



Holyoke Historical Commission (HHC)

Meeting Minutes

Monday July 12, 2021

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

Zoom Meeting ID: 872 6606 7595

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), Gabriella Klinakis (OPED)

Others in Attendance: Peter Palombella, Mimi Panitch, Brody Hale, Sarah Kunkemueller (HHC Intern), Judith Ha (HHC Intern)

1. Call to Order – Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being recorded.

2. Review of June 14, 2021 Minutes

A motion was made by Christopher Gauthier and seconded by Paola Ferrario to accept the minutes from June 14, 2021. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Participation – Peter Palombella, resident of 5 Center Street within the Hadley Falls Company Housing Historic District, shared that the original wood shutters on the building were replaced by vinyl shutters in 1974 and that there are easements in the deed that say that the residents cannot change the appearance of the building. Mr. Palombella would like to have the building back to its historic façade with no shutters, as would many residents. He asked if the Commission could write a letter stating they cannot find historical evidence of shutters on the historic building before 1974, so the residents do not have to pay for repair costs. There was consensus from Commissioners that they would like to view photos of the building and shutters before writing any type of letter and that the topic will be included on the August meeting agenda.

4. Historical Commission Community Engagement

A) Intern Project Presentation – Paola Ferrario introduced the Historical Commission interns, Sarah Kunkemueller and Judith Ha. They presented a slideshow that included several historic properties and way finder signs, including culturally significant buildings. They also included maps of walking/driving tours for historic buildings around the city that would include a QR code that could be scanned by a phone to learn more about the properties. Commissioners shared with the interns that they did a great job. Ms. Ferrario noted that they will be back in Holyoke soon to tour more historic sites and any Commissioner that would like to join them would be appreciated.

5. Sacred Heart/ Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Buildings; Plan for Preservation – 435 Maple Street – Paola Ferrario introduced Attorney Brody Hale and explained that he specializes in economical law and that he is also involved in NAME Foundation for the preservation of churches. Mr. Hale expressed that he would like the churches to continue to be used as a church and the other parish buildings be used for a complimentary use such as affordable housing. He would like to tour the Our Lady of Guadalupe parish buildings and make an offer that would be contingent on a structural engineer’s assessment of how much it would cost to rehabilitate the buildings. Ms. Ferrario said that she was under the impression that Mayor Murphy would have to order the beginning of the process to make a single block historic district and she reached out to the Massachusetts Historical Commission to ask for assistance with the paperwork.

Ben Murphy explained that in his experience establishing local historic districts in Springfield, the mayor and city council were not involved until the end of the process. Ms. Ferrario explained that that was the process explained in a workshop she attended, and Mr. Murphy said that the Historic District Commission would put together the report. Ms. Ferrario said that she will reach out to Marco Crescentini, Chair of the Local Historic District Commission (LHDC), for guidance on moving forward. Mr. Murphy shared that he had heard that the Diocese was looking at demolishing the church building. He went on to point out that it is important that the Commission focus on preserving the buildings based on their historic and architectural significance and not the preservation of the institutions that are in the buildings.

6. Annual Elections of HHC Officers

A motion was made by Luis Salazar and seconded by Elana Aubrey to reelect all officers through December 2021 as follows: Richard Ahlstrom as Chair, Paola Ferrario as Vice Chair, and Christopher Gauthier as Clerk. The motion carried unanimously.

- 7. Old Business** – Richard Ahlstrom informed the Commission that he spoke to Carl Cameron, Holyoke Medical Center COO, about the hole in the roof at 1840 Northampton Street and that Mr. Cameron stated that his intent is to renovate the building into medical offices.

Commissioners discussed the letter related to the proposed city demolition bond that went to the City Council. Elana Aubrey suggested that the letter be sent to the local newspapers to raise more awareness. Mr. Ahlstrom said that this would be a good idea, but the Commission should reach out to Mayor Murphy and other City Councilors first, as well as attend the Finance Committee meeting on August 2nd where there will be a public hearing on the demolition bond.

A motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Luis Salazar to send the original demolition bond letter to the Finance Committee along with a new cover memo. The motion carried unanimously.

- 8. New Business** – Christopher Gauthier shared that he met a gentleman who is interested in purchasing a historic plaque for his home located at 332 Pleasant Street. He asked Paola Ferrario if the interns could conduct research on the home's history and she said she will have the interns investigate the property.

Luis Salazar said that he was approached by staff members at the War Memorial about the possibility of creating a historic designation for the B-17 Memorial on Mt. Tom. Mr. Murphy shared that he has also had several discussions about this topic and has been in touch with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) about the topic. The response from MHC was that the site is unlikely to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Murphy indicated that the topic could be added to next month's meeting agenda.

Richard Ahlstrom shared information about the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds meeting. He indicated that there is a three to four-page document available that shows the funding requests made by organizations and city departments. Elana Aubrey asked who makes the final decision with these funds and Ben Murphy replied that it is most likely the Mayor. Ms. Aubrey expressed that she thinks these funds could benefit the preservation of historic buildings in Holyoke. Mr. Ahlstrom advised that she reach out to the Office for Community Development who is managing this money.

Mr. Murphy informed the Commission that staff has discussed the possibility of combining the Local Historic District Commission and the Historical Commission and that the topic would be added to next month's meeting agenda.

9. Next Meeting- August 9, 2021

10. Adjourn

At 8:06 p.m., there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Elana Aubrey and seconded by Christopher Gauthier to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried.

Sincerely,
Holyoke Historical Commission