

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
MINUTES
Mayor's Reception Room, Lowell City Hall
February 14, 2022 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.

Members Present: Lisa "LC" Cassidy, Aurora Erickson, Kerry Regan Jenness, Christine McCall, George Villaras, James Wilde

Members Absent: Troy Depeiza, Jeffrey Harris, Richard Lockhart

Others Present: Stephen Stowell, Administrator

The following represents the actions taken by the Historic Board at the 2/14/2022 meeting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting occurred in hybrid form, both in-person and via the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Vice-Chair Jenness called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. **DLHD-22-16: 62 Gorham Street**

The Greek Revival style James Carr House (ca. 1830). Application for a Historic Permit by 62 Gorham LLC for exterior rehabilitation pursuant to the Lowell Historic District Act (Chapter 566, Acts of 1983).

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary and Geary LLP
Leo Monteiro, 62 Gorham LLC

J. Geary introduced and described the proposed project while L. Monteiro presented project plans.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

J. Wilde inquired about the location of the heat pumps. L. Monteiro said that they were on the outside of the

building with two on the right elevation in the narrow alley and five others on the rear elevation.

J. Wilde asked about potential barriers to prevent vehicles from hitting the building in the future. L. Monteiro said that he has had conversations with the City Engineers Department regarding options and that work to the sidewalks, including rebuilt handicap ramp, will hopefully include bollards or barriers. With the sidewalk work needed due to new utilities that will be run into the building, he is hopeful protective measures can also be installed.

C. McCall wanted to thank the developer for taking on the project which is in a critical corridor and that the building has been dilapidated for some time. She noted that there has already been an improvement in activity in the area and that she fully supports the project.

Motion:

By C. McCall, seconded by G. Villaras, to:

Vote to issue the Historic Permit for the exterior rehabilitation of 62 Gorham Street in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

1. Submittal, review, and approval of final storefront design and details including, but not limited to, shop drawings, door specifications, and glass based upon on-site investigation and historic documentation prior to commencement of work;
2. Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to all aspects of the window scope of work (wood or aluminum) including, but not limited to, paint color, any proposed interior screen systems (no exterior screens permitted; dark frames on interior screens), and blinds (dark color) prior to commencement of individual work items. No build out of existing window frames is allowed, nor is wrapping of any elements (all existing window elements to be removed so that new units fit within dimensions of masonry openings). Similar submittals will be needed for rear ell windows and doors;
3. Submittal, review, and approval of material and color samples for any masonry repair/reconstruction, repointing, metal work, wood, rear ell addition siding/trim, and paint. On-site cleaning, mortar, masonry, metal, siding/trim, and paint samples will be required for review and approval prior to commencement of work; and
4. Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details, and any scope of work alterations, including, but not limited to, mechanical equipment; roofing/flashings/gutters/downspouts; lighting including traditional fixtures, security lighting, and architectural lighting; cameras; and building signage prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 2.301, 2.31, and 2.32 of the Design Review Standards for the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

B. DLHD-22-17: 80 Gorham Street

The Greek Revival style Lowell Hotel (1829). Application for a Historic Permit by New Gorham LLC for exterior rehabilitation pursuant to the Lowell Historic District Act (Chapter 566, Acts of 1983).

On Behalf:

John Geary, Geary and Geary LLP
Leo Monteiro, New Gorham LLC

J. Geary introduced and described the proposed project while L. Monteiro presented project plans.

Speaking in Favor:

Fred Faust

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

C. McCall said that the developer has been an incredible community partner, working with the City to clean and secure both buildings, that the project is an important step in the continued redevelopment of the JAM area. She noted that the project is across the street from an underutilized municipal parking lot, she has no concerns about the number of units, and that more people and more foot traffic in the area will be a positive. The project will also help address the housing demand in Lowell and be respectful of the historic nature of the building, that the rear addition would not be visible, and that she is in full support of the project.

The Vice-Chair had a question about the style of the proposed addition and the existing building, what the thought process was behind it. L. Monteiro said that brick would be expensive and time consuming, that originally a brick base was proposed. But in discussion with the Administrator, it was decided to provide differentiation between the historic building and addition.

The Vice-Chair asked if there was a way to have the windows in the addition be more similar to those of the historic building. L. Monteiro said that they could look into revising the windows.

