



The City of
WORCESTER

Historical Commission

Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice Chair
Steven Taylor, Clerk
Devon Kurtz
Donald Northway
Erika Helnarski
Tomi Stefani
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

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

Thursday, August 10, 2023

Worcester City Hall - Levi Lincoln Chamber,
with remote participation options available via Webex online at
<https://cityofworchester.webex.com/meet/historicalcommissionwebex> and
call-in number 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1608081191).

Commissioners Present: Diane Long, Chair
Janet Theerman, Vice-Chair
Steven Taylor
Donald Northway

Commissioners Absent: Erika Helnarski
Devon Kurtz
Tomi Stefani
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

Staff Present: Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)
Michelle Smith, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)

Call Commission to Order – 5:30 PM

Approval of Minutes – June 1, 2023

On a motion by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve the minutes of June 1, 2023.

Old Business

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

1. 88 Webster Street (27-032-00004) – BDDW-23-13

Petition Purpose: Construct addition including selective replacement of bricks, concrete blocks, windows and window grates

Sarah Vo o/b/o Gold Star Builders

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to continue this item to the August 24, 2023 meeting with a constructive grant deadline of September 8, 2023.

New Business

Certificate of Non-Applicability

2. 9 Crown Street (03-025-00010) – CNA-23-22

Petition purpose: Replace deck boards

Joe Chaves, general contractor, indicated that the owner is looking to do this work because the front porch started sagging. They intend to rebuild just as it is now. They don't know how much of the deck is compromised and won't know until they begin work. Mr. Chaves has worked on historic homes in the past and is familiar with the expectations.

Ms. Johnstone added that although not on the application, the railing system may also need to be replaced, which would also be replaced in kind.

Chair Long asked Mr. Chaves what materials will be used for the decking.

Mr. Chaves said the same wood materials that are existing will be used. The type of wood will be determined once boards are removed.

Commissioner Taylor thanks Mr. Chaves for using high quality wood in kind for replacement.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

Upon a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Northway, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 9 Crown Street are not under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the request for a Certificate of Non-Applicability was approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A - Application submitted by Jose Chaves and received July 25, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions shown at meeting

3. 96 Sagamore Road (20-002-03+4A) – CNA-23-23

4. 88 Sagamore Road (20-002-00005) - CNA-23-24

Petition purpose: Replace fence

Kim & Adrian Vanderspek, 96 Sagamore Road and Pam Farren, 88 Sagamore road would like to replace a cedar fence that runs across both properties. The fence was installed years ago and having the same company come back and install the same fence with the same materials brand new.

The Commission had no questions for the applicant.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

Upon a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 96 Sagamore Road and 88 Sagamore Road, consisting of the replacement of the existing fence in kind, are not under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the request for a Certificate of Non-Applicability was approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A – CNA-23-23 Application submitted by Kim Vanderspek and received July 25, 2023

Exhibit B – CNA-23-24 Application submitted by Sean Farren and received July 25, 2023

Exhibit C – Slides of current conditions shown at meeting

Building Demolition Delay waiver

5. 928, 930, 934 Main Street (06-042-00023, -00024, -00025) – BDDW-23-22

Petition purpose: Complete demolition of all buildings.

Joshua Lee Smith, Bowditch & Dewey, o/b/o Clark University Trustees and joined by various representatives of Clark University to seek a demolition delay waiver. This is a sizeable project and slides were shown indicating the impacted area. There are three historic buildings in the area designated for redevelopment. The buildings were built in the early 1900's and were used as ground floor retail and apartments on the upper floors. Clark has owned the buildings for a number of years and have used them as intended since. Currently, these buildings contain 66,000 square feet that are dedicated to student housing and 9,000 square feet of commercial space. The driver for this project is to increase the square footage of housing for students in a new building. This will modernize housing and give many more beds for anticipated growth. The new building will be approximately 156,000 square feet, 146,000 of which will be dedicated to student housing and 10,000 square feet of commercial space. Clark did a study with respect to renovation of the existing buildings compared to new construction. The consultant recommended adding 375 beds to the current housing inventory to meet current and future anticipated need. Clark has been overenrolled in housing and has been in third party agreements with Worcester State College to house students. This construction will alleviate the current day problem and allow for future planning. This will also help to relieve a small piece of the overall Worcester housing crisis as well.

Mike Gross, Architect for the project, walked through the diagrams that were shown as slides. They are early in design but wanted to show the thinking currently.

