



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday December 14, 2020

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 829 2308 5674

Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom, Elana Aubrey, Paola Ferrario, Christopher Gauthier, Luis Salazar, Frances Welson

Not in Attendance: Marco Crescentini, Harry Montalvo

Municipal Staff: Ben Murphy (OPED)

Others in Attendance: Marc Joyce, Stephanie Joyce, Thomas Shea, Christopher Sims, Jonathan Mills, Rema Mills, Carl Cameron, John Therrien

1. **Call to Order** – Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded.
2. **Review of November 9, 2020 Minutes**
Elana Aubrey requested some small changes to the minutes to correct spelling mistakes.

A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Paola Ferrario to accept the minutes from November 9, 2020, as amended.

The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Public Participation** - There was no public participation.
4. **Community Preservation Act - Determination of Historic Significance**
Ben Murphy reminded Commissioners that they are being asked to make a determination about the historic significance of the historic resources to the City of Holyoke. The Commission was not deciding or making recommendations on funding or the merits of the projects.
 - a. **JFK Memorial**
Marc Joyce, of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade, explained the history and importance of the JFK Memorial, which is located at the intersection of Appleton, Suffolk, and Sycamore Street. An application for CPA funds is being submitted to make repairs to the Memorial.

A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Frances Welson to determine that the Holyoke JFK Memorial is historically significant to the City of Holyoke.

The motion carried unanimously.

- b. **Holyoke Fire Engine 9**

Deputy Chief Thomas Shea, of the Holyoke Fire Department, explained the history and importance of the Engine #9 Mack Fire Truck, which the City purchased new in 1935. He explained that CPA funds are being applied to repair the vehicle.

A motion was made by Frances Welson and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to determine that Holyoke Fire Engine #9 is historically significant to the City of Holyoke.

The motion carried unanimously.

c. War Memorial Building

Christopher Sims, Chair of the Holyoke War Memorial Commission, explained the history and importance of the Holyoke War Memorial Building. He explained that CPA funds are being sought to make repairs to the building. Ben Murphy reminded Commissioners that the Commission had previously supported the nomination for the building to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

*A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Paola Ferrario to determine that the Holyoke War Memorial Building is historically significant to the City of Holyoke.
The motion carried unanimously.*

5. Public Hearing

a. Demo Delay – 58 Waldo Street Garage

*A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to open a demolition delay public hearing for 58 Waldo Street.
The motion carried unanimously.*

Jonathan Mills, owner, and resident of 58 Waldo Street, explained that he and his wife recently moved into the home at 58 Waldo Street. He explained that the garage at the rear of the property is leaning significantly towards their neighbor's yard. Richard Ahlstrom shared that he conducted a site visit with the homeowners and explained that the structure does not have a foundation and it is in significant disrepair. He further stated that it would be very difficult to salvage and is in favor of taking the building down.

Mr. Ahlstrom opened the hearing up for public comments.

The owner of the rear abutting property, at 105-107 Nonotuck Street, stated that she supported the demolition of the structure if there was no possible way to repair it.

Mr. Ahlstrom closed the hearing to public comments.

*A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Paola Ferrario to close the demolition delay public hearing for 58 Waldo Street.
The motion carried unanimously.*

*A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Elana Aubrey to impose a demolition delay on 58 Waldo Street garage.
The motion failed unanimously.*

6. Public Hearing Continuation

a. Demo Delay - 12 Corser Street and **b.** Demo Delay - 14 Corser Street and **c.** Demo Delay - 605-607 Beech Street and **d.** Demo Delay - 1840 Northampton Street

Christopher Gauthier stated that he is recusing himself from the conversation and decision due to a conflict of interest, as he has a preexisting business relationship with Holyoke Medical Center. Paola Ferrario explained that she has worked with the state ethics commission because she owns a property within the neighborhood, and it has been determined there is no conflict because the property does not directly abut or abut an abutter of any of the properties.

