



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday July 13, 2020

Due to the declared public health emergency, the meeting was held virtually via zoom.us

Zoom Meeting ID: 878 7050 8813

Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom, Elana Aubrey, Marco Crescentini, Paola Ferrario, Christopher Gauthier, Frances Welson

Not in Attendance: N/A

Municipal Staff: Ben Murphy (OPED)

Others in Attendance: Zachary Violette, Dennis Hohenberger

1. **Call to Order** – Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m and announced that the meeting was being recorded. Mr. Ahlstrom introduced Elana Aubrey as the newest member of the Commission.

2. **Review of December 9, 2019, January 13, 2020, February 10, 2020, and March 9, 2020 Minutes**

A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Marco Crescentini to accept the minutes from December 9, 2019, January 13, 2020, February 10, 2020 and March 9, 2020.

The motion carried. 5 Yeas, 0 Nays, 1 abstention (Elana Aubrey).

3. **Survey & Planning Grants**

a. **Main Street Corridor Historic Survey Project Presentation**

Zachary Violette, the consultant that is conducting the survey, was present to speak about the survey project, which he has partnered with preservation consultant John Clemson to complete. Mr. Violette made a brief presentation and shared that 106 buildings have been surveyed based on the project target list, 86 as individual B (Building) Forms and 20 buildings are part of four Area Forms. The four Area Forms include:

- Merrick Thread Company Area, which was the only industrial complex surveyed.
- Fredrick Company Area along Race and Main Streets at Sargeant Street, which is a mix of residential and commercial buildings developed by Ernst Hugo Friedrich.
- John J. Prew Clemente Street Subdivision Area, a group of early small wood frame houses that where likely moved to the location.
- South Bridge Street Area, a group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential tenement blocks and is one of the best preserved unified residential streetscapes in Holyoke.

Mr. Violette explained that the survey area may be of national importance as an example of immigrant enterprise and small scale urban development. Most of the buildings where built by recent immigrants, primarily French-Canadian and German, for their own homes and for rental income.

Mr. Violette explained that because of the past loss of historic buildings in the survey area, it is difficult to identify National Register Historic Districts in the area, which would be most typical in this type of urban area. In this circumstance properties can be listed individually to the National Register of Historic Places (NR). The Merrick Thread Co. and South Bridge Street Areas are the exceptions. Mr. Violette has identified 22 individual properties and two districts (Merrick Thread Co. & South Bridge St.) he feels are eligible for listing on the NR. He further recommended that the following eight properties are the most significant and should be prioritized for listing on the NR.

- Richardson Train Depot, 12 Bowers Street
- Precious Blood Rectory, 56 Cabot Street
- Holyoke Water Power Company Office, 1 Canal Street
- Mount Tom Hose Company #1, 5 Canal Street
- Levi Perkins Block, 335 Dwight Street
- Levi Perkins Block Annex, 64-66 Main Street
- Lemuel Sears and Company Block, 80-88 Race Street
- Turn Halle, 620-626 South Bridge Street

Mr. Violette clarified that the survey forms help build a foundation for listing on the NR, but that additional work is required for listing, including an official finding of eligibility and having the property owner agree. For historic tax credit purposes, all that is needed is an official finding of eligibility.

There was some discussion on the eligibility of NR listing of Holyoke House, the Greek Revival style palace hotel at 345 Dwight Street, as it one of the most important early buildings of Holyoke. Mr. Violette indicated that there are challenges to listing on the NR because it has lost some of its integrity and there is not a lot of opportunity for a historic district in that area. To argue for its significance in its survey form, historic significance has been emphasized over the architectural significance.

Mr. Violette shared details about the work process, which included finalizing the target list, photographing buildings over the course of a couple of days, map research to find gross construction dates, deed research on most properties, and then other research such as census work to find out occupations. He explained that the project is currently in phase three and that all the forms have been submitted to MHC for review. MHC will make comments and suggest changes and corrections. After that, the survey forms will be finalized and sent to MHC and HHC.

Mr. Murphy shared that MHC has allocated an additional \$3,000 for the project because funds became available from another project falling through, and the Main Street Corridor project was overmatch. Mr. Murphy has worked with Mr. Violette to identify buildings in the South Bridge Street area to be included.

b. Canal System Industrial Area Survey Grant

Ben Murphy shared that the matching CDBG funds for the grant have been secured and the project will move forward. The grant must now be accepted by the City Council before it can proceed. It appears the project will follow a similar timeline as last year, with a consultant being hired in October. Mr. Murphy indicated that he will be looking for volunteers to sit on the review committee to hire a consultant.

Mr. Murphy explained that this survey will focus on the mill complexes along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals and the 3rd Level Canal and the Connecticut River. It will also include historic buildings within The Flats and South Holyoke that had not been included in the Main Street Corridor Survey. The goal is to complete survey work in The Flats and South Holyoke neighborhoods.

4. Demolition Delay Ordinance

Ben Murphy clarified that it appears that 1920 was used by the city assessor as a default year for the “built date” for many properties, even though some are older. Now that we are in 2020 all those buildings are 100 years old and now fall within the demo delay ordinance. Mr. Murphy indicated that he hopes to focus on advancing the demo delay ordinance update before the September Commission meeting.

- 5. Old Business** – Richard Ahlstrom indicated that he would reach out to David White, owner of the Richardson Train Station, to discuss his plans for the building. Mr. Murphy also suggested that the Commission discuss with him the potential for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

6. New Business

- Mr. Murphy shared that he has heard from Michael Moriarty from OneHolyoke that they are planning to demolish a small house at 246 Lyman Street and that he expects the demo delay hearing to happen at the August Commission meeting.
- Elana Aubrey introduced herself to the rest of the Commission and shared that she has been a resident of a historic house in the Highlands neighborhood for four years and has an interest in participating in anything that perpetuates Holyoke. She does not have experience with municipal commissions but is interested in making sure the history of Holyoke is not lost.
- There was discussion and questions on state ethics training. Mr. Murphy indicated he would look into how often Commissioners must complete ethics training and also see if there are any information documents on how to serve on a commission.
- Mr. Murphy shared that the MassDevelopment study on the Holyoke Armory is complete, which focused on preserving just the exterior walls of the building. He will send the study to Commissioners. He also shared that the CPA grant application for the Armory was not funded.
- Mr. Murphy shared the list of historic preservation projects that are receiving CPA funding this year. They include:
 - City Hall Stained Glass Restoration \$80,000 (project also receiving MHC Preservation Project Funds grant)
 - Holyoke Merry Go Round Restoration \$26,170
 - Wistariahurst Museum Electrical Upgrade \$104,500
 - Lady Liberty Conservation Study \$25,000
 - Armour & Company Project, 130 Race St. Rehabilitation of Façade: \$90,000
- Marco Crescentini spoke about the need for the Historical Commission and the Community Preservation Committee to communicate about historic preservation projects and preservation restrictions. Mr. Murphy will send the Commission the CPA related policies that have been adopted.

7. Next Meeting – August 10, 2020

8. Adjourn

At 7:33 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Paola Ferrario to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Sincerely,

Holyoke Historical Commission