Joseph Corazzini, Vice-President for Government and Community Affairs for Clark University, spoke on behalf of the project. Has worked with the commercial tenants to assist with this transition for the project and almost every business has intention to return post construction. All tenants agreed that the buildings are in a state that they need to be replaced. Don't believe the community deserves to leave the buildings as is. Clark is working to insure value to the community while furthering goals. On last project, DEI goals were higher than targets. At the conclusion of construction, tenants will have better accommodations and housing will be accessible for all students and the community will be an increase of students moving onto campus.

Mr. Smith went over the timetable of the project outlined on a slide shown.

Chair Long said point made were admirable, they don't fall under the purview of the Historical Commission. The task of the commission is to determine if the loss of the three buildings would be a detriment to the City of Worcester's historical resources. The housing issue does need to be addressed, but not necessarily with the loss of these three buildings. This will change the landscape of Main Street and not sure it is for the better. This item will be opened for public comment and there are a couple of letters from students that will be read into the record.

Commissioner Taylor said there is a second phase of this process that happens if it is determined there is a financial hardship.

Ms. Johnstone stated that if they wanted to apply under financial hardship they could come back.

Chair Long said looking at the timeline for the demolition of these buildings, which is September of 2024, Clark realizes that a Demolition Delay Waiver is twelve months. She asked if the petitioners were at the meeting for the vote understanding that regardless of the vote, the project can move forward next September.

Mr. Smith stated they understand the time frame. Clark understands these buildings are historic and that the commission may have an opinion on their significance and also understands there is a possibility that the waiver could be denied. Clark devised the timetable taking that twelve-month period into consideration.

Vice-Chair Theerman doesn't believe that Clark is at pre-pandemic numbers as nationwide there is a decrease in college enrollment.

David Chearo, Vice President for Planning at Clark, stated that Clark has rebounded from the pandemic lull in enrollment however, the goal of this project is to house a greater proportion of the students on campus. Without any growth in enrollment, Clark students, both graduate and undergraduate, are experiencing a harder time finding housing in Worcester.

Commissioner Taylor asked what percentage of students are currently housed on campus.

Mr. Chearo said Clark has 1680 beds and currently enroll 2400 students.

Vice Chair Theerman asked how much guaranteed housing is offered.

Mr. Chearo said that the first- and second-year students are required to live on campus. Third and fourth years are optional. They would like to be able to guarantee any student who would like to live on campus can.

Commissioner Taylor asked if they have a sense of the percentage of students that have a desire to live on campus.

Mr. Chearo said the year after the pandemic, they went from a traditional third year percentage of 18% to 38%. This happened possibly because when students returned from the pandemic, the same apartments were not available to them as before.

Commissioner Taylor said that 67% sounds like a high number compared to nationally in terms of students living on campus in urban schools.

Mr. Chearo said in relation to timing, if they could apply for a demolition permit directly, they would, however, understanding was the way to begin the process was to apply for a waiver and that is why they are here and anticipating that petition could be denied, they have planned accordingly.

Public comment:

Steve Teasdale, Executive Director, Main South Community Development Corporation, would like to oppose the request for the waiver. The applicant has not demonstrated any need for financial hardship and the project is not scheduled to start until September 2024, so unclear the need for the waiver. A project this size will have a huge impact on the community and there should be a lot of community discussions about this before a building is pulled down. If the waiver is granted, the building could be pulled down immediately. The students displaced from housing will put an extra burden on the housing market in that area. Looking for conversation with Clark as there are community concerns about the scale of this project and asking that you deny this request.

Maggie Davis, Clark Student & Resident of Worcester, believes it is unfair to the business owners who occupy the building to give them less time to prepare before the building is torn down. Also, the increase in housing does not necessitate tearing down these buildings specifically. In 2021, Clark purchased seven acres of land at the corner of Park and Maywood and had no plans and not sure why plans for that land isn't housing. Also, take issue with the application that states Clark has had an increase in enrollment and agree with the commissioners that nationwide, there is not an increase in enrollment. If Clark over admitted students, it shouldn't be Main South's burden. Believe Clark should build on the empty parcel of land available to them rather than demolish historic buildings.

Dan Mulcahey, Vice President Worcester/Fitchburg Building Trades Council, noted that in the application, the petitioner indicated the price per square foot of the new construction. Hear to say that there is no urgency to get this approved at the moment and believe it would be wise to have more community conversations, work with local construction managers and build responsible in Worcester.

Pierre Roa, Worcester/Fitchburg Building Trades Council, piggy backed on what Mr. Mulcahey said that the feedback received from local construction folks in the city state that the budget proposed for this project is not viable. When this happens, buildings are value engineered and it is the trades people that pay the price for this. Also the details and historic features that were presented pay the price to meet the budget. They should spend some more time in the community to get an idea of what it costs to build a project like this in Worcester. A little more time would definitely be in order.

