

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD  
MINUTES  
Mayor's Reception Room, Lowell City Hall  
January 9, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Note:** These minutes are not completed verbatim. For further detail, contact the Lowell Historic Board, Lowell City Hall, Room 51, 375 Merrimack Street or refer to video recordings available online at [www.LTC.org](http://www.LTC.org).

**Members Present:** Jeffrey Harris, Chair; Lisa "LC" Cassidy, Troy Depeiza, Aurora Erickson, Kerry Regan Jenness, Richard Lockhart, George Villaras

**Members Absent:** Yovani Baez-Rose

**Others Present:** Stephen Stowell, Administrator

*The following represents the actions taken by the Historic Board at the 1/9/2023 meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting occurred in hybrid form, both in-person and via the Zoom video conferencing platform.*

*Chair Harris called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.*

1. MINUTES

Approval of the Minutes of October 17, 2022

Motion:

By K. Jenness, seconded by T. Depeiza, to:

Approve the minutes of October 17, 2022

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

2. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Enforcement/Violations Update

At this point of the year, there will be less of a focus on minimum maintenance as much of this work can only be accomplished in warmer weather. However, several other buildings have been identified that are in need of work, mainly storefront repairs and painting similar to the buildings last year, and Requests for Compliance will be sent in late winter that will anticipate spring and early summer work being undertaken. This is similar to earlier this year.

With regard to the Saab Building at 147 Central Street, as you recall the Board voted at the June 13 meeting to find that violations existed and that a fine of \$100 for each of the seven violations would begin to accrue daily. The returned certified mail cards were not returned but using the USPS tracking numbers, delivery was made on June 25. As of January 5, the total accrued fines would be \$136,500 (7 violations total @ \$100 per day = \$700 per day x 195 days beginning 6/25/2022 to 1/5/2023). Materials have been sent to the Law Department to seek compliance in Superior Court but no action has been taken as of yet.

Non-conforming signage that has crept in during the pandemic will receive additional focus, especially lit signs in windows. These will be addressed and will be brought into compliance as personal visits occur and if needed, a Request for Compliance sent.

The Chair asked what the timeline might be for addressing the 147 Central Street violations. The Administrator said that a meeting with Assistant Solicitor McKenna will take place soon and that he is well-versed in property matters.

G. Villaras asked how many other violations are in a similar state. The Administrator said that none were, that most are resolved in-person, such as signage, while no new minimum maintenance notifications will be sent until this spring. He noted that 147 Central Street is a bit of an anomaly as all of the others cited at the same time last spring addressed their properties promptly.

#### B. Administrator's Report

The Administrator noted that the materials in the packet are for informational purposes and would be included in the record.

#### Upcoming Projects:

Several projects are in the review stage and will require public hearings including the rehabilitation of the Hildreth Building (including two connected structures to the rear on Paige Street) at 45 Merrimack Street. Post-permitting review and approval of design details and materials continues at a variety of projects including 733-735 Broadway Street, 279 Dutton Street, 62 Gorham Street, 80 Gorham Street, 199 Market Street, 555 Merrimack Street, 78 Middlesex Street, and 160 Middlesex Street. This is in addition to routine signage and maintenance work.

Note that in 2022, the Board reviewed and approved over \$38.3 million in projects throughout the Downtown Lowell Historic District (including two in the Acre Neighborhood District) that included 93 new units of housing of which 52 were affordable units. The Administrator said that these are numbers related to projects that the Board has a direct role in reviewing, approving, and permitting. The numbers do not include other investment that isn't applicable to Board review in the districts, such as a new kitchen, that would definitely place the investment in properties in historic districts at a higher number.

The Chair said the numbers are powerful and he was glad to see them shared in social media to get the word out, that it shows the impact the Board has.

#### Downtown Streetscape Standards:

The Administrator and Lowell National Historical Park historical architect David Lieb have been reviewing and commenting on a series of downtown streetscape standards being developed by the DPD's chief design planner and neighborhood planner. The document covers City infrastructure such as light poles, paving, street

furniture, and so on. Consistency with the Board's Standards as well as the federal standards for the streetscape within the National Park is critical and the document is consistent with those directives.

#### Downtown Wayfinding Design:

The Administrator and Lowell National Historical Park historical architect David Lieb have also been reviewing design for a new wayfinding system downtown that has been collaboratively developed by stakeholders including the City, National Park, Historic Board, UMass-Lowell, and others. The design that has been developed is sympathetic and consistent with the historic context downtown. What is being reviewed at this point is more editing in nature to ensure place names are accurate and the content is consistent between the various elements.

#### Preservation Month:

As usual this coming May is Preservation Month nationwide and will be recognized in Lowell as it has been the past few years by extensive social media programming. Unclear at this point is if Doors Open Lowell will be held this year given the nature of the event needing access to many interior, often private, spaces. Preliminary discussions with a few property owners indicate a hesitancy still existing regarding allowing the public access. If the event is not held, it is anticipated that a few tours will be offered throughout the month.

#### Downtown Lowell Historic District Markers:

The fabrication of new markers is presently on hold pending coordination with the sign fabricator. However, development of the Black history panels is still continuing with approximately 12 panels mounted on various poles downtown planned.

#### Sun Sign:

A meeting was held in November with representatives of the Sun newspaper, Sun Building, and the Lowell Heritage Partnership to begin formalizing efforts to restore the roof top Sun sign. Once the sign has been transferred to the building ownership, funds will be sought for the restoration which was estimated at \$45,455. A new estimate is currently being sought as well as one from an alternative contractor. As you recall, the sign would be converted to LED resulting in less maintenance and operation costs due to the longevity of the LED components and the fact they require far less power than neon.

#### Social Media:

Social media continues to be a very popular and effective community engagement and outreach tool for the Board. The Board's Facebook page has 7,438 followers while individual posts continue to reach thousands. Other platforms include Instagram (1,664), Twitter (699 followers), and Pinterest (32 followers).

#### Miscellaneous:

The Chair inquired about the Goodyear site on Merrimack Street. The Administrator said that it was sold and appears that it will remain an automotive use, not a development parcel.

L. Cassidy informed the Board about another National Park Service preservation workshop that will possibly take place in April at the Lowell National Historical Park. Similar to the workshop held in Lowell last year on historic masonry, this workshop will focus on window preservation and restoration.

Next Meeting:

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 13, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Reception Room.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

By L. Cassidy, seconded by G. Villaras, to:

Adjourn the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator