Holyoke Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2017

Attendance:
Richard Ahlstrom (Chairperson), Paola Ferrario, Olivia Mausel, Joe Paul, Ali Puffer, Frances Welson, Christopher Gauthier (Alternate), Dan Fitzgerald
Absent: James Sheehan, Jean Jonker (Associate)

Municipal Staff: Debbie Oppermann (OPED), Paul Payer (Law Dept.), Chris Eurchell (Law Dept.)

Others: Marco Crescentini (Chairperson of the Local Historic District Commission)

1) Call to order: Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:40pm.

2) Review of 9-11-17 minutes: Ali Puffer made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of 9-11-17 with the following alterations: move Olivia Mausel's name to absent, add Paola Ferrario to present and change the name Jean Cook to Lauren Cook - Joe Paul seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

Ali Puffer made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the public hearing with the following alterations: same as above, and clarify the motion made at the end of the hearing to clearly state that a demolition delay was imposed, Joe Paul seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

3) Mater Dolorosa
a. City Law Dept. to discuss ongoing litigation
The Commission acknowledged the need to enter into Executive Session to discuss the City’s ongoing litigation with the Springfield Diocese concerning Mater Dolorosa, noting that an open discussion would be detrimental to negotiations.

Ali Puffer made a motion to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing ongoing litigation between the City and Springfield Diocese. Frances Welson seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously through a roll call vote of all Historic Commission members present. Minutes of the Executive Session are attached.

b. Single building historic district: Commissioners raised some questions regarding the upcoming public hearing for the creation of a single building historic district. 1) Are Commissioners permitted to speak on behalf of the project?, 2) Must the Local Historic District Commission remain neutral?, and 3) Does there have to be a quorum to hold the public hearing. Debbie will contact Chris Skelly (MA Historical Commission) for answers and forward them to the Commission via email.

c. Offer to purchase from the MD Preservation Society: Debbie Oppermann reported that the Mater Dolorosa Preservation Society provided the Bishop Rozanski (Springfield Diocese) with another proposal to purchase the property from the Diocese. It includes among many items, a
statement regarding the basis for this request (Canon law and ownership arrangements), an evaluation of the interior art, its value as a historic building, etc.

4) 289 Main Street (HLY 317)- proposed demolition: Debbie Oppermann reminded the commission that this property is on the Problem Properties Working Group priority list. It’s been declared “beyond saving” by the City’s Survey Board – its structural integrity has been extensively comprised. The City would like to demolish this property using CDBG funds. She also stated that by ordinance the Commission is still supposed to hold a public hearing on this action, but if it fails to do so the City may proceed with the demolition. This statement also prompted some discussion about the Commission’s desire to change the ordinance so that it doesn’t need to hold a public hearing if evidence indicates that there is no objection to demolishing the building.

5) Demolition hearing procedures discussion:

a. Richard Ahlstrom offered to review the “script” used during public hearings and make suggestions for improvements.

b. There was a brief discussion about enforcing language already in the demolition delay ordinance as it pertains to City project. This will be an item of business at the next meeting.

6) Old Business

a. Community Preservation Committee: Marco Crescentini provided an update on the work of the Committee, including the effort underway to obtain grant funds for a professional planning consultant to assist the committee with drafting a citywide Preservation Plan.

b. Preservation of City Hall Portraits: Olivia Mausel reported that the portraits (from City Hall) that Vitek Kruta is restoring will be completed in a month or so. She also stated that there is a booklet being compiled by the Friends of City Hall group describing the pictures and portraits of City Hall including photographs and a description of each.

c. Preservation Plan – DGR overview Debbie Oppermann provided an overview of the Historic Preservation Plan presentation that Marcos Marrero made to the Development and Government Relations Committee of the City Council on 10/2. It was received favorably. MA Historical Commission, who provided partial funding for this project, does not require that the full City Council review or approve the Plan.

7) New Business:

1. Paola Ferrario suggested that the Commission send a letter to the Board of Directors at Nueva Esperanza recognizing them for improvements on their building. Paola offered to draft the letter and all agreed to review it at the next meeting.

2. The committee considered organizing a meeting with residents of So. Holyoke, the Flats and Springdale in order to solicit concerns and suggestions for protecting historical resources in those neighborhoods. All agreed to address it at the November meeting.

8) Next Meeting: November 13, 2017

9) Adjourn: A motion was made by Joe Paul to adjourn the meeting at 8:30; it was seconded by Olivia Mausel and passed unanimously.

Submitted by,

Debbie U. Oppermann