



Chair – Paola Ferrario

Vice Chair & Recording Secretary – Christopher Gauthier

Commissioners: Elana Aubrey & Luis Salazar

Alternate Commissioner: Marco Crescentini

## HOLYOKE HISTORICAL COMMISSION (HHC)

Meeting Minutes Monday, July 11, 2022, @ 5:30 p.m.

Conference Room 403 or virtually via Zoom - Meeting ID 857 0948 7585

Attendance: Paola Ferrario, Elana Aubrey (Virtual), Luis Salazar & Marco Crescentini (Virtual)

Not in Attendance: Christopher Gauthier

Municipal Staff: Jennifer Keitt, Development Specialist – Office of Planning & Economic Development & Mayor: Joshua Garcia.

Others in Attendance: Pater Palombella & Susan Welton.

- 1) **Call to Order** – Chair Ferrario called the meeting to order @ 5:33pm and stated with the open meeting law, all votes will be done by roll call and no votes with screens off.
- 2) **Review of Minutes** – Motion made to approve 5/25/2022 minutes by Commissioner Aubrey & seconded by Commissioner Salazar. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously. Motion made to accept 6/13/2022 minutes (not approve) by Commissioner Aubrey & seconded by Commissioner Salazar. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously. Motion made to accept (not approve) 5/9/2022 minutes by Commissioner Salazar & seconded by Commissioner Aubrey. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously.
- 9) **Special guest Mayor Joshua Garcia** – Chair introduces Mayor Joshua Garcia. Mayor Garcia will participate as needed and agreed to proceed with agenda.
- 3) **Preservation of Historic Buildings Ordinance Update** –
  - a) **Report on Ordinance Committee Meeting of June 28, 2022** – Chair Ferrario asked Commissioner Aubrey if agenda could be forwarded to her first for editing. Commissioner Aubrey accepted. Chair Ferrario spoke of conversation with the Ordinance Committee & City Council with expectations of passing with City Council. The age of building will not be considered, and staying with 100 years. Instead of 12 months, the demo delay would be 9 months with hearings lasting no longer than 3 months, a good compromise. Mayor Garcia expressed concerns with unintended consequences, acknowledging preservation is valuable. Commissioner Salazar questioned what will be done with the delay time. How can the commission find a path to support the preservation of projects (not just delay them) when they don't want to see something demolished.



- b) Preparation of August City Council Meeting – Chair Ferrario will draft essay to direct conversation, reiterating 9 months. Chair Ferrario explains that property preservation ordinance is a tool for the city and the city's planning department to preserve important historical properties. Chair Ferrario is asking legal if the HHC can create & distribute an information card stating that we are supporting changes to the ordinance. Commissioner Salazar wants the city to be more aware of the historical value of this buildings. Discussion of 195 Appleton and the surrounding properties and its value to the city.

Motion made to move items 4, 5 & 6 together, starting with item 5, by Commissioner Aubrey & seconded by Commissioner Crescentini. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously.

5. Reports on progress with organization of archives (storage drives) & staff – Commissioner Aubrey expressed concern over lack of clarity to who is doing what within the commission. If questions arise, who do we report to? Concerns with funding for a staff person, recordings, archiving, we don't want to get lost in the shuffle. Chair Ferrario had a conversation with the Chair of the Cambridge Historical Commission. Chair of the Cambridge Historical Commission questioned why we are under OPED. Mayor Garcia stated that we were not under OPED. Commission argues that they are staffed by OPED. Mayor Garcia explains that HHC operates on its own & has full autonomy. The concern is always about staffing and lack of knowledge. Holyoke historically uses office to help & assist boards and commissions. Chair Ferrario stated its very misleading that Aaron Vega signs the agenda. Mayor Garcia explains that these procedures were created before us and that if this system does not work the HHC is able to reorganize, as long as it falls within the ordinance and charter rules. Mayor Garcia went on to state by having an office work with each board and commission allows for opportunities to cross share information. Chair Ferrario states the conflict of interest, lack of clarity and records being lost, a lawsuit waiting to happen. Chair Ferrario requested 15k for staff. Mayor Garcia stated says OPED is the office that supports the HHC and he will not veer of the current model, explaining a lot of new changes and transitioning coming down the pipeline, suggesting to better strengthen the relationship and set expectations. Commissioner Aubrey expressed frustration with lack of appointees. Mayor Garcia stated he has 4-5 names of people to appoint, and how OPED also had a lot of open positions to fill but is now fully staffed. Mayor Garcia invited Chair Ferrario to sit in on the interview process with new prospective commissioners. Chair Ferrario informed the commission about storage and new staffing for the commission. Archives has been reorganized without consent of the chair or the commission. Chair Ferrario spoke of the past Development Specialist, Ben Murphy and his excellent record keeping and that we need his records on the shared folder of which cannot be found. Chair Ferrario gave an example of a demo delay case, the format changing again, being uploaded but without the package and hearing materials. Dates are all over the place but located in the 2020 folder, stressing all materials including packets need to be uploaded properly. Chair Ferrario implies that the HHC cannot do their jobs because of lack of organization of files. That it's been extremely difficult to find all necessary information to complete the annual CLG report. Chair Ferrario spoke how incredibly hard the Commission works and HHC did not upload minutes for almost 8 months. Mayor Garcia acknowledged turbulence during staff changes. Mayor Garcia explained as long as minutes are available we are meeting open law requirements.



