Holyoke Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 9, 2018

Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom (Chairperson), Paola Ferrario Joe Paul, Alexandra Puffer, James Sheehan, Francis Welson
Absent: Chris Gauthier (Alternate)
Municipal Staff: Debbie Oppermann (OPED)
Others Present: Kenneth Lefebvre, Glenn Sullivan, Jean Jonker, Olivia Mausel, Audrey Park, Lucas Wiggins, Stephen L’Heureux, Steve Bergeron, Glenn Shealey, Stephen Bosco, Marco Crescentini, Laura Clampitt, Daniel Fitzgerald

1. Call to Order- Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

2. Review of March 5, 2018 minutes – Two spelling errors were corrected. A motion was made by Ali Puffer and seconded by Joe Paul to approve the minutes of 3/5/18. The decision was unanimous.

*Richard Ahlstrom noted that Marco Crescentini, the Commission’s representative to the Community Preservation Committee, was present and asked him for an update. Mr. Crescentini said that he had sent the notices and meeting notes of the CPC meetings for January and February to Debbie Oppermann. She acknowledged that Commissioner’s had a copy of those in their meeting packets. He urged the Commission to attend and voice their opinions of how CPC money should be spent at the CPC’s community forum scheduled for April 18th, 6 pm at the Senior Center. Each speaker will have 3 minutes to speak. He also encouraged everyone to take the survey being circulated regarding the same. There was discussion among Commissioners about speaking out about specific buildings versus speaking in general terms about preservation projects. Commissioners agreed that the 2017 Historic Preservation Plan update should be the basis for any recommendations made to the CPC. Richard Ahlstrom and Frances Welson will work prepare a statement to be read at the meeting.

3. Final discussion and adoption of revised bylaws – Frances Welson asked for two corrections to be made, a capitalization and swapping the word “as” for the word “is. Ali Puffer made a motion to adopt the revised bylaws as presented with the corrections noted, Frances Welson seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously

4. Richardson Train Station – Richard Ahlstrom stated that Joe Paul has conducted some research for a single building historic district. Joe Paul said that he had reviewed each of the forms for individual properties in that proposed district and that all of the forms need to be updated. Both agreed that doing so would be a lot of work and that a condition of structure report might be a valuable thing to get for the HG&E (owners) in the interim.
Frances Welson reported on her phone call with Jim Jablonski at HG&E describing how HG&E originally purchased the building for a specific purpose but that there is no longer a purpose for the building.

Richard Ahlstrom stated that implementing a protective district like a single building historic district or creating a new local historic district may not be feasible at this time and that a building structure report might better serve the purpose for the HG&E when it advertises a revised Request for Proposals for purchase and redevelopment of the site.

Mr. Ahlstrom asked Glenn Shealey, who was in the audience, if he had any further information on the site since his attempt to the purchase it. Mr. Shealey said that he was aware that the HG&E wanted to go out with the new RFP. He spoke briefly about his ideas for preservation of the building.

Joe Paul stated that he is in favor of creating a larger district (vs a smaller one).

All agreed that the Commission will continue to investigate ways we can help the HG&E market and save the building with the focus being on the preservation of the building.

*Richard Ahlstrom noted that Mike Moriarty, One Holyoke CDC, was present and asked him to provide an update on his efforts to move the house currently located at 1850 Northampton Street to 278 Pine Street. Mr. Moriarty said that Peoples Bank is donating the building, not selling it but that it requires that the building be off site by June 1st. He reported that the City had authorized the sale of the lot at 278 Pine Street to One Holyoke. He also talked about how well the house fits the character of the Pine Street neighborhood and how he is going to manage the project economically by various subsidies including CDBG funds. Once complete, the 2-family house will be made available affordably to first time homebuyers (for 15 yrs, owner/occupancy) and that the rental unit will also be restricted to income eligible renters. Mr. Moriarty thanked the Historical Commission for broaching the idea of a move to save the house from demolition, stating that without the Commission’s foresight this project would not be happening.

There was discussion among Commissioners regarding ideas for capitalizing on this “good news preservation project” and generating as much publicity as possible for the Commission. Paola Ferrario shared a photo she had created showing the 1850 N’ho St. house on truck’s flatbed and said that she had ideas for a postcard or other memento. Ali Puffer offered to draft a press release and social media messaging. All agreed that this is a public relations opportunity to share a message about the Historical Commission being a force for preservation and redevelopment in Holyoke.

5. Prospectus’ for Amory building, 123 Pine – Debbie Oppermann provided copies of the draft information table that she compiled for the prospectus’ that the Office of Planning & Economic Development will use to market these properties and include in a soon to be released Request for Proposals for the same.
6. Old Business:
   a. Community Preservation committee update – see above discussion with Marco Crescentini
   
   b. Status of 98-100 North East Street – Debbie reported that she hasn’t spoken with the Building Inspector regarding his decision on to fine Associated Building Wreckers for prematurely demolishing this property.
   
   c. Update on 1850 Northampton Street house move -see above discussion with Mike Moriarty
   
   d. Demolition Delay Sub-committee report – France Welson provided the Commission with a list of questions/issues to consider in re-drafting a Preservation Ordinance. She stated that the list was not inclusive and suggested that Commissioners review it, do individual research on the matter and come to the May 14th meeting prepared to determine a date for a meeting to solely discuss changes to the ordinance.
   
   e. Commissioner status updates: Debbie Oppermann reported that the Mayor’s office has not offered any appointments to the City Council to fill the vacancy left by Olivia Mausel. The office is aware, however, that the Historical Commission would like to have Chris Gauthier, currently an Alternate, appointed to fill the vacancy.
   
7. New Business – Tax credit letter of support - Debbie Oppermann reported that Valley Opportunity Council asked for a letter of support for their request to the MA Historical Commission for tax credits. She provided a copy of the same letter (reflecting current date) used in their December application. Paola Ferrario made a motion to provide a letter of support to VOC for the project at 348 Chestnut St./48-52 Franklin St. HLY.1102, it was seconded by Joe Paul and approved unanimously. Richard Ahlstrom signed the letter.
   
   So. Holyoke Neighborhood Association – Paola Ferrario encouraged the Commissioners to attend the upcoming May meeting. She will provide the exact meeting time in a forthcoming email.
   
   Commission email – Richard Ahlstrom asked that Commission business email communication be directed to Commissioners only. Debbie Oppermann noted that she will remove any others on the email list.
   
8. Next Meeting – May 14, 2018

8. Adjourn
   With no other business in Regular Session, a motion was made by Frances Welson, seconded by Joe Paul to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. The decision was unanimous.
   
Submitted by: Debbie U. Oppermann