David Sullivan, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, expressed the chamber's support for Clark's proposed project. It is a significant long term investment in the community which will allow for more Clark students in the neighborhood and increase business activity in the commercial corridor. In the Chamber's opinion, the university is going above and beyond with helping the tenants relocate by the end of May 2024 according to their timeline. They have been transparent and have offered financial assistance for relocation services. The chamber is also assisting with relocation services even if the tenants are not chamber members with the hope that these tenants will return to the building to take advantage of the increased square footage. It is a necessary expansion project for Clark as they have been over capacity for years now. The chamber is confident that those being impacted by this project are and will be well supported. The new building will compliment the character of the Main South community and the university is making this process as community oriented as possible.

Chair Long read letters into record from letters received. Margaret Lambert, Clark Grad 2023, opposes the project because it will change the feel of campus and Main Street for the students. Marcus Palumbo, Sophomore at Clark, opposes the demolition because these historic buildings are important to the campus and to the student community.

Chair Long summarized the public comments made and asked commissioners for any additional comments.

Commissioners had no additional comments.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted zero (0) in favor and four (4) opposed that the proposed demolition at 928, 930, 934 Main Street, consisting complete demolition of buildings would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous negative vote, the motion failed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 928, 930, 934 Main Street was thus denied.

Exhibits

Exhibit A - Application submitted by the Trustees of Clark University and received May 31, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and proposed new project shown at meeting.

6. 17 Herman Street (03-003-00006) – BDDW-23-38

Petition purpose: Replace windows, trim, and doors in new and existing openings

Rachael Mair Project Manager of GoVenture Capital Group, spoke about project. Building is currently being used for manufacturing. It is the historic Taylor & Farley Organ Factory Building. Team is proposing to renovate the building to be a 36 unit multi-family apartment complex. The exterior changes are replacing and adding new windows and trim and doors as well as landscaping in the back and minor upgrades to the railings in the front.

Ms. Johnstone followed up that the commission has seen this building when it has come for letters of support for tax credits. It is state and federal historic tax credits and any renovations are done to the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

Commissioners had no questions or comments

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 17 Herman Street, consisting of replacing windows, trim, and doors in new and existing openings would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 17 Herman Street was thus approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A - Application submitted by Rachael Mair, Project Manager, and received July 10, 2023
Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and proposed changes shown at meeting

7. 41 Whitmarsh Avenue (1-009-00019) – BDDW-23-39

Petition Purpose: Remove all existing storefront glazing, frames, spandrel panels and doors & infill storefront openings on north, south and west elevations with CMU block wall with openings for windows.

Allison Lee of Worcester Community Housing Resources, with the permission of the current owner, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church to discuss changes to the 1960's addition to the church. They will be moving their offices and a family shelter into the addition and are proposing to replace the current storefront system façade with a more energy efficient CMU block system. With the design, they looked to match the exterior of the older section of the church more closely.

Commissioner Northway asked when what currently exists was added.

Ms. Lee answered in 1960.

Commissioner Taylor stated this is an issue that is going to come up more and more where additions and buildings built in the 1960's are now over 50 years old, and this commission has to take that into consideration when approving things.

Ms. Johnstone added that it was a pattern in the late 1950's early 1960's for churches to build this type of school building for Sunday school or parochial schools. Although the building is representative of that time and place, it is not a stellar example.

Andy Howorth, Director of Development and Finance at WCHR, stated that they did extensive design research to see if there was anything that could replicate the mid-century modern motel look that currently exists. There are both structural and insulation issues with the single paneled glass and the rusting steel frame and felt there were two alternatives – to replace what is there with new which would be very expensive and would make it very difficult to permit for intended uses with current code or what we are proposing.

Chair Long noted the conversation would be completely different if it were the church portion of the building.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 41 Whitmarsh Avenue, consisting of removing all existing storefront glazing, frame, spandrel panels and doors & infill storefront openings on north, south and west elevations with CMU block wall with openings for windows would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 41 Whitmarsh Avenue was thus approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A - Application submitted by Allison Lee and received July 17, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and future renderings shown at meeting

8. 5 Jackson Street (03-003-00023) – BDDW-23-40

Petition Purpose: Drill holes in masonry to accommodate sprinkler standpipe & FDC sign, fire alarm bell & hot air heating units

Jonathan Finkelstein, attorney, o/b/o Michael O'Rourke reviewed the work to be done and showed photos of other buildings that have had similar work done so the commissioners could have an idea of what it would look like.

