Holyoke Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2018

Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom (Chairperson), Paola Ferrario, Chris Gauthier, Joe Paul, Alexandra Puffer, James Sheehan, Francis Wilson
Municipal Staff: Debbie Oppermann (OPED)
Others Present: Virginia Patsun

1. Call to Order- Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

2. Review of September 12, 2018 minutes – Minutes from the September were not available for review at this meeting.

3. Public Participation – None.

4. Virginia Patsun – Proposal to create interpretive signage for Holyoke’s canal system. Ms. Patsun introduced herself to the Commission and described the project she is considering. The Commission asked who will manage her efforts. Ms. Patsun said that she will work closely with her academic advisor. Overall, Commissioners thought it was a good idea but wanted more detail. They recommended that she meet with Marcos Marrero, Director of Planning & Economic Development, the umbrella department for the Historical Commission, share her idea with him and if he agrees, then come back to the Commission to vet it.

5. MHC Survey & Planning Grant – Regarding uses for this funding, Joe Paul stated that he thought it would be a good idea to update property inventory forms in preparation for a National Register District nomination. Debbie Oppermann shared a map showing the outline of an area from Lyman Street to Sargeant St., between Race and Main Streets that Marcos Marrero proposed for a grant study area. It is a geographic extension of the area that Joe Paul proposed at an earlier meeting. Commissioners discussed: 1. whether the size of the area was too big (number of buildings to inventory too great) for the up to $35,000 grant (which requires a local match for a total of up to $70,000), 2. would it make sense to divide that area into two districts, 3. cost of doing the building inventories and identifying buildings that may be slated for demolition etc.

Debbie Oppermann said that she has asked the PVPC (Shannon Walsh, Historic Preservation Planner) for an estimate of the cost of that work. All agreed that the Commission would like to submit a Letter of Intent in November. Debbie offered to call Michael Steinitz, MHC staff person in charge of this program, and vet our project (and thoughts on alternative project areas).
6. **Demolition Delay Ordinance** – It was noted that on many copies of the ordinance, the track changes didn’t show up. Commissioners agreed to split up the areas requiring changes, work on them independently (research best practices, wording, other considerations) and bring that information to the November meeting where the information and proposed changes will be reviewed by the entire Commission.

*Age & definitions of demolition and partial demolition* – Frances Welson & Chris Gauthier

*Neglect and requiring a plan for redevelopment* – Richard Alhstrom

*Requiring an updated inventory form, length of delay* – Debbie Oppermann

*Procedure for city projects* – Joseph Paul

The Commission will review this material at the November 14th meeting.

7. **Certified Local Government Annual Report** – Debbie Oppermann reported that she had submitted this annual report to the MA Historical Commission and included it in tonight’s meeting’s packet because the Commission should be aware of this responsibility. When asked what advantage the CLG designation gives the Commission or the City, Debbie responded that it’s primarily honorary but that CLGs are also given an advantage when applying for MHC funds.

8. **Old Business:**

   a. **Archeological research update** – No report.

   b. **Richardson Train Station** – Richard Ahlstrom reported that he will try to schedule a tour for Commissioners of the building with a representative of the HG&E.

   c. **CPC designation re: Historical Significance** – Debbie Oppermann reported that she has communicated extensively with the City’s CPC coordinator regarding the Commission’s role in identifying properties for designation as historic properties. She will confirm with the coordinator that the Commission will be responsible for providing the applicants with a letter regarding the designation upon request. To date, the Commission has received requests from the Friends of City Hall for their Annex Lantern and Stained Glass window projects as well as a request from the owner of buildings on Maple Street across from the Library.

9. **New Business** – Richard Ahlstrom congratulated Paola Ferrario on her efforts to protect/save the Lynch School. All agreed that she had extended considerable effort and commended her for it. There was also some discussion about how the lack of a local newspaper in Holyoke hinders communication in the community, particularly about situations like the Lynch School redevelopment process.

   James Sheehan asked if there was an update about the demolition of Mater Dolorosa. While everyone has heard rumor of impending demolition, no one had any certain information.
Joe Paul asked if the former Hotel Jess had been sold by MassDevelopment. Several commissioners thought that it had and Debbie Oppermann reported that it had been sold but couldn’t recall the name of the purchaser. It was noted that the new owner has removed the wood panels that were boarding up the windows and that that one small act has made a positive change in the building’s appearance. All voiced hope that the new owner succeeds with the redevelopment.

10. Next Meeting – November 12, 2018

8. Adjourn

With no other business in Regular Session, a motion was made by Paola Ferrario, seconded by Frances Welson to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. The decision was unanimous in favor of closing the meeting.

Submitted by: Debbie U. Oppermann