stated that that was what the applicant was asking the Commission.

Mr. Rolle stated that it sounds like the applicant is proposing to do the whole roof so that the whole thing matches. He stated that the applicant should specify a specific color and shingle type for the Commission to consider. Mr. Tibrewal stated that he thinks he included that in his proposal and that his contractor proposed a similar black asphalt shingle. Ms. Johnstone stated that the proposal was included in the application. Ms. Johnstone confirmed that the replacement would be a like-for-like color.

No public comment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed changes of like-for-like materials to the entire roof at 1 Montvale Road are appropriate for the local historic district and voted to approve that Certificate of Appropriateness.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition at 1 Montvale Road would not be detrimental to the historic or architectural resources of the City.

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated January 26, 2020, received February 19, 2020.

Exhibit B: Postponement form, received March 18, 2020.

5. 29 Whitman Road – HC-2020-027 (MBL 20-005-00002)

Petitioner: Patricia and Patrick Hanrahan

Year Built: ca. 1904-1906

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; Montvale Local Historic District (LHD); State Register of Historic Places (SR); National Register of Historic Places District (NRDIS); Worcester National Register of Historic Places Multiple Resource Area (MRA), FKA Edwin S. Pike House

Petition Purpose:

- Install a radon mitigation system – radon collection chambers will be created; 3” PVC vent pipes will be installed in chambers and connected to a single exit pipe; vent pipes will exit basement of home via siding penetration

BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline: May 8, 2020

Trish Hanrahan, the owner of 29 Whitman Road spoke on behalf of the application. She explained the proposed work, which includes the installation of a radon mitigation system due to high levels of radon in the home. She stated that the vendor has suggested a four inch PVC pipe to exit the basement via the siding, and the discharge stack would go from the fan up to the roof. The system would be located on the least visible corner of the house.

Commissioner Long stated that she sold a house four years ago and the buyer asked her to install a radon mitigation system, which she did. She stated that the installation technician asked her if the radon levels were only tested in the basement, which they were. The installation technician stated that since Commissioner Long didn't have a finished basement and nobody was living in the basement, nobody would be exposed to the radon. Commissioner Long asked if the upper levels of the house were tested. Mrs. Hanrahan stated that only the basement was tested, and that the levels were 9.6 and 10.5, and that anything above 4 is considered high. She stated that there is exercise equipment in the basement. Commissioner Long stated that if there is exercise equipment in the basement, the applicant would be breathing in very deeply while using the equipment and that she wouldn't blame the applicant for installing a radon mitigation system. She also stated that the systems are loud and not attractive.

Commissioner Stefani asked if there was a way to but the fan and exhaust pipe in the tucked away corner where there is no view. He also asked if the pipe would be painted to match the house. The applicant stated that the vendor has suggested a white pipe. Mr. Rolle also added that PVC can accept paint, so if the homeowner found the look obtrusive, the exhaust could be painted to match the house.

No public comment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-1, with Commissioner Long being the nay, that the proposed demolition at 29 Whitman Road is not detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-1, with Commissioner Long being the nay, that the proposed changes of adding a radon mitigation system on the side of 29 Whitman Road are appropriate for the local historic district and voted to approve that Certificate of Appropriateness.

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, received March 9, 2020.

6. 234 Pleasant Street – HC-2020-028 (MBL 03-026-00016)

Petitioner: James P. Gaskell

Year Built: 1911

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; Crown Hill Local Historic District (LHD); State Register of Historic Places (SR), FKA The Parlin

Petition Purpose:

- Pour a new concrete pad (partially retroactive – the driveway has been demolished)
- Install a chain link fence to replace old chain link fence
- Plant bushes and spread grass seed for lawn
- Install a new transformer box for electrical (retroactive)
- Remove existing slate and metal roof and replace with 24 gage stainless steel metal roof in royal blue (partially retroactive)
- Remove two brick chimneys to accommodate new heating system (retroactive)
- Remove existing vinyl windows and replace with new 1/1 vinyl windows (retroactive)
- Remove and replace rear deck (retroactive)
- Replace all exterior doors (partially retroactive)
- Sandblast brick to remove paint (partially retroactive)
- Install heating pipe through rear basement (retroactive)

BDDW Constructive Grant Deadline: May 8, 2020

Jim Gaskell, owner, and Wesley Stanhope, contractor, spoke on behalf of the application. Mr. Stanhope gave some background on the building and stated the intent of the petition. Work on the building began about two years ago. He stated that he and the applicant are hoping to move forward with the building.

Chair Wambach asked if permits had pulled for the work. Ms. Johnstone stated that for the majority of the work no permits were pulled. Mr. Rolle stated that there were permits pulled for interior work, but the work completed exceeded those allowed by the permits pulled.

