

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
JUNE 22, 2006
418 MAIN STREET, SUITE 400**

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

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

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Tom Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The approval of the minutes was tabled until the following meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. **17 Southgate Place Demolition:** Scheduled Update July 13, 2006.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARING

2. **15 Chesnut Street (HC-06-10) Building Demolition Delay Permit:** Dennis Gray, representative for Verizon Inc., petitioner, presented the petition. Mr. Gray explained that Verizon Inc. seeks to remove six limestone panels and observe the conditions of the stone connections underneath. Mr. Gray showed examples of damage to a similar building in Lynn, Massachusetts that was designed by the same architect and stated that similar repairs may be necessary at 15 Chestnut Street. He also stated that they had chosen the six panels on the south side of the building based on accessibility and because it is expected the most damage would be located on the south side. Mr. Gray also noted that the panels cannot be replaced when they are removed because they are broken in the process. In addition, he stated that if structural damage is found, he may recommend that the owner remove the limestone façade and replace with pre-cast simulated limestone. He stated that he feels there is most likely damage on the parapet. Finally, Mr. Gray stated that he will complete the study by August and will appear before the Commission again for a proposal to replace the windows as well as any other renovations necessitated by the results of the research. Commissioner Theerman

cited public safety issues as a reason for approval. Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition of the designated historic building at 15 Chesnut 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 5-0.

3. **766 Main Street (HC-06-11) Building Demolition Delay Permit:** April Kelly and Cal Wilson, representatives for YMCA of Greater Worcester, presented the petition. Mr. Wilson stated that the proposed addition to the Alden Building will be used for office space and noted that while the window patterns on the addition and the banding will match the current building, there will be a slight color difference in the exterior materials. He noted that such modest color differences already exist on the building. Mr. Wilson explained that the proposed entry vestibule (light tower) will face Main Street and the parking area and was designed to increase the visibility and energy of the building in the neighborhood. He added that they chose to do a tower because of its significance in New England architecture and noted that the tower will have a “gossamer look” during the day and will be illuminated at night. It was noted by staff that the other building on the lot, which will be demolished to increase parking, is not on the MACRIS list. Thomas Conroy noted, for the record, that the current Building Demolition Delay application needs to be modified to provide the Commission with more and improved information about what applicants are applying for exactly and, in the case of 766 Main Street, which buildings. Mr. Wilson stated that an entryway constructed of brick would cost approximately \$75,000 more than the proposed entry. Ms. Kelly added that the YMCA of Greater Worcester had looked at a number of designs including a more historic brick entryway and had determined that it created a “closed-in” look and was not complimentary to their goals of creating a new entry. Commissioner Theerman noted that the building already has a hodgepodge look and that the proposed entry will increase visibility of the building in the neighborhood. Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition of the current vestibule of the designated historic building at 766 Main 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 4-0. Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Constantine, *the Commission found that the proposed demolition associated with the proposed addition to the Alden Building would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Worcester* and approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver 4-0.

Jeanice Sherman arrived at 6:00 pm.

OTHER BUSINESS

4. **2-4-6-16 South Cambridge Street (Worcester Center for Performing Arts)** Mark Donahue, representative for the Worcester Center for Performing Arts and Mike Pagano, architect, presented preliminary plans for the restoration and rehabilitation of the former Polis Palace Theater. Mr. Donahue clarified that the proposal would appear before the Commission in a bifurcated fashion due to funding and permitting reasons. He indicated that the first step in the renovation, for which he will appear before the Commission on July 13,

2006, will be to demolish the back wall of the building in order to increase the stage area and to add a performers' "green room". He explained that the project will appear before the Commission at another future date in order for him to present the proposed façade renovations. Mr. Donahue noted that the Worcester Center for Performing Arts will house 2,400 seats and that the expansion of the stage will allow them to host an increased number of performances and events. The Commission indicated that they would like to arrange for a site visit.

5. **Fire Alarm Telegraph Building:** Commissioner Theerman expressed enthusiasm that the building is in stable condition. The Commission members who viewed the site explained that one limiting factor for development is the lack of parking spaces. It was further noted that the abutting land cannot be sold because it is park land. Thomas Conroy noted that the attic area was dry despite recent rain. Vice Chair Johnson requested that staff check with Robert Antonelli, Assistant Parks Commissioner, and ensure that the medical records, fire records, and slides have been removed from the building and placed in a secure location.
6. **Historical Commission on the City Website:** Vice Chair Johnson requested that staff check the City's website and make sure that the address, contact information and meeting times are listed correctly.
7. **Chapter 139 Hearings:** Vice Chair Johnson indicated that he would try to attend the Chapter 139 hearings as a representative of the Historical Commission and asked that staff clarify the purpose of the hearings, which they understand is to facilitate ongoing communication between the City and property owners of condemned buildings to ensure that they are taking the necessary precautions to secure and insure the buildings and to obtain any updates on future rehabilitation or demolition.
8. **Worcester State Hospital:** Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester, stated that members of Preservation Worcester had toured the State Hospital. Ms. Packard requested a copy of the letter that Peter Schneider sent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Tom Johnson adjourned the meeting at 6:40 pm.