The Administrator said that the Vice-Chair raises an important issue regarding the windows, that the scale of the windows could be increased as they are presently short and squat. He noted that the 1/1 windows would be appropriate though as it is one way to distinguish new construction from the old but not having multi-light windows. But increasing the size of the windows would aid in creating more of a balance between the solid and void relationship of wall to windows and doors.

The Vice-Chair said that the size adjustment to the windows is what she felt would address the concern. L. Monteiro said that he could work on revisions to the windows with the Administrator.

L. Cassidy said that she also had concerns with the addition but if fully supportive of the rehabilitation of the historic structure. She noted that she did not see harmony between the new addition and surrounding structures with the windows, details, and roofline.

J. Geary agreed that the addition design could be anywhere but that it is not visible from the street and that costs are a consideration. He indicated that L. Monteiro is amenable to reworking the windows in terms of scale.

L. Monteiro said that the window layout and styles for the addition can definitely be revised. He also noted that the historic tax credits would not apply to the addition, only the historic structure, so cost is an issue.

L. Monteiro said that the roofline is a gable and it intersects with the gable slope of the historic building, similar to other buildings in the area.

The Administrator said that another low cost item could be looking at trim around windows, cornerboards, and a watertable. L. Monteiro said that could definitely be included in the revision of the addition's design.

C. McCall asked what the existing addition's siding was. L. Monteiro said the existing was vinyl and that the new addition will have higher quality fiber cement siding that is more in keeping with the historic characteristics of wood siding.

L. Cassidy said she is supportive of the project and at present, the design of the addition did not meet the Board's standards for new construction. She proposed an additional condition to be a part of any motion that adds additional features to the design of the addition.

A. Erickson noted that it is questionable how much of the rear addition would actually be seen due to its location and the presence of trees in the rear.

The Administrator said that the various items discussed the addition's design including window scale and trim can be included as part of the recommended motion. He noted that the scale of the addition and proposed materials are consistent with prior new construction projects approved by the Board. L. Monteiro agreed with the Administrator.

J. Wilde said that he supports the project and that with the minor design alterations to the addition, the benefits of the project far outweigh any negatives regarding the addition.

Motion:

By C. McCall, seconded by J. Wilde, to:

Vote to issue the Historic Permit for the exterior rehabilitation of 80 Gorham Street in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

1. Submittal, review, and approval of final storefront design and details including, but not limited to, shop drawings, door specifications, and glass based upon on-site investigation and historic documentation prior to commencement of work;
2. Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to all aspects of the window scope of work (wood or aluminum) including, but not limited to, paint color, any proposed interior screen systems (no exterior screens permitted; dark frames on interior screens), and blinds (dark color) prior to commencement of individual work items. No build out of existing window frames is allowed, nor is wrapping of any elements (all existing window elements to be removed so that new units fit within dimensions of masonry openings). Similar submittals will be needed for rear ell windows and doors;
3. Submittal, review, and approval of material and color samples for any masonry repair/reconstruction, repointing, metal work, wood, rear ell addition siding/trim, and paint. On-site cleaning, mortar, masonry, metal, siding/trim, and paint samples will be required for review and approval prior to commencement of work;

4. Submittal, review, and approval of rear addition elevation revisions including, but not limited to, window dimension and location alterations, watertable, trim, and other design features; and
5. Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details, and any scope of work alterations, including, but not limited to, mechanical equipment; roofing/flashings/gutters/downspouts; lighting including traditional fixtures, security lighting, and architectural lighting; cameras; and building signage prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 2.301, 2.31, and 2.32 of the Design Review Standards for the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

2. MINUTES

Approval of the Minutes of December 13, 2021

Motion:

By C. McCall, seconded by L. Cassidy, to:

Approve the minutes of December 13, 2021

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Mural Process with City Cultural Affairs and Special Events Office

New City Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Peter Crewe director introduced himself to the Board and that he is looking forward to working with the Board. He specifically noted working with the Board and the partnership of Project Learn and Beyond Walls on future mural projects.

C. McCall said that monitoring the mural processes would be advisable. P. Crewe said he would engage with the Board early in the process, that by March potential sites may be identified and then see which are the best candidates.

The Vice-Chair asked if a mural was still proposed for the Market Street Garage. P. Crewe said that an RFP had just been received and that it is being looked at.

The Administrator said that he and P. Crewe had already discussed one potential location but that it is outside of the Downtown Lowell Historic District and as such, the Board would not review it. He said that it was encouraging that sites elsewhere in the city are being looked at to spread art to neighborhoods. The location discussed with P. Crewe was a property that does have a state preservation restriction on it due to prior grant funding but it would be the state looking at appropriateness, not the Board.