Ms. Johnstone suggested going item-by-item through the work.

The first item discussed was to pour a new concrete pad in place of a former asphalt driveway. There were no comments from the Commission on that item.

The next item discussed was to replace the existing chain-link fence with a new chain-link fence. Planning Division staff is of the opinion that the property would be better served by a black aluminum fence to resemble cast iron, which would be more appropriate to the local historic district. The Commission agreed that a black aluminum fence would be more appropriate.

The next item discussed was to spread grass seed and plant bushes to replace the bare dirt. The Commission stated that such work would improve the property.

The next item discussed was to install a new transformer box for electrical service, which was done by National Grid. Mr. Rolle stated that typically building owners do not have much say in where a new transformer box is installed. The Commission agreed that this item was acceptable.

The next item discussed was to remove two brick chimneys to accommodate a new heating system, which were not or barely visible from public rights-of-way. They were not functional and were in a state of disrepair. Commissioner Long stated that if they weren't visible, they weren't visible and that it's not an issue. Ms. Johnstone stated that staff would agree.

The next item discussed was the removal and replacement of the rear deck. The deck that was installed in its place is wood. Ms. Johnstone stated that the deck to begin with wasn't a character-defining feature, and that it isn't visible from Pleasant Street, but is visible from Congress Street. The Commission did not

express any concern about the item, and Commissioner Bloom stated it is rather difficult to even see the deck from Congress Street, especially with leaves on the trees.

The next item discussed was the replacement of all exterior doors. Ms. Johnstone stated that only two exterior doors are visible from Pleasant Street, neither of which are original and are in poor condition. Ms. Johnstone suggested conditioning this item to include retaining the fanlight above the primary front entrance and retaining the original three-light wood transom above the ancillary front entrance.

Commissioner Bloom asked what type of doors would replace the existing doors. Mr. Stanhope said he and the applicant would be open to discussion as to what type of doors the Commission would find favorable. Ms. Johnstone stated that on a building of this age, you would typically see a wood-paneled door with glazing on top, or, if it was a replacement door, you might see an aluminum paneled door that resembles a wood door. Mr. Stanhope suggested providing a specification for a door. Mr. Rolle suggested that if the Commission could define what they would like to see in a replacement door and condition an approval on the review of a replacement door by staff, or they could continue just that item to the next meeting.

Commissioner Stefani said he would be amenable to a cut sheet being submitted to staff for review, but wanted to know if the doors would match. Mr. Stanhope stated that he would want the doors to be similar or the same.

Commissioner Bloom stated that he thought the doors should have a basic appearance more appropriate to the building than the current doors, but that since the building is set so far back from the street, you can't necessarily see all the details.

Commissioner Theerman asked what was planned for the awning over the ancillary front entrance, which looks like it was put on as an afterthought. Mr. Gaskell stated that something is needed there for protection over the door. Commissioners Long and Helnarski agreed that the awning is not attractive. Mr. Stanhope stated that they could change the features and submit a detail to staff for review.

The next item discussed was sandblasting the building to remove the paint. Ms. Johnstone stated that typically, sandblasting historic brick is not recommended because it is abrasive and can damage the bricks. She stated that typically a chemical peel or hand-scrape method to remove the brick, or simply cleaning the painted brick, would be recommended. She went on to note that the building was originally bare brick and it would make sense to bring it back to its natural state.

Commissioner Bloom stated that the red brick color is far more interesting than the painted brick on the façade.

Mr. Gaskell stated that he found the paint on the front of the building, which was there when he bought it, very ugly.

Commissioner Long agreed that she prefers the red brick.

The next item discussed was the installation of a heating pipe through the rear basement of the building. The Commission did not express any concerns for this item.

The next item discussed was the removal of the slate roof and its replacement with a 24-gauge stainless steel roof in the color royal blue. Ms. Johnstone stated that typically the color choice would not be appropriate for the Crown Hill Local Historic District. She went over the options that the Commission could consider, which included the issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness; the issuance of a Certificate of Hardship; requiring the applicant to replace the partially installed metal roof; or the issuance of a fine for the work. Mr. Rolle stated that the roof is not prominently visible, and that should play a role in the discussion of the Commission.

Commissioner Stefani stated that while the roof is not visible from Pleasant Street, but it is visible from Congress Street, but wouldn't be as visible with vegetation cover.

Commissioner Helnarski stated that the royal blue color would be visible, and feels that with the amount of work going into the property, a royal blue roof wouldn't tie it all together, and that the color choice is not appropriate for the district. Commissioners Theerman and Bloom agreed. Commissioner Bloom also noted that if the right permits had been obtained, they wouldn't be in this awkward situation.

