

HOLYOKE HISTORICAL COMMISSION (HHC)
Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 8, 2021

Due to the declared public health emergency the meeting was held virtually via Zoom.
Meeting ID: 835 8599 8565.

Attendance: Chair-Richard Ahlstrom, Elana Aubrey, Marco Crescentini, **Vice Chair**-Paola Ferrario, **Secretary**-Christopher Gauthier, Luis Salazar & Frances Welson

Not in Attendance: None

Municipal Staff: Director, Office of Planning & Economic Development - Aaron Vega

Others in Attendance: Suzanne Parker, Matt Blumenfeld & Ruth Roy of Girls Inc., Olivia Mausel of Fairfield Avenue Historical Commission & The Holyoke Preservation Trust, David White of H.H. Richardson Train Station, Donald Sanders of MIFCA /The Victory Theater, Dan Manson, owner of the Mt. Tom Ticket Booth)

1. **Call to Order** – Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order @ 5:32 pm and announced that the meeting was being recorded.
2. **Review of October 12, 2021 Minutes** – Richard Ahlstrom stated meeting minutes were not available, & hoped to have them for next month’s meeting. Christopher Gauthier offered to take notes for tonight’s meeting.
3. **Public Participation** - None.
4. **Community Preservation Act** –
 - 4a – **Girls Inc. Headquarters & Program Center.** Executive Director, Suzanne Parker announced her staff members and to request of the Commission, a letter of support of historic significance for 480 Hampden Street, for CPA funds to Secure the building envelope. Suzanne Parker started the presentation of the building formerly owned by the O’Connell’s and their significant role in Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley for the past 200 years, until the building was sold in 2017. Suzanne Parker spoke of the many projects with the O’Connell’s involvement; Silk Mills, Farr Alpaca, water services, gas lines, Mt Tom Ski area. 480 Hampden Street was the birth and growth of Holyoke’s planned city. Suzanne Parker spoke of the building’s prominent location and the Girls Inc. to be part of it. Suzanne Parker spoke of the overview of the building needs, substantial work to the brick façade, restoration of the slate roof, and water drainage issues. Paola Ferrario asked about the entrance to the space, and Suzanne Parker stated the entrance would be in the back corner, not in the street view, an accessible entrance is needed. Paola Ferrario also asked about the front façade. Suzanne Parker spoke of no changes, except signage, lighting, and to make the front door up to code. Richard Ahlstrom reminded the Commission that we are here to determine historical significance of the building. Elana Aubrey asked the Commission of any record of previous work of historical significance and if the building was original, rebuilt etc. Suzanne Parker, stated that they have just taken owner of the building in September of 2021, and the interior shows the age of the building. A lot of elements are still in place. Suzanne Parker did speak of an addition of an upper level. Discussion ensued

of the front façade, original brick work and the upper brick work, and its adaptive use. The building has had upgrades. Paola Ferrario thanked the Girls Inc., for their work, and after research she concluded it was a minor mill, not showing in any research she has done. Paola Ferrario stated it was hard to give it architectural relevance in its current condition, but she saw a project of green preservation in keeping the building intact. Richard Ahlstrom asked Paola Ferrario her meaning of a minor mill, she replied that it was not one of the grand mills. Richard Ahlstrom commented on a statement of historic significance, even though the building was heavily modified, but does have history. Frances Welson spoke of the building's importance tied to the O'Connell family and O'Connell building company. She does not want to see any more modifications or a demolition. Paola Ferrario reiterated because they are keeping the brick façade and slate roofing it would be a historic green preservation. Richard Ahlstrom proposed a letter of support of 480 Hampden's Street significance to the city, and verbiage of its importance. A brief discussion about the Commission only looking at the building, but Luis Salazar stated its cultural significance counts. Paola Ferrario talked about 3 historic preservation criteria. historic purity, community related, and green restoration. Paola Ferrario made a motion of support to write a letter explaining the 3 focuses of support. Christopher Gauthier seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Richard Ahlstrom thanked the Girls, Inc for the meeting.

