



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday June 14, 2021

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 881 3022 8355

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

Not in Attendance: Harry Montalvo

Municipal Staff: Ben Murphy (OPED) Gabriella Klinakis (OPED)

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 May 10, 2021 Minutes

A motion was made by Elana Aubrey and seconded by Paola Ferrario to accept the minutes from May 10, 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Participation - There was no public participation.

4. Discussion with Mayor Murphy (*this item was taken out of order, after item 6*) – Mayor Terry Murphy did not participate in the meeting. Christopher Gauthier explained that his term expired in May and that Mayor Murphy requested a meeting with him before appointing him to a new term. At the meeting they spoke about the Demolition Delay Ordinance and how the Commission tends to be the last to know about projects involving demolition. Mr. Gauthier went on to explain that the Mayor asked him for the top three historic buildings that the Commission wanted to see saved and Mr. Gauthier provided a list but explained to the Mayor that he could only represent himself and not the Commission.

Ben Murphy explained that the City Council was taking up an order to issue a bond to pay for the demolition of several buildings, including buildings not owned by the City. He went on to explain that the list had come from a list that the Problem Properties group maintains, but that that group had not been consulted, nor had the Office of Planning and Economic Development.

There were concerns raised by several Commissioners about the Commission not having been consulted about any of the properties on the demolition list and that the Problem Properties Group does not have any representation from the Historical Commission. Additionally, there were questions on the legality of the City demolishing buildings that it does not own. Frances Welson asked if the buildings on the list would fall under the Demolition Delay Ordinance and Mr. Murphy responded that all the buildings are over 100 years old and therefore would fall under Demo Delay unless the Holyoke Building Commissioner deemed them unsafe.

Richard Ahlstrom encouraged Commissioners to attend the City Council meeting on Tuesday 6/15 to express their concerns on the proposed demolition bond. There was consensus from Commissioners that a letter should be sent from the Commission to the City Council stating that the Commission does not support the demolition bond.

A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Elana Aubrey for the Holyoke Historical Commission to send a letter to the Holyoke City Council stating that the Commission is not in favor of the proposed demolition bond. The motion carried unanimously.

- 5. Letter of Support- Vadim Tulchinsky** – Ben Murphy introduced Vadim Tulchinsky, Managing Director of Urbanist Capital. Mr. Tulchinsky explained that he and his two business partners, Bill Womeldorf and Alec Bewsee, are asking for letters of support that would help with applications for state grants to rehabilitate 106-120 High Street and 141-147 High Street. He went on to explain that both buildings have retail space on the ground floor and market rate apartments are planned on the currently vacant upper stories. They are trying to preserve the look of the buildings while also making them look more inviting by taking down the metal grates in front of the doors located at 106-120 High Street. Uplighting is planned to be installed to highlight the architecture of the buildings. They are also working with the City on how an adjacent municipal parking lot may be utilized to help with the parking needs of the development.

A motion was made by Frances Welton and seconded by Elana Aubrey to provide a letter of support for the rehabilitation of 106-120 High Street and 141-147 High Street. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Historical Commission Community Engagement

- a. HHC Community Engagement Committee** – Paola Ferrario shared that the interns will be in Holyoke on Thursday 6/17 and they will meet at City Hall and then then go to the Public Library to start researching historic buildings. Frances Welton asked how long the interns will work with the Commission and Ms. Ferrario replied that they will be here until August. Luis Salazar shared that the Commission would like to set up walking tours with homes over 100 years old and utilize the name “Historical Holyoke”. The tours could also integrate promoting local businesses. Ms. Welton asked how the rest of the committee can help and Ms. Ferrario said that offering any opinions or advice is helpful as well as people who are able to offer any knowledge about historic Holyoke.
- b. Historic Plaque Program** – No Update.
- a) 216 Appleton Street – Winn Development** – Marco Crescentini provided an update about the Farr Alpaca Building; WinnDevelopment is willing to put a historical marker on the building. Mr. Murphy shared two examples of historical signs on other buildings located in Springfield. Elana Aubrey asked Christopher Gauthier if the Print Shop on Main Street could produce a sign for the building and Mr. Gauthier replied that they could and that he will ask them for a quote.

7. Discussion on Wyckoff Park Historic District – No update.

- 8. New Business** - Ben Murphy asked the Commission if they would like to meet in person or via Zoom for the July meeting and there was consensus to meet on Zoom. He also asked if meetings could be held earlier and the Commission agreed to meet at 5:30pm.

Paola Ferrario shared that she visited 1784 Northampton Street for a client, which is listed for sale. She indicated that she thought the asking price is high and the listing is written in such a way that would discourage finding a buyer to rehabilitate the house. She shared her concern that the owner will use this as a reason to demolish the building.

Mr. Murphy shared that the Catholic Diocese of Springfield is consolidating three Holyoke parishes and that they may be looking at demolishing the Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish buildings. He indicated that he would add this as a topic for the next Commission meeting.

9. Next Meeting- July 12, 2021

10. Adjourn

At 9:20 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