Mayor Garcia offers to have a meeting with Chair and a commissioner and head of OPED to work through 2-way expectations and communication. Chair Ferrario reiterated that 2 recordings that are missing from the last 6 months, and believed we are beyond not worrying. Mayor Garcia stated he feels as if we are saying that OPED is purposefully screwing this up. Commissioner Aubrey states the first few months of this year, every meeting was taken over by discussion of merging commissions, spiraling out of control and almost derailing the HHC. Commissioner Aubrey stated they are doing the job of the HHC and all other stuff was not our responsibility. Mayor Garcia pointed out the interruption was due to transition in leadership, and former board members has conversations outside public meetings and now new members want to do everything correctly. Mayor Garcia acknowledged lack of communications and would be willing to intervene and facilitate conversation to help alleviate the issues that have arisen, and should that not work he would make the hard decisions. Commission Salazar summarized 3 expectations - not having to overthink administrative issues around HHC work, grant writing, with multiple options in state to get funded but escapes their capacity as volunteers, needing professionals to assist and support around some budget for communications. Not having the resources to publish historical materials is difficult. Chair Ferrario explained that she requested the budget from AV to see how much money was allocated for staff assistance for HHC, that she wanted staff to have the skills to serve the HHC. The commission was not able to view c.v.'s of new staff and as far as they know historic preservation is a new subject matter to staff members. Chair Ferrario asked how many hours are paid to staff the HHC, money that is allocated for staff support could go to training new staff. She also questioned the most importance of the digital archive and how is it going to be restored? Mayor Garcia stated that conversations can be had regarding what does HHC staffing look like and how much time is committed, and that staff knows enough to navigate grant requests, tap into other partnerships with other organizations, etc., Chair Ferrario explains that we are a CLG & able to secure grants, and that everyone on the commission is very competent. Chair Ferrario spent too much time arguing regarding the proper procedures and that the HHC is not being heard. Putting together the CLG report had been difficult due to accessing material, fighting to get minutes and meetings up on the website in proper order assuming the commission is not competent. Mayor Garcia explained towns and cities throughout the valley, felt that the historical commissions always feel left out, and we need to be sure we are strengthening the position of the HHC setting tone and expectations. Mayor Garcia spoke of the huge disconnect and needing to get everyone aligned moving forward. Commissioner Salazar acknowledged that change in administration created a structure making it difficult to navigate and make transparent. Different moves on the bureaucratic level to create a connection throughout the rest of the city. Commissioner Salazar stated he was looking forward to refreshing the process and getting things done. Historically the city has had the city historian under the HHC but now is in Wistariahurst with no connection to the HHC. Commissioner Salazar stated what's most important is how can we make the process more efficient and how can we amplify our beauty, that we need to move forward and to stop carrying the same points over and over again. Acknowledging things are coming from the mess before us, and no need to stay in this state of mind. Mayor Garcia stated that the first step is acknowledging there is a problem, but having committed members that are working hard, empathizing that we are all working together to unknot the mess left before us. Mayor Garcia asked information about historically having the city historian being moved under Wistariahurst. Mayor Garcia thanked the commission and expressed that he is available, and that they can/should



reach out to him with concerns & visions. Chair Ferrario thanked the mayor for attending.

4) Certified Local Government Annual Report –

a) Revisions –

b) Approval – Chair Ferrario shared her screen with the report stating that in the past reports were put together by staff and signed by the chair. Chair Ferrario wants more input in preparing report reviewing highlighted areas. Chair Ferrario asked Local District Commissioner Crescentini about his portion of the report. Commissioner Crescentini stated they have already completed the forms and signed them. Chair Ferrario questioned that Local District signed his Report without waiting for the HHC to finish their part. Chair Ferrario wants everyone to review, and discuss before signing. OPED Development Specialist Keitt confirmed receipt of the Local District Commissions report, and currently waiting for HHC's form, and everyone will have a chance to review prior to signing. Chair Ferrario will do work to fill in and present the report for approval in August.