Chair Long stated that the commission does not usually oppose safety issues for historic buildings.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 5 Jackson Street, consisting of drilling holes in masonry to accommodate sprinkler standpipe & FDC sign, fire alarm bell & hot air heating units would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 5 Jackson Street was thus approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A - Application submitted by Michael O'Rourke and received July 18, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and photos of other buildings with similar work done shown at meeting

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

9. 12 Congress Street (03-026-00023) – COA-23-15

Petition Purpose: Paint siding, trim, doors, window sashes, and shutters. Replace fencing. Install new retaining wall. Install new heating system ventilation pipe through the roof

Allison Lee of Worcester Community Housing Resources acting as receiver for this property. This property was here previously for the design and is now back for remaining design work approval. They are looking for fiber cement board, trim, shutters, and doors color approval. Additionally, looking for approval for the retaining wall material and color. They are replacing an additional length of wooden fence that had already been approved. For the ventilation system, they are looking to add a couple of pipes in the roof and a vent in the side of the house.

Commissioner Northway asked about the ventilation pipe and where on the roof it will be.

Ms. Lee said the photo is hard to see. It will be on the driveway side in between the windows. The square vent would be for the dryers.

Commissioner Northway said it is an 1867 house that doesn't have a lot of the historic look to it anymore and the chimneys were structurally not sound, is there any chance to construct just for the look of it.

Ms. Lee said that is not currently proposed, but understand what is being asked, for the look. This project has become costly because of other structural issues and that is why chimneys are not being proposed.

Vice-Chair Theerman asked if the fences are being replaced with in kind materials.

Ms. Lee said that the chain link is being replaced with the already approved spruce/pine material

Public comment:

Chair Long read into the record a letter sent by Roger Comeau, 14 Congress Street, who was concerned about the height of the fence and retaining wall.

Chair Long stated that the Historical Commission has no per view over any differences with approvals with regard to planning and perhaps Ms. Lee reach out to that neighbor.

Ms. Lee stated they have had some conversations with Mr. Comeau already.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes at 12 Congress Street, consisting of painting siding, trim, doors, window sashes, and shutters, replacing fencing, installing new retaining wall, and installing new heating system ventilation pipe through the roof is appropriate for the Crown Hill historic district. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Certificate of Appropriateness for 12 Congress Street was thus approved.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 12 Congress Street, consisting of painting siding, trim, doors, window sashes, and shutters, replacing fencing, installing new retaining wall, and installing new heating system ventilation pipe through the roof would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 12 Congress Street was thus approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Allison Lee and received July 6, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and proposed materials to be used shown at meeting

10. 253 Pleasant Street (03-027-00029) – COA-23-16

Petition Purpose: Replace windows and doors, add window boxed and downlighting, power wash, point, repair, and restore brick and remove rolldown door and hardware

Wendy Steinhilber, petitioner participated remotely with husband Bill, stated they own and operate their business out of the building. They are working with the City of Worcester façade program and the transformative district initiative with Mass Development. They would like to remove the metal framing from the roll down door that was previously there from the previous owners as well as repoint, repair, and power wash all of the brick. They will be adding downlighting, window boxes for flowers, all existing

window frames and two front doors. They will also replace the front window with a new window as current window is damaged. All siding will be replaced with hearty board and batten.

Public comment: None.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 253 Pleasant Street, consisting of replacing of windows and doors, add window boxed and downlighting, power wash, point, repair, and restore brick and remove rolldown door and hardware would be appropriate for the Crown Hill historic district. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Certificate of Appropriateness for 253 Pleasant Street was thus approved.

On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Taylor, the Commission voted four (4) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed demolition at 253 Pleasant Street, consisting of replacing of windows and doors, add window boxed and downlighting, power wash, point, repair, and restore brick and remove rolldown door and hardware would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester. Having gained a unanimous affirmative vote, the motion passed and a Building Demolition Delay Waiver for 253 Pleasant Street was thus approved.

Exhibits

Exhibit A – Application submitted by Wendy Steinhilber and received July 17, 2023

Exhibit B – Slides of current conditions and proposed changes shown at meeting

Communications

None

Other Business

Ms. Johnstone said that next week, along with Chair Long and Vice-Chair Theerman, they will be going on a walking tour of Saint Gobain and will take photos. At a subsequent meeting, they will give a report of what was seen and learned.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted four (4) to zero (0) to adjourn the meeting at approximately 6:45 p.m.