4b – Victory Theater Scones & Mountain Park Ticket Booth. Discussion among the Commission if the applications were submitted together, and who owned the ticket booth. One application or two separate applications. Donald Sanders of MIFA spoke of the historical and cultural significance of the two items to certify they are different but related to the city of Holyoke and its adaptive reuse. Donald Sanders spoke of the Mt Tom ticket booth being a portable ticket booth for the Victory Theater, and the “sizzle” of a mobile platform announcing shows with its digital components. Also making it available for other events within the city. The sconces are part of the interior of the theater, the theater already deemed of historic significance. The sconces would be restored and to be seen outside the theater, until the theater is complete then would be placed back into service on the interior of the building. Frances Welson asked who owned the ticket booth and why did the Victory apply. Paola Ferrario stated it was in the application. Donald Sanders introduced the owner of the ticket booth Dan Manson who has been restoring it. And the Victory wants to take it to the next purpose. Discussion among the Commission of ownership and working with Dan Manson to purchase it at some point. Elana Aubrey asked for pictures to be shown, of the sconces and the ticket booth. Donald Sanders stated they had no visual presentation materials. Frances Welson questioned the price of the sconces and Donald Sanders went into discussion of the work to be done to bring them back. Discussion among the Commission of procedure and placement of the sconces, and for its repair. Frances Welson asked why the owner of the ticket booth was not on the application and Donald Sanders stated because they want to save it for history, and its possible disappearance of its communal vision. Richard Ahlstrom asked where the ticket booth was now, and Donald Sanders replied that it was being stored in Northampton. Dan Manson is not a resident of Holyoke. Frances Welson stated the confusion of the application and if a purchase-and-sale was in place. Don Sanders stated that would receive a certificate of ownership, once repairs are done. Paola Ferrario stated the sconces are a no brainer for historical significance, but the booth would be complicated, since its not part of the restoration

of the Victory Theater creating a precedence that is not related to the building they want restored. Richard Ahlstrom reminded the commission to raise hands when needing to speak, so that we are not talking over each other. Richard Ahlstrom spoke of other items that the Commission has approved, the fire truck, but the ticket booth is no longer located in the city. Richard Ahlstrom also asked about the restoration of the ticket booth. Donald Sanders introduced Dan Mason, owner of the ticket booth. Dan Mason stated that the booth has been completely restored. Frances Welson asked what they wanted the money for, and both Dan Manson and Don Sanders stated to add a digital sign to make it functional. Frances Welson stated that this was problematic. Richard Ahlstrom stated that we were here for historical significance. Richard Ahlstrom also stated that we cannot make a determination because the ticket booth is not in the city or in possession by anybody in the city. Christopher Gauthier asked because it's not currently located in the city, or because it was party of the city, does that affect determination? Richard Ahlstrom replied that that would be up to the CPA to decide because its within Holyoke. Frances Welson stated that in no doubt the ticket booth is historic, but with what is proposed with the digital signage, does not feel in keeping with the historical significance of the structure. Richard Ahlstrom asked the commission if they had any other questions. Christopher Gauthier asked if we were only making a determination. Don Sanders spoke of his desire to see this historic artifact saved. Discussion that it was not living in Holyoke, and the guarantee that it would be purchased by the Victory and stay in Holyoke. Richard Ahlstrom asked Marco Crescentini about the opportunity with the CPA for its December meeting. Marco Crescentini stated that they were meeting next week and also in December. Discussion ensued to bring it back to the CPA for clarification and also where would the unit be stored, and loaning the booth to other establishments within the city. Also adapting the booth to modern use while keeping the historic structure of it. Richard Ahlstrom suggested a vote about the sconces being historic and to send the booth back to the CPA for clarification, because its not within the city, and to make it two separate items. Frances Welson stated that adding digital signage undermines its historical significance, and to not make a decision on it tonight. Elana Aubrey questioned the price of the sconces and if other items were coming to the board from the Victory for CPA funds at this time. Don Sanders stated that there was an application already approved for the murals. Don Sanders also stated that the CPA asked to bring the ticket booth to the Historical Commission for its assessment to be qualified for consideration. Motion made by Marco Crescentini that the sconces were deemed historic and seconded by Paolo Ferrario. The motion carried unanimously. A motion made by Paola Ferrario to table the ticket booth for further review by the CPA, was seconded by Frances Welson. The motion carried unanimously. Richard stated he would be in contact with Amy @ CPA for questions, and thanked both Don Sanders & Dan Manson for attending.

4c – H.H. Richardson Train Station – Richard Ahlstrom introduced, David White. David White stated the funds will be used for maintaining the structure of the building and work to masonry and the roof and envelope projects. He asked for historic designation. David White spoke of the prominent architect of the H.H. Train Station. Once completed it will be a major attraction to the city of Holyoke. Elana Aubrey commended David White as she attended the Doors of Holyoke, open house and the train station was the number one place where people wanted to see the inside. Elana Aubrey appreciated talking to David White and his wife, the number one question asked of what was he going to do with the building? David White replied

that he wants it preserved for the next people who take it to the next level. Elana Aubrey reiterated its historical significance for its continued growth. Frances Welson made a motion to designate the H.H. Richard Train Station as historically significant, seconded by Christopher Gauthier. The motion carried unanimously. Richard Ahlstrom asked the Commission & David White if any type of previous letter of support was requested. Marco Crescentini responded the CPA didn't pursue before David White's time as with several other important buildings. The commission thanked David White for attending, with good thoughts on this upcoming attraction.