*A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Elana Aubrey to concurrently continue the demolition delay public hearing for the 12 Corser Street, 14 Corser Street, 605-607 Beech Street, and 1840 Northampton Street applications.
The motion carried 5 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention (Christopher Gauthier).*

Carl Cameron, Chief Operating Officer for Holyoke Medical Center, explained that additional information was sent to the Commission and was meant to show the financial health of the Hospital and the recent growth of the organization. Mr. Cameron explained that the goal is to remain a local and independent hospital. He also shared a 3D rendering with the Commission of the facility from Northampton Street.

Richard Ahlstrom opened the hearing up to public comment. Hearing from no one from the public, Mr. Ahlstrom ended the public comment period.

There continued to be concern from Commissioners on how the facility will fit within the neighborhood. Additionally, there was concern that if the new facility was not approved, historically significant buildings would be demolished and replaced with parking lots.

Frances Welson stated that the Corser Street properties will need to be rezoned and all the properties will require a variance from the City Council for the proposed parking. Mr. Cameron explained that the hospital will need to request those changes. He also clarified that the Hospital will not demolish any of the buildings until they have gotten all the necessary approvals from the City. He also stated that they expect to get state approval in January or February.

Ms. Ferrario stated that the Planning Board and the Historical Commission are separate entities, even though they are both under the umbrella of the Planning Department. She stated this to make clear that the different boards and commissions may have different opinions. She stated that historic preservation does not necessarily mean the building must be exactly original.

Mr. Ahlstrom stated that the goal is to look at alternatives and come up with the best possible project and in this case, he feels that salvaging the integrity of Northampton Street is important. He was concerned that the current Medical Center is architecturally disjointed, and he did not want to see that on Northampton Street.

Mr. Ahlstrom recommended that the Commission look at ways to compromise and suggested that the Medical Center look at preserving and reusing 1840 Northampton Street in exchange for the Commission not imposing delays on the three other buildings. He shared that he is concerned that if 1840 Northampton Street were demolished, inevitably the remaining two-family house next door would also be demolished, and that would significantly change the streetscape of Northampton Street. Mr. Ahlstrom also suggested that as mitigation, the hospital would document the other three buildings through professional photography, which could be donated to the History Room at the Holyoke Public Library. He indicated that 1840 Northampton Street was in bad shape, but not beyond repair and he thought that it could be reused. Elana Aubrey suggested that office space for counseling at the Northampton Street building could be convenient to the behavioral health facility.

Mr. Cameron agreed to investigate the possibility of reworking the plans so that 1840 Northampton Street could be saved and reused. He indicated that it may be possible to reuse the house for administrative office space, but the challenge will be finding space somewhere else for the parking spaces planned for that location. Mr. Cameron indicated that the City has asked that the Hospital not expand into the neighborhoods near Pinehurst and Portland Street. Mr. Cameron asked for assurances and clear direction from the Commission to be able to move forward with the project.

There was informal consensus from the Commission that they would support not enforcing a demolition delay on the Corser Street and Beech Street buildings if the Northampton Street building is saved and reused. Mr. Ahlstrom suggested that the Northampton Street demolition be removed from the table as part of the agreement to move forward with not imposing a delay for the other three properties.

Commissioners asked that the renderings of the proposed facility be sent to the Commission for closer review and Mr. Cameron indicated he would send those documents to the Commission. The Commission asked that Mr. Cameron look into the possibility of saving and reusing 1840 Northampton Street and report back to the Commission at the January meeting.

A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Elana Aubrey to continue the demolition delay public hearings for the 12 Corser Street, 14 Corser Street, 605-607 Beech Street, and 1840 Northampton Street applications until the next meeting of the Holyoke Historical Commission on January 11, 2021.

The motion carried 5 yeas, 0 nays, 1 abstention (Christopher Gauthier).