P. Crewe appreciated the help and guidance, that he is encouraging the mural consortium to get out into the neighborhoods more so that the entire city benefits.

B. Enforcement/Violations Update

Work continues to assist businesses with DPD's Sign and Façade program assistance as well as Historic Board Sign Grants. Several businesses have removed lit "open" signs that have crept in during the pandemic and work continues to assist them and others on signage needs. Coordination is currently taking place to wrap up design and move on to fabrication for permanent signage for Solution Services at 65 Merrimack Street while Classic Convenience across the street is exploring simple window graphics to deal with some issues there.

A more long-term, or seasonal effort, focuses on minimum maintenance. To recap, documentation and notices are in the process of being wrapped up with the goal to have all permitted and ready to go as soon as winter clears. These projects are very much seasonal and involve painting for the most part that cannot be undertaken in the colder temperatures. These buildings include –

- 101 Central Street (Mansur Building) – unauthorized ground floor painting and door replacement, rear ell painting)
- 147 Central Street (Bradley Block aka Saab Building) – ground floor storefront repairs, painting, mismatched doors
- 10 Kearney Square (Fairburn Building) – minor storefront stall riser glass repair in one area
- 1 Merrimack Street (Simpson Block) - ground floor storefront repairs, painting
- 45 Merrimack Street (Hildreth Building) - ground floor storefront repairs, painting
- 123 Merrimack Street – ground floor storefront repairs, painting
- 133 Merrimack Street (Thompson Building) - ground floor storefront repairs, painting
- 169 Merrimack Street (Welles Block) - ground floor storefront repairs, painting

C. Administrator's Report

Upcoming Projects

Several projects are in the review stage and will require public hearings. Among the projects is a proposed affordable housing project at 733 Broadway Street that is in design review that should be on the March agenda.

City Hall Stained Glass – Community Preservation Act

On December 16, the Administrator presented the City Hall stained glass restoration project to the Community Preservation Committee. Subsequently the CPC approved the full \$473,713 project, bonded over 20 years, conditional upon final City Council authorization. In addition, the Administrator also presented the project to the joint City Council Neighborhood and Finance subcommittee on February 9.

The Administrator also continues to provide guidance to those CPA projects with an historic preservation component.

Open/Closed Signs

As previously noted, since 1989 the Board has provided custom oval open/closed signs for businesses in the DLHD. Unfortunately these have run out and a new supply of 200 has been ordered from the sign company who has been providing them over the years. The design proof has been approved and the signs will hopefully be available in several weeks.

While businesses aren't required to use them as traditional open/closed signs can also be used (not those of the lit variety obviously), businesses have liked these signs and they're also another engagement and outreach tool at the Board's disposal to assist businesses, like sign grants and design guidance.

Lowell Sun Sign

A meeting between the Sun newspaper and the Sun Building owners is in the process of being arranged while an update to the \$45,455 cost estimate is being obtained. 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.

Doors Open Lowell

Given the lead time to plan, organize, and fundraise for the event and the uncertainty of pandemic protocols, it is 99% certain that Doors Open Lowell will pause again this coming May. In lieu of Doors Open Lowell this year, it is anticipated that several walking tours may be presented during Preservation Month along with other thematic events as well as online social media content.

C. McCall acknowledged the pandemic uncertainty and said she hopes some downtown activities can be arranged during Preservation Month.

Downtown Lowell Historic District Building Markers

24 new markers are in the process of being developed that will be installed as they are fabricated. To date, 44 markers have been installed.

Website Updates

Recently several ADA corrections were made to the Board's website, specifically to various tables and links so that they are ADA compliant. Beyond these technical fixes, additional content has been added to the Historic Places and Architecture section in terms of several new architects under the Architects of Note section.

C. McCall appreciated the work undertaken by the Administrator to complete the website ADA updates.

L. Cassidy mentioned an upcoming historic masonry workshop being run by the National Park Service in Lowell in June and that the Administrator will be assisting with it.

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 6,668 followers while individual posts continue to reach thousands. Other platforms include Twitter (721 followers), Instagram (1,534 followers), and Pinterest (28 followers).

Next Meeting

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 14, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Reception Room.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

By G. Villaras, seconded by C. McCall, to:

Adjourn the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator

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