6) Report on Chair conversation with Charles Sullivan, Chair of the Cambridge Historical Commission – Cambridge Commission is not CLG because they are really well funded and not fair being on the Mass Historical Commission to take money from CLG grants, etc., from poorer cities and towns. Chair Ferrario wants commission to apply for grants, but Chair Sullivan brought up making sure no conflict of interest, implying that having the HHC under OPED can leave the door open for a potential conflict. Concerns included the 195 Appleton recording being missing, and March minutes don't have all the history that was discussed. The Commission needs to be very careful with their association with OPED. Mayor Garcia acknowledged internal conflict can cause delays. Chair Ferrario explains the pressure from city council, what is HHC's method to determine something historic, and our last two hearings making sure there was due process. All of the information should have been in the folder for the March meeting and staff needs to understand that. Chair Ferrario doesn't want a conflict of interest. Stating both departments may see the wealth and interest in keeping a building but the OPED may not. It's not good or bad, a different way of looking and what's best for the city. There will be situations where OPED & HHC are not on the same page, but that should not get in the way of things. Chair Ferrario stated the conflict of interest having an OPED staff person staff the HHC. Mayor Garcia stated he could discuss the concerns further and he is hearing OPED is getting in the way of the business that HHC is doing, everyone should be working together. Chair Ferrario states that there are no competing interests only differing perceptions. Commissioner Salazar states its not just perception, we have to have clarity about what is to be preserved. HHC gets presented with a deal that's already in the works and that the HHC is not in the way of economic development. Using 195 Appleton as an example of communications and teamwork saving the buildings and its smoke stack, how we have to deal with the conflict of interest in a real way. Commissioner Salazar expressed frustration with lack of historical acknowledgment when OPED is trying to develop a particular area/property. Mayor Garcia stated that these conversations need to be had earlier in the process, and as we evolve, we need to communicate to strengthen partnership. Chair Ferrario stated the city has less and less buildings that are intact and we need to protect and preserve them, a complicated discourse. Mayor Garcia told the commission to not worry about what people feel about the HHC, and that we are all partners, finding ways to work cooperatively with the



system we have in place. He stated prior issues with departmental strife and his administration wants to see cooperation and collaboration, and to move forward and do what falls within our purview.

7) Approval of letters of support for MA Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

a) 348 Chestnut Street/48-52 Franklin Street – HLY.1102 – Chair Ferrario spoke with the VOC, and should be all set from last meeting. They have secured a contractor and work will start in October. They will be invited to attend a meeting for an update.

b) Farr Alpaca Mill – MHC# HLY.75 – Contact person is on vacation and will forward on once approved. Motion made to approve letters of support for Mass Historical Tax Credits made by Commissioner Aubrey And seconded by Luis Salazar. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously. Letters to be sent out.

8) Historical Plaques Program –

a) Report from Attorney Degnan on using a specific plaque manufacturer –

b) Forms & plaques in Spanish - Atty Degnan stated its ok to tell people to use a particular company for a historical plaque as long as we specify that we don't know the company, only that they make them. Chair Ferrario would like to list companies that make them and for people to complete HHC's internal form so that record can be kept of what/how plaques are created. Forms to be available in both English and Spanish. Discussion at August's meeting.

- 10) Election of officials – Chair Ferrario offers herself as Chair stating that Commission Gauthier wants to continue as Vice-Chair. No one wants to be secretary. Motion made to re elect Paola Ferrario as Chair made by Commissioner Aubrey and seconded by Commissioner Salazar. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously. Motion made to re elect Christopher Gauthier as Vice Chair made by Commissioner Salazar and seconded by Commissioner Aubrey. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously. Motion made re elect Christopher Gauthier as temporary secretary in addition to Vice Chair until someone else joins the Commission made by Commissioner Aubrey and seconded by Commissioner Salazar. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously.

- 11) Announcements – Chair Ferrario spoke of a \$55k grant awarded for the windows at City Hall, and that Commissioner Aubrey attended an event at the Senior Center to launch the new community website and to talk about historical tourism. Holyoke Media was there. The Explore Holyoke Website is up and running Still a long way to go with it.

- 12) New Business – Chair Ferrario spoke of the new rules for open meetings and that all new rules will be followed. 345 Dwight Street will be going up for auction later this month. Commissioner Crescentini last meeting with the HHC. He will continue to serve on the LHD but will serve as an alternate on the HHC if necessary for quorum. Chair Ferrario thanked him for his willingness to serve.



- 13) Old Business – Chair Ferrario was to ask the building inspector to look at housing the HHC is Monitoring, stating this will get done soon. Commissioner Aubrey is considering joining the CPA. Concerned about demographics of the group not being diverse enough to be representative of the city. She is requesting additional time to consider. Chair Ferrario showed the shared CPA folder and documents that were created.
- 14) Adjourn – At 8:09pm., there being no further business to come before the Commission, motion made by Commissioner Aubrey and seconded by Commissioner Salazar to adjourn the meeting. Roll call as follows: Aubrey (Yes), Salazar (Yes), Gauthier (Absent), Crescentini (Yes) & Ferrario (Yes). The vote passed unanimously.