



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday August 10, 2020

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 834 1280 4041

**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:** Michael Moriarty, David White

1. **Call to Order** – Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

2. **Review of July 13, 2020 Minutes**

*A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Paola Ferrario to accept the minutes from July 13, 2020.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

3. **Public Hearing – Demo Delay 246 Lyman Street**

*A motion was made by Frances Welson and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to open the demolition delay public hearing for the 246 Lyman Street application.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

Michael Moriarty, the executive director of One Holyoke CDC, provided the background of 246 Lyman Street. He explained that the Mass Attorney Generals office contacted OneHolyoke about taking on this property as a receiver and OneHolyoke agreed as long as resources would be available to resolve the problems with the property, which has been abandoned for about ten years. The previous owner died, and the owner's estate walked away from the property. The property was not of interest to most developers because it is in significant disrepair and once demolished the lot is too small to be built upon. OneHolyoke will demolish the house, fill in the foundation hole, grade and seed the lot. About 85% of the cost is being provided by a state grant and by a private donor. The rest of the cost is being covered by OneHolyoke as part of their mission. The structure is very small and is estimated to take about a day to demolish.

Frances Welson asked about having the estate pay for some of the expenses and Mr. Moriarty responded that they are looking at possibility of going after the estate for the funds, but it is unlikely due to the difficulty and expenses of going through that process. Richard Ahlstrom commented that the extent of the disrepair is shown in the photographs.

*A motion was made by Frances Welson and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to open the hearing to public comment for the demolition delay application of 246 Lyman Street.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

There were no public comments and no correspondences were received.

*A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to close the hearing to public comment for the demolition delay application of 246 Lyman Street.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

Elana Aubrey asked about removal of hazardous materials from the site and Mr. Moriarty shared that a hazardous materials review was conducted as part of the demolition permit process. It found some small amounts that will be remediated as part of the demolition. Mr. Ahlstrom clarified that that is part of the Building Departments purview.

*A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to close the demolition delay public hearing for the 246 Lyman Street application.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*

*A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to impose a delay for the demolition of 246 Lyman Street.*

*The motion failed unanimously.*

#### **4. Richardson Train Station**

Richard Ahlstrom introduced David White, the new owner of the Richardson Train Station. Mr. White explained that he purchased the property in October 2019 and about three months ago work started to make the building safe, make it watertight, remove trash, debris, graffiti, and plant overgrowth.

Mr. White shared that the following work has already proceeded:

- removal of a concrete loading dock
- painting the concrete block addition
- repairing exterior doors
- repairing the most rotted sections of the roof

Major projects for the building include:

- Repairing the rotted platform along the train tracks
- Permanently repairing the roof, which is estimated to cost \$150,000. Currently, temporary roof repairs have been keeping water out.
- Putting back missing exterior brownstone wall caps, which have been found on site.
- Running a new water service in from the street.
- HG&E will bring in power underground.

Mr. White shared that in the next thirty to sixty days HG&E will be installing fiber optics for security, repairs to masonry will be made and the building will be handicap accessible. The chain-link fence along the train tracks will be replaced with a nicer fence. Some of the work is challenging because it requires access via the railroad right-of-way, but so far, the railroad has been cooperative. The goal is to bring back the building to its historic appearance.

Marco Crescentini asked if Mr. White would consider removing the cement block walls to reopen the porch that had been enclosed and Mr. White responded that it is an option, but it would depend on whether a future tenant would need the additional space. Mr. Ahlstrom asked about the condition of the foundation and Mr. White responded that the basement is wet and will need a dehumidifier, but he was not concerned about the condition of the foundation. He stated that it would need to be grouted, but that it is not a big deal. Frances Welton asked if historic tax credits are an option and Mr. White indicated that he has met with a few architects that specialize in restoration and that they will get back to him in early October to formulate a plan.

Ben Murphy shared that the City is completing an update to the historic survey form in the area of the Richardson Train Station and that the survey recommends adding the property to the National Register of Historic Places, which is a requirement to qualify for historic tax credits.

Commissioners thanked Mr. White for taking on the project and for the progress so far. There was some discussion on conducting a site visit to see the progress.

## **5. CPA Preservation Restrictions**

Ben Murphy shared that the four documents included in the meeting packet were the lists of the 2019 and 2020 funded CPA projects and preservation restrictions for the Victory Theater and 43 Canal Street. Mr. Murphy was unsure on what the CPA Committee needed from the Historical Commission related to these documents. Marco Crescentini shared that the restriction for 43 Canal Street is controversial because the owner, OneHolyoke, has concerns about it. He also shared that there was a concern about funding the Victory Theater before all of their financing was secured.

Richard Ahlstrom asked what the HHC was responsible for and Mr. Murphy responded that the main responsibility of the HHC is to monitor the properties to make sure that inappropriate changes are not being made to the buildings. Mr. Murphy will confirm with the Building Commissioner that those properties can be added to the Building Departments database to be flagged if a permit is pulled, which would require a property owner to first receive approval from the HHC before making changes. It would be like the system used to flag properties in the Local Historic District.

Mr. Murphy agreed to touch base with the CPA staff person to find out more information on the preservation restrictions and asked Commissioners to read through the preservation restrictions before the next meeting.

## **6. Demolition Delay Ordinance**

Ben Murphy shared that he has started reviewing the process for possible changes and asked Frances Welton to review the suggested changes before sending it to the full commission. Ms. Welton shared some language from the Sturbridge Historical Commission about their demolition delay ordinance, which requires a property owner to offer the property for sale for at least twelve months and show reasonable effort to find a buyer that is able to restore the building. Mr. Murphy will send the document to Commissioners. Mr. Murphy shared that he sent a list of demo delay cases to the Commission and it shows that the Commission has not imposed a significant number of delays. Richard Ahlstrom indicated that the Commission would focus on the demolition delay ordinance at the September meeting.

## **7. Holyoke Armory Study**

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 indicated that the plan is to go out to bid again to see if there is any interested in the property now that additional information is available.

## **8. Survey & Planning Grants**

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

Ben Murphy shared that he and the Mass Historical Commission have reviewed the surveys and submitted comments and corrections to the consultant, Zachary Violette. He will update the forms and then they will be finalized. He is also working on the additional properties in South Holyoke that were added to the Scope of Work. The goal is to have everything done by the end of September. Mr. Murphy also shared that Michael Steinitz from MHC said that it may be possible for the Holyoke House property to be eligible for the National Register, depending on any interior historic fabric that may still exist and probably by pairing it with the Parsons Hall building across the street.

### **b. Canal System Industrial Area Survey Grant**

Ben Murphy shared that he is working on moving forward with the process to hire a consultant and have the City Council accept the MHC grant, which is expected to happen at their September meeting.

## **9. Old Business – No old business was discussed.**

**10. New Business**

Ben Murphy shared that Frances Welton made a presentation on the Yankee Pedlar/PeoplesBank project to the Western Mass Historical Commission Coalition. The Coalition had asked for preservation success story and HHC submitted the project.

**11. Next Meeting** – September 14, 2020

**12. Adjourn**

*At 7:47 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.*

Sincerely,

**Holyoke Historical Commission**