



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)
Meeting Minutes
Monday February 10, 2020

Attendance: Paola Ferrario, Christopher Gauthier, Marco Crescentini

Not in Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom, Frances Welson

Municipal Staff: Ben Murphy (OPED)

Others in Attendance: N/A

1. **Call to Order** – Paola Ferrario called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m and announced that the meeting was being recorded.
2. **Review of December 9, 2019 and January 13, 2020 Minutes** – The minutes of the December and January meetings were not available for the Commission to review and approve.
3. **Public Participation** – No public participation

4. **Demolition Delay Ordinance**

Ben Murphy shared a document he produced entitled 2020 Update to the Demolition Ordinance. The document describes the demolition delay ordinance, the changes the Commission is proposing to be made, why the changes are being proposed, and identifies City programs and policies that have been implemented since the ordinance was last updated in 2013. The document also contains a section of funding sources available for historic preservation project, which Mr. Murphy intends to expand upon.

Mr. Murphy shared that the new Chair of the City Council Ordinance Committee is back logged, which means this ordinance will most likely be delayed until the fall. Mr. Murphy shared that he and Commissioner Welson have met with the Building Commissioner, the Board of Health Director, and the Fire Chief. The Building Commissioner has been supportive of the suggested changes. The Director of the Board of Health and the Fire Chief had concerns about extending the delay to an 18-month period. The Fire Chief was also concerned about lowering the threshold to 75-year-old because that change may translate to more vacant and deteriorated buildings which are generally a fire hazard.

Mr. Murphy shared that he had a list pulled of all the properties that would be affected by the ordinance changes and he found that 1920 appears to have been used when a built date was unknown. He came to this conclusion because of the unusual number of buildings with 1920 as their built date and by auditing those properties to find that some are clearly older than 1920. Mr. Murphy has also been putting together a spreadsheet of demolition delay applications that the Commission has heard since the inception of the ordinance, which shows that the Commission rarely enforces a delay.

5. **MHC Survey and Planning Grant**

a. **Main St. Corridor Survey**

Ben Murphy shared that the consultant is in the next-to-last phase and the longest part of the project, which is producing all the survey forms. This phase is expected to be completed in May.

b. **2020 Grant Application – Canal System Industrial Area Survey**

Ben Murphy shared that he submitted the full MHC grant application for the Canal System Industrial Area and feels confident about its chances of being funded. CDBG funds have been identified for the required MHC grant match, but they have not been secured yet. Mr. Murphy indicated that he thinks CDBG funding is available. Between the two survey projects, the hope is to complete survey work for all The Flats and South Holyoke neighborhoods.

6. Old Business

Ben Murphy shared that Commission Ahlstrom has indicated that the new owner of the Richardson Train Station, David White, was willing to come to a future Commission meeting to speak about his plans for the building.

7. New Business

- Ben Murphy shared that the Holyoke Armory continues to be a difficult property as it is dangerous to go inside and obtain existing conditions because floors and stairs have collapsed along with rotten floors. The architect working on the building study is going to the State Archives to see if she can find plans for the building.
- Ben Murphy shared that the City is again applying for MHC Preservation Project Funds for the stain glass windows at City Hall and a support letter from the Historical Commission is required. The consensus from the Commission was that the City can provide a written update of the project for the next meeting instead of coming in person to present.

8. Next Meeting – March 2020

9. Adjourn

At 6:57 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Marco Crescentini and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Sincerely,

Holyoke Historical Commission