Mr. Stanhope stated that the building owner believed he was above board with all of the right permits, and only learned the correct permits hadn't been obtained while work was in progress. He also noted that the existing slate roof had been removed, and the metal roof was already 80% done. He stated that the metal roof color can't be changed, and would need to be torn off and thrown away, which would potentially cause a financial hardship.

Commissioner Helnarski responded; stating that this, being new work, falls under the purview of the Worcester Historical Commission and that a bright blue roof, regardless of financial hardship, is not appropriate. Commissioner Bloom agreed, stating that the roof is very inappropriate color-wise. Commissioner Long also agreed that the color is not appropriate, but gave credit to it being a high-quality metal roof and that maybe the Commission could give the applicant a pass on the color choice given the other compromises being made.

Commissioner Bloom suggested that maybe the Commission could request the applicant replace only the roofing materials on the front slope rather than the whole roof, since the roof is visible coming south on Pleasant Street. Mr. Stanhope stated that in the photographs the Commission has seen, the roofing materials are stacked on top of each other and that is why it appears so visible. He also stated that maybe could install some eaves details to hide the roof.

Commissioner Long stated that it is difficult to see the roof head-on. Commissioner Bloom stated that that is true, but it can be seen coming down Pleasant Street.

Commissioner Helnarski stated that she would be willing to give a pass on the color, and was amenable to the suggestion made by Mr. Stanhope to add something to the edges of the roof to make the color less visible.

The next item discussed was the replacement of the windows. Ms. Johnstone stated that the windows were replaced in the past few months. The work was a like-for-like replacement, and one-over-one vinyl windows have been in place in the building since at least 2007. There are two original or historic replacement windows that remain, with one visible from Pleasant Street in the gable peak, and one which is barely visible from Newbury Street in the gable peak.

Commissioner Long stated that the two historic windows should stay in place. Commissioner Helnarski agreed. She stated she does not like or agree with the other windows that were replaced, but that the work was said and done. She expressed her wish to have say in the remaining historic windows.

Commissioner Theerman stated that she thought that the rectangular windows in the arched openings look out of place. Commissioner Helnarski agreed. Ms. Johnstone stated that it was the opinion of staff that the Commission should require the applicant to replace the rectangular windows in the arched openings with more appropriately shaped windows.

Commissioner Bloom stated that the two smaller windows on either side of the second-story arched windows have black underneath them, which doesn't appear to be what was originally intended, and asked if something could be done to improve that. Commissioner Stefani thought that the two smaller windows should be the full length of the opening.

The applicants were amenable to making changes to the Venetian and arched windows.

No public comment.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that that the proposed demolition involved in pouring a concrete pad to replace the asphalt drive; replacing the chain-link fence with a black aluminum fence more appropriate to a historic district; planting bushes and lawn; the installation of the transformer box by National Grid; the removal of the slate roof and replacement with a royal blue metal roof with efforts to be made by the applicant to make the royal blue color less prominent; the removal of two brick chimneys which were not visible and served no purpose; removal of the back deck and replacement with a new wood deck; the installation of two matching front doors and adding an aesthetic design to the awning over one of the doors; using an alternate, less abrasive method than sandblasting to remove the paint from the building; installing a heating pipe in the rear of the building; window replacements to include one-over-one vinyl in-kind replacements, but maintaining the two historic windows that remain in the gable peaks and replacing the arched windows in the front and the two small windows on either side to something more appropriate to the design of the historic district is not detrimental to the historic or architectural resources of the City, and that the changes are appropriate for the Crown Hill Local Historic District.

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated and received March 9, 2020.

Exhibit B: Letter from Jim Gaskell to the Worcester Historical Commission, dated April 1, 2020.

COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Request from Epsilon Associates for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Ransom F. Taylor Block, 526 Main Street.
- b. Request from Epsilon Associates for a **new** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Kane Building, 204 Main Street.
- c. Request from the Public Archaeology Laboratory for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Bancroft Hotel, 50 Franklin Street.
- d. Request from the Public Archaeology Laboratory for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Cheney-Ballard Building, 517 Main Street.
- e. Request from the Public Archaeology Laboratory for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Park Building, 507 Main Street.
- f. Request from the Public Archaeology Laboratory for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Worcester Boys' Club, Lincoln Square.
- g. Request from the Public Archaeology Laboratory for an **updated** Letter of Support for Historic Tax Credits for the Worcester County Courthouse, 2 Main Street.
- h. Communication from Lenny Vairo re: status of Goulding Street (taken out of order)

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 to provide updated letters of support for items a, and c–g.

Ms. Johnstone gave some background information on the project associated with the request for a new letter of support for the Kane Building.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to issue a new letter of support for the Kane Building.

Ms. Johnstone noted that from now on, the Commission meetings would be beginning at 6:00 p.m. to allow for the COVID-19 briefings to take place prior the Historical Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Chair Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.