

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

APRIL 30, 2020

LEVI LINCOLN ROOM, ROOM 309 – CITY HALL

Commission Members Participating: Mark Wamback, Chair
Devon Kurtz, Vice-Chair
Randolph Bloom
Tomi Stefani
Janet Theerman
Cathryn E. Jerome-Mezynski, Alternate

Commission Members Absent: Diane Long
Erika Helnarski, 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 –

April 16, 2020 – Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the April 16, 2020 meeting minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

1. 126 Water Street – HC-2020-016 (MBL 04-022-00006)

Petitioner: Jean-Luc Wittner
Year Built: ca. 1910
Historic Status: MACRIS listed; located in the Blackstone Canal National Register Historic District, FKA Lewis Goldstein Apartment House

Petition Purpose:

- Remove the neon sign

The Commission held a public hearing on the petition for 126 Water Street at the April 16, 2020 meeting, and inadvertently did not take a vote on the item.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition at 126 Water Street consisting of the removal of the sign would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City, with Commissioners Wamback and Bloom abstaining from the vote due to their absence at the February 20, 2020 meeting. The motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 126 Water Street was approved.

List of Exhibits

1. Building Demolition Delay Waiver application dated January 29, 2020.
2. Partial decision for petition, dated February 24, 2020.
3. Postponement form, dated February 27, 2020.
4. Postponement form, dated March 17, 2020.
5. Email correspondence from Edward Murphy to Michelle Johnstone regarding destination of neon sign, dated March 30, 2020.

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 9 Oxford Street – HC-2019-071 (MBL 03-025-00004)

Petitioner: Helen & Dom Pham

Year Built: 1891

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; National Register Determination of Eligibility (DOE); National Register District (NRDIS); Local Historic District (LHD); State Register (SR), FKA Salem Griggs House

Petition Purpose:

- Replace windows (retroactive)

The Commission did not have a quorum to hear the item. Steve Rolle stated that City staff suggested re-advertising the petition to make all Commission members once again eligible to participate.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to postpone the petition to the May 28, 2020 meeting and to re-advertise the petition.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Appropriateness and Building Demolition Delay Waiver

3. 10 Washington Square – HC-2020-032 (MBL 02-014-00012)

Petitioner: John Odell o/b/o Worcester Redevelopment Authority

Year Built: ca. 1911

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; on the State Register of Historic Places (SR); on the National Register of Historic Places (NRIND); located in a National Register District (NRDIS); and located in the Worcester National Register Multiple Resource Area (MRA), Union Station

Petition Purpose:

- Remove the existing platform
- Demolish and replace the existing plaza deck to include new waterproofing and drainage measures along south side of building
- Create a center island platform to be fully integrated with the Union Station building with two access points; associated elevators and a pedestrian overpass to the center island platform from the east side of the platform, and via a new access entrance through Union Station, with new stairs and an elevator to the platform
- Add new passenger connections to the existing Union Station building and parking lot
- Make associated track and signal upgrades
- Construct a new track interlocking, CP-44

John Odell, City of Worcester Director of Energy and Asset Management and WRA staff liaison for Union Station, spoke first on behalf of the application. He stated that the primary intention of the application is for the MBTA to install a new center platform for train access that is substantially longer than the existing platform, with two connection points. The project is to be managed by the MBTA, and the WRA will be involved to assist with the portions of the project that will affect the building.

Maribel Kelly, MBTA Senior Project Manager, spoke next on behalf of the application. She stated that this project is an accessibility and infrastructural improvement project. She stated the benefits of the project, which include

safety improvements; ADA upgrades; betterment of reliability; an increase in capacity; and lower energy consumption and maintenance costs.

Christopher Smee of HDR spoke next on behalf of the application. He provided renderings of and talked through the proposed layout for the new platform and associated elements, including a new covered pedestrian bridge with an elevator and stair for access to allow for full accessibility to the platform. He noted that the renderings that the Commission were provided with did not necessarily have accurate finishes and that they were conceptual. He also talked briefly about the eventual removal of the existing platform. Next, he touched on the interior changes that would be necessary to facilitate the project, including the opening of the telephone lobby and ticketing area that will transition into a corridor that will lead to access points to the exterior. He stated that the interior was intentionally designed to make things clear to passengers, and to complement the existing building.

Maribel Kelly spoke on the project schedule, which is has a targeted construction start date of November 2020 and a target completion date of November 2022.

Holly Palmgren, Manager of Environmental Construction at the MBTA, spoke next on behalf of the project. She stated that she had provided a historic resources technical memo regarding the area surrounding the project, which was prepared as part of Section 106 Compliance. The report had a finding of no adverse effects on historic resources. She stated that she was hoping for the Commission to concur with that finding of effect.