7. Demolition Delay Ordinance

Richard Ahlstrom shared that he spoke to City Councilor Rebecca Lisi, who is the Chair of the Ordinance Committee, and she made suggestions on how to move forward with the ordinance. Councilor Lisi stated that the ordinance and a formal letter be sent to the City Clerk to be placed on a City Council agenda. She did not think it would be heard until the February meeting. Ms. Lisi recommended reaching out to the members of the Ordinance Committee to inform them of the proposed ordinance. Committee members include Rebecca Lisi, Juan Anderson-Burgos, Libby Hernandez, Terence Murphy, and Linda Vacon. The Committee will want to know how the change will affect City Departments and she recommended providing case studies from other communities. Councilor Lisi said she would file the ordinance.

The Commission felt it was important to speak about the ordinance with the Building Commissioner, Damian Cote, and the members of the Ordinance Committee in January. Commissioners will hold off contacting other City Councilors about the ordinance until closer to the City Council meeting where the ordinance will be heard. Ben Murphy indicated that he would draft the letter to the City Clerk.

Mr. Murphy reminded the Commission that Paola Ferrario drafted a letter to the Planning Board about 140 Middle Water Street. Ms. Ferrario shared that she thought it was important to formally let the Planning Board know what the Commission had discussed in its meeting and to open communication with the Planning Board.

A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Luis Salazar to approve sending a letter, as presented, to the Holyoke Planning Board related to the construction of a new building at 140 Middle Water Street.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Murphy indicated that he would put the letter on letterhead and forward it to the Planning Board.

8. Community Engagement – HHC Social Media and Webpage

Paola Ferrario shared that she met with Elana Aubrey and Luis Salazar to discuss the Historical Commission's online presence. The Committee decided against recommending a Facebook page because of the difficulties managing public comments. The committee recommended expanding the current HHC City webpage or creating a new website that focuses on three main topics.

- **Locational Resources**
Information of historically significant buildings like how they are being used, have they been restored, and encourage others to provide additional information.
- **Internal Information**
Information about the Commission such as meeting minutes, proper procedure, and form.
- **Community Involvement**
To promote its historic richness, Holyoke should be presented as a complex and interesting City.
Engage the community through videos or publications with topics such as
 - Contemporary use of old buildings
 - Architects of old mills
 - Stories of historic preservation and lost buildings

- Interviewing people on their favorite buildings
 - Utilize well known longtime residents to talk about their favorite buildings
 - Utilize new homeowners to talk about their experience with their historic house
- The website “Dear Photograph” can be used as an example on how to discuss the history of the City by comparing photographs of the past to what has happened to that place since the photograph was taken. Community members, students, and interns should be utilized for outreach and to help create content. Messaging around historic preservation should stay positive, especially where nostalgia is present.

9. Survey & Planning Grants

Ben Murphy shared that a selection committee made up of Frances Welton, Christopher Gauthier and Alicia Zoeller from the Office for Community Development, met to review the one quote that was received for the Canal System Industrial Area historic survey. The quote was submitted from Zachary Violette, the consultant that completed the Main Street Corridor historic survey. The Committee found that he is qualified and recommended hiring him for the new project. Mr. Murphy is now working on getting Mr. Violette under contract with the City and moving forward with the project.

Mr. Murphy shared that he sent the final report on the Main Street Corridor to the Commission. He explained that all the survey forms have been put up online and he has placed hyperlinks to each form within the list of properties at the end of the final report. He explained that the report also identifies buildings and areas that may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Old Business – No old business was discussed.

11. New Business

- Richard Ahlstrom stated that the Commission is meant to elect officers annually at the beginning of the fiscal year in July. He asked that the Commission take up elections at the January meeting. Mr. Ahlstrom shared he is willing to stay on as chair. The Commission needs to also elect a vice-chair and recording clerk.
- Elana Aubrey shared that Gateway City Arts has closed.
- Paola Ferriaro shared that her film about Mater Dolorosa will be premiering online on Saturday, December 19th.
- Ben Murphy stated that the discussion about the possibility of making Wyckoff Park an historic district will be an agenda item on the January meeting agenda.

12. Next Meeting – January 11, 2021

13. Adjourn

At 8:58 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Elana Aubrey to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Sincerely,

Holyoke Historical Commission