Holyoke Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2018

Attendance: Richard Ahlstrom (Chairperson), Chris Gauthier, Joe Paul, Alexandra Puffer, James Sheehan, Francis Welson
Absent: Paola Ferrario
Municipal Staff: Debbie Oppermann (OPED)

1. Call to Order- Richard Ahlstrom called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2. Review of October 10, 2018 minutes – Alexandra Puffer made a motion to accept the minutes with the following revisions: insert the word “meeting” under #2 “Minutes from the September …” insert information left out of item #4 Virginia Patsun’s meeting with the HHC, Joe Paul seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Minutes from the September were not available for review at this meeting.

3. Public Participation – None.

4. Demolition Delay Ordinance Revisions –

   Richard Ahlstrom began the discussion by stating that Marco Marrero had contacted him and Frances Welson with an offer to help revise the ordinance. Joe Paul thought it would be best to work on the ordinance first and then provide it to Mr. Marrero for his opinion on the outcome. Frances Welson said that she’d like the Building Commissioner to weight in as well as she and Chris Gauthier had spoken with him about certain sections of the ordinance to report back on this evening. Richard Ahlstrom agreed that the Building Commissioner should be a part of the process.

   James Sheehan asked about how the Building Commissioner currently defines demolition and what fees were involved.

   Joe Paul began the discussion with a review of the topic he had previously chosen to research: City Projects. He stated that no other community that he looked at had a separate category for city projects, emergency demo yes, but not other demo. In terms of enforcement Holyoke doesn’t impose any fees or penalties. Other communities note demolition by “misadventure”(if a bldg. is destroyed directly or indirectly with the owner at fault). Mr. Paul said the he saw 3 options: a. keep this section the way it is, b. leave it and make it clear that to City officials that they still have to come before us (still hold a hearing), c. indicate that the Commission has the power not to do anything. Alexandra Puffer stated that keeping this section is a good and check and balance on the process with city projects and recommended that Marcos Marrero take a look at it.
In terms of enforcement, Joe Paul recommended Commissioners taking a look at MHC’s example (i.e. 2 year moratorium on redevelopment)

Richard Ahlstrom reported on his research into neglect and requiring a plan for redevelopment. He noted that demolition bylaws address active demolition whereas demolition by neglect is a separate topic; one that may require a by-law since its pre-emptive. He recommended MHC’s Demolition Delay Bylaws and Ordinances book – affirmative maintenance bylaw- offered examples

Paola Ferrario’s report on utilities as they relate to demolition was given by Richard Ahlstrom since Ms. Ferrario could not be at the meeting. Many towns require the utilities to remain connected until a demolition permit is granted (draining of pipes permitted). She recommended that the Commission discuss this with the Building Commissioner.

Frances Welson and Chris Gauthier researched age and defining demolition and partial demolition.

Debbie Oppermann reported on 1. Requiring an updated inventory form if a property is demolished, an action that was proposed in the 2017 Historic Preservation Plan – according to MHC, this is not recommended, and 2. Length of Delay – she reported that 108 communities in MA have demo delay ordinances, 47 are for 12 months, 10 have 18 months and the remaining 51 have anywhere between 3 and 9 months.

All commissioners agreed to review the ordinance changes at the December meeting.

Frances Welson asked if Debbie could send out the ordinance with the comments well in advance of the next meeting so that the Commission has time to review it before the December 10 meeting. Debbie said that she would send it out 2 weeks before the next meeting.

5. **MHC Survey & Planning Grant** – Debbie Oppermann reported that she had discussed the Commission’s idea for a survey of properties between Race and Main Street (Lyman to Sargeant) with Peter Stott, Preservation Planner at MHC and he recommended enlarging the area to encompass at least 90 properties. Marcos Marrero, Director of OPED, suggested extending the area by including the other side of Main Street and continue down to Jackson, including the blocks between Race and Main along Jackson (as seen in a map she showed the Commission). Mr. Marrero recommended using CDBG funds as the match. Frances Welson made a motion to authorize Debbie Oppermann to submit said application on behalf of the Commission, Alexandra Puffer seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Debbie will update Commissioners on the final application when it is submitted on 11/16.

6. **Old Business** –
   a. **Virginia Patsun** – Debbie Oppermann provided an update on Ms. Patsun’s meeting with Marcos Marrero. Marcos approved Ginny’s proposal to place interpretive signs in appropriate places along the Canal area. The content of the signs will be of a historical nature featuring the canals, mills and people associated with both. The content will be reviewed for accuracy by those who are authorities on the subjects. She will contact community organizations,
businesses and individuals about the project and ask for support. She intends to form a project team with those interested in getting involved and partnering with Holyoke Creative Art Center with whom she’ll write the grant proposal and oversee the project with. She’ll keep the Commission informed on the status of the project.

b. **Archeological research update** – Debbie Oppermann reported that she’d had a conversation with John Patton, Archaeologist at MHC. He stated that if there is a big concern that an amateur will undertake an excavation on private property without any oversight then the Commission might want to craft a local by-law. He cautioned that the City would have to consider if it has the capacity to manage such a by-law. He offered an example from Aquinnah. Other than that concern, he didn’t see a reason for it. 950 CMR.70 already guide’s professional archeologist’s work on public lands. Joe Paul stated that he found the need for an archeological bylaw unnecessary at this time and made a motion to not consider the matter further unless circumstances warrant it. Frances Welson seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

c. **Richardson Train Station** – Rich Ahlstrom reported that he had not set up an appointment for the Commission to do a walk-through of the station. He will endeavor to do so prior to the next meeting.

d. **CPC update** – Debbie Oppermann provided an overview of her recent conversation with the CPC Coordinator Amy Landau. Initially the CPC wanted the HHC to supply a letter of stating that the property is historically significant, which Debbie has done for 4 applicants. Now, the CPC would like the HHC to make a statement regarding whether the work proposed is in keeping with quality historic rehabilitation. Given that final applications are due to the CPC by Friday, November 30th, Debbie didn’t see any way of providing that kind of review in time. She also mentioned that she’d have to work out evaluation criteria such as reviewing proposed work in terms of keeping within the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior Standards- would require an in-person meeting with the applicant and being provided with specifications that are detailed enough to make a decision. In order to perform this review, it would make sense to develop a list of submission requirements for the applicant to follow. She mentioned that Marcos Marrero has given his opinion as well, stating that this is more administrative work than originally stated. Debbie will keep the Commission updated.

7. **New Business** – None.

8. **Next Meeting** – December 10, 2018

8. **Adjourn**

   With no other business in Regular Session, a motion was made by Jim Sheehan to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m., the motion was seconded by Joe Paul and the decision was unanimous.

Submitted by: Debbie U. Oppermann