Ms. Johnstone stated that the Commission did receive the technical memo in the application materials submitted, and that typically after the MHC received the PNF, they would notify the Commission, and at that point, the Commission would issue comments. Ms. Palmgren stated that since there are federal funds being used in the project, the Section 106 process is being handled completely through the FTA, and that once the MBTA receives concurrence from the Commission, their report would then go to the MHC for their review, since there is no PNF.

Mr. Rolle suggested that since a request for a concurrence has not been advertised on the agenda, the Commission should have some time with the report and that that item get placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Ms. Palmgren was agreeable to that.

Commissioner Bloom had a couple of questions. He stated that he assumed that the proposed work would not change the appearance of the façade. Maribel Kelly stated that it would not, however at some point there would be wayfinding signs added to the exterior. Commissioner Bloom went on to state that the existing platform is quite deteriorated, and he hopes that there is some understanding of what caused that, since the feature is not that old. Ms. Kelly stated that the salt used on the concrete platform did not react well. A fibrous material will be used on the new platform, which would be more salt-resistant. Commissioner Bloom also stated that his philosophy for historic buildings, especially those like Union Station, is that any minimal changes that can be made to make them far more functional are important steps to take.

Commissioner Stefani stated that this project is long overdue. He asked whether the existing platform, which is to be removed, would be replaced with something else, or if it would be a walkable space. He also asked if the curved staircase inside the building would remain open to access that area. Mr. Odell stated that the existing platform would be removed and not be replaced. The area would be water sealed and proper drainage would be installed. It is still to be determined what the space would be used for. The staircase Commissioner Stefani referenced would still remain in use for access to whatever that space is eventually used for. Commissioner Stefani also asked whether a tunnel rather than a pedestrian bridge was considered. Mr. Smee stated that a tunnel was considered, but considering the slope of the area, and the comfort factor of a tunnel versus a bridge, they decided to go with a bridge. He believed that in addition to being better received by the public, a bridge would help better define that area as an access point. Ms. Kelly stated that the MBTA is trying to get away from using tunnels on the commuter rail as a security measure. Commissioner Stefani stated that he understood.

No Public Comment.

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

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition at 10 Washington Square, which includes the demolition of the existing platform; the demolition and replacement of the existing plaza deck to include new waterproofing and drainage measures along south side of building; the creation of a center island platform to be fully integrated with the Union Station building with two access points; the addition of new passenger connections to the existing Union Station building and parking

lot; associated track and signal upgrades; and the construction of a new track interlocking, CP-44, is not detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City. The motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 10 Washington Square was approved.

List of Exhibits

1. Building Demolition Delay Waiver application dated April 23, 2020.

4. 4 Congress Street – HC-2020-025 (MBL 03-026-00032)

Petitioner: Emilio Mendez

Year Built: 1850

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; Crown Hill Local Historic District (LHD); State Register of Historic Places (SR); National Register of Historic Places District (NRDIS); National Register Multiple Resources Area (MRA), FKA James and Persis H. Andrews/Freeman Brown – Louis Lewisson House

Petition Purpose:

- Paint house
- Pave driveway
- Replace windows
- Rebuild 30 feet of concrete walkway
- Erect fallen column next to driveway
- Replace wood fence

The applicant did not call into the hearing. Mr. Rolle stated that staff have had difficulty making contact with the applicant. He said that staff has drafted a letter to be sent to the applicant explaining that the petition will be postponed to the May 14 meeting and that at that time, the petition will be heard with or without his participation.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz, the Commission voted 5-0 to postpone the petition to the May 14 meeting with or without the owner’s presence, with Commissioner Bloom recusing himself from the vote.

COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Letter from the MHC re: consideration of 44 Portland St. – Printers Building for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

Commissioner Bloom stated that the restoration work on the exterior of the Printer’s Building is a fine example of what art deco early 20th century architecture can look like. Commissioner Jerome-Mezynski agreed.

- b. Communication from the MHC re: Project Notification Form for the demolition of the Hale Building (AKA Nurse’s Building) at the former Worcester State Hospital Campus at 305 Belmont Street; invitation to comment.

This communication was held.

- c. Communication from the FCC re: Section 106 compliance; invitation to comment on potential effect of collocation of antennas atop property located at 116 Belmont Street.

Upon a motion by Chair Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commissioner voted 6-0 to not issue comment on this item.

- d. Letter from the MHC re: bathroom renovation at 69 Grove Street.

Upon a motion by Chari Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commissioner voted 6-0 to make a finding of no adverse effects.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Chair Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the meeting was adjourned at 7:07 PM.