5. **Historical Commission Community Engagement** – Frances Welson asking the Commission if the interns were still working with us. Paola Ferrario responded that next month she will have pages of buildings added to speak with Aaron Vega on our next event. We will only have one intern left soon. Discussion ensued of the process with the interns and their work. Paola Ferrario stated she is helping with their writing as its not clear. Frances Welson offered her assistance as well. Richard Ahlstrom spoke of the walking tours, plaque program, guided tours and pulling together with other departments to support our community engagement. Frances Welson asked Olivia Mausel of the Holyoke Preservation about working together. Oliva Mausel spoke of the Holyoke Walking Tours with Bob Comeau, his tours this past summer and his availability for private tours. Oliva Mausel will forward over his contact information for distribution. Elana Aubrey commented now that the election is over to assert our interest to the new administration, updating our website with all of Holyoke's History and its departments, under one location, we need to get this information out to the public. Paola Ferrario stated that the history room is doing a tour of Dwight Street, and with 350 people who came to Open Doors, we would have support of 50-70 people when we present the preservation ordinance, we also have a data base now of people with interest in the history of Holyoke. Richard Ahlstrom spoke of the possible meeting with the new mayor to our 3 focuses; the ordinance is ready to go, historic Holyoke website, and combining of the two commissions. Luis Salazar stated that we need to make the citizens aware of our history and how it can happen with their support, as a brand a great step to show awareness, our work depends on the whole Commission. Lastly, Holyoke preservation presentation, better leverage with the ordinance. Our role to have a clear impact in the city. Luis Salazar suggested another meeting should be made for presentation to the mayor and what we are going to do to make this engagement work. Discussion ensued with involvement with OPED. Richard Ahlstrom suggested we pursue in December and let the mayor get situated. The commission was in agreement to think about the website and how its going to be produced etc., Also support of the other groups for us to be the platform, especially with the new ordinance. It will be continued on the next agenda. Discussion of starting our own list of contacts to start the process. Frances Welson suggested Oliva Mausel assistance for her wealth of information.

6. **7. Proceeding with Revised Preservation Ordinance (Demo Delay) & Combining Historical & Historic District Commissions** - Richard Ahlstrom recommend combining the agenda items 6 & 7 as they are the same in moving forward. Frances Welson asked if the Fairfield District voted on this and Marco Crescentini stated they do not, it was assumed by OPED. Frances Welson

stated without a vote it can't move forward. And both commissions need a commitment together. Discussion amongst the commission on the transition to one commission. Luis Salazar asked for clarity, and that we only have bits and pieces. Sounds great in concept. It was agreed that it thrown at us by the OPED with very little specifics. We need examples of other towns, and that the local commission has more power. A lot was thrown at us and that OPED needs to meet to understand this combination of boards. Oliva Mausel stated she has done research on both Springfield and Northampton towns who have combined Commissions. Both Commissions need to agree to explore options, before we proceed, with no commitments. Luis Salazar recommend we write questions for the next meeting for more clarification to move forward, the commission all agreed. Frances stated that this should now be separate issue from the ordinance. Discussion from the commission should shoot towards January to bring the preservation ordinance forward. Paola Ferrario stated that in January of 2022 there will be a vote for a new counselor president and chair. Discussion of a brand-new counsel and current city council with this ordinance and with a new counsel the Commission would be in better shape to proceed. Questions arose with postponing and it being presented with support with OPED. Also, with end of year meetings before the transfer, holiday's do we do in fact wait? it was agreed to come back in December to decide to move forward and to connect with new mayor with our 3-point attack to get him on board. It was agreed as well to review all documentation again before our next meeting.

- 8. Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated When Meeting Agenda Posted** - Elana Aubrey congratulated Paola Ferrario on her running for city council. Richard Ahlstrom spoke of the bylaws electing officers, and if any interest of a new chair, Paola Ferrario expressed her interest. Discussion ensued if boards were combined there would be only one chair, alternates etc., and the possibility of all new elections if boards were combined. Richard Ahlstrom asked if there were any objections to taking a vote, but agreed with changes coming we have a lot of influx and we should hold off. It was agreed to discuss it in the December meeting further. Luis Salazar asked if we were trying out a combined commission with Oliva Mausel in attendance and it was agreed that it was an open meeting and that we need to find a way because of zoom, a certain order, its changeling with thoughts and ideas. The physicality of a meeting in person. The commission also spoke of going back to in person meetings for our December 13th meeting. Aaron Vega mentioned of in person board meetings with the public still virtual. Agreement was made for an informal survey before the meeting to keep a zoom meeting or in person meeting.
- 9. Next Meeting** - December 13, 2021 @ 5:30pm.
- 10. Adjourn** - At 8:38pm there being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Paola Ferrario and seconded by Alana Aubrey to adjourn the meeting, the motion carried.