

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
PUBLIC HEARINGS
Conducted via Zoom
August 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeffrey Harris, Chairman
Christine Bruins
Troy Depeiza
Aurora Erickson
Kerry Regan Jenness
Richard Lockhart
George Villaras

OTHERS PRESENT

John Faneros, 414 Broadway Street
Dean Jenkins, Landsmart LLC
Kevin Murphy, 414 Broadway Street
Stephen Stowell, Administrator

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and for the benefit of any members of the public and the applicants in the virtual meeting, asked the Board members to introduce themselves and who they represented.

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. AND-21-02: 61-69 Rock Street

Application for an Historic Permit for construction of two multi-unit residential buildings and associated site improvements on existing vacant lot.

The Chairman read the published Public Hearing notice and declared the Hearing open to those wishing to speak in favor of the application.

The Chairman recognized developer and builder Dean Jenkins from Landsmart LLC. Mr. Jenkins said the project location is on Rock Street on an existing vacant lot immediately adjacent to two Habitat for Humanity houses that were built several years ago. He said that the plan is to construct two three unit townhouse buildings facing each other across a central driveway, each with a garage.

The Administrator described the plans and that in an initial site meeting with Mr. Jenkins, the desire to have the gable ends facing the street have a street presence was a priority. Thus the arrangement of windows and doors have them appear as gable facing homes that would traditionally front a street. The Administrator said that both the National Park architect and Mr. Depeiza commented on the plans and that suggestions regarding the buildings' fenestration, materials, dormers, and unit definition have all been incorporated into the submitted plans.

Mr. Jenkins noted that his preference was to use the building design and architectural features to define each unit as opposed to having many different colors provide that definition.

Mr. Depeiza said that the design had improved and that color would be important in the overall final appearance. But that overall he felt it was a good job.

The Administrator said that the materials for the buildings would be consistent with other new construction approved by the Board for prior new construction in the Acre Neighborhood District in terms of their natural appearance and workability. The siding will consist of cementitious siding (such as Hardieplank) while trim will be a cellular pvc product such as Azek. Windows are to be determined but would be of a composite material or aluminum clad wood.

Mr. Jenkins said that he would appreciate guidance on the type of garage doors to use, as well as possibly using a different color on those.

Having asked aloud 2 more times and hearing no one, the Chairman declared the Hearing closed to proponents and opened the Hearing to those who wished to speak in opposition.

Having asked aloud 3 times and hearing no one, the Chairman declared the Hearing closed to opponents and opened the Hearing to comments or question from Board members and the staff.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Jenkins for working with the Administrator, Mr. Depeiza, and the National Park architect, taking into consideration recommendations and making design revisions.

Ms. Jenness agreed with the Chairman and felt the changes made to the design broke up the façade in a way that made it look more organic, creating division between the different units rather than one monolith.

Mr. Lockhart said he thought the project would help the area and would not create parking issues. He was pleased with the two car garages that were proposed for each unit.

The Chairman asked about the garage door material. Mr. Jenkins said they could be fiberglass. The Chairman asked about the texture. Mr. Jenkins said that smooth could be looked at, rather than grained. The Chairman said that the smooth look would be preferable.

Mr. Jenkins asked about the vertical siding and that he may explore alternatives to that. Mr. Depeiza said that he may have some thoughts on alternatives and that he would take a look at it.

Motion by Ms. Jenness, seconded by Mr. Lockhart, to:

vote to issue the Historic Permit for the construction of two multi-unit residential buildings and associated site improvements on existing vacant lot at 61-69 Rock Street in the Acre Neighborhood District conditional upon the following:

- Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details including, but not limited to specifications for door and window systems, porch railings/post system, paint color, and shingles prior to commencement of work. Material and color samples will be required for paint and shingles;
- Cementitious siding and pvc trim to have smooth (not raised grain) surface. Sample of final selection (including colors) to be submitted for review and approval prior to purchase and installation;
- Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to the site plan including, but not limited to, planting plan/schedule, fencing, paving, dumpsters/screens, building/site lighting, and other site features prior to commencement of work; and

- Submittal, review, and approval of any scope of work alterations and final details prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the Design Review Standards of the Acre Neighborhood District.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

B. AND-21-03: 414 Broadway Street & 51-55 Willie Street

Application for an Historic Permit for construction of one multi-unit residential building and associated site improvements on existing vacant lot.

The Chairman read the published Public Hearing notice and declared the Hearing open to those wishing to speak in favor of the application.

The Chairman recognized Attorney Kevin Murphy, representing the applicant Ryan Rourke. Mr. Murphy also introduced John Faneros who is also part of the project team.

Mr. Murphy noted that the project previously appeared before the Zoning Board of Appeals and was granted a variance relative to parking requirements and that they will appear before the Planning Board in a week to construct the building. He said that he has received the Board's recommendations and is in full agreement with them.

The Chairman asked Mr. Faneros if he had anything to add. Mr. Faneros said he did not and asked if the Administrator could show the proposed designs on the screen.

The Administrator said that the proposed project is similar to the first project the Board ever approved in the Acre Neighborhood District on Adams Street, garage under townhouses but needing to have the garages to the rear and not visible from the street. The Administrator said that was the same goal here, to have the garages to the rear so as to not be visible from the primary elevation along Broadway Street. He said that from the beginning, the architect has always shown it that way.

The Administrator said that the proposed project is similar to the design for 61-69 Rock Street and involves the construction of one, 3 ½ story, three unit residential structure fronting Broadway Street at the corner of Willie Street. Each unit includes a two car garage at the rear of the structure and accessed either from Willie or Broadway streets.

The Administrator said that the materials for the building would be consistent with other new construction approved by the Board for prior new construction in the Acre Neighborhood District in terms of their natural appearance and workability. The siding will consist of cementitious siding (such as Hardieplank) while trim will be a cellular pvc product such as Azek. Windows are to be determined but would be of a composite material or aluminum clad wood.

The Administrator said that suggestions regarding the building's fenestration and materials have all been incorporated into the submitted plans. Particular attention was paid to the end elevations, especially the elevation at the corner fronting Willie Street to provide additional windows and a door. In addition to addressing the fenestration on the front elevation, vertical elements were introduced to provide additional unit definition.

Having asked aloud 2 more times and hearing no one, the Chairman declared the Hearing closed to proponents and opened the Hearing to those who wished to speak in opposition.

Having asked aloud 3 times and hearing no one, the Chairman declared the Hearing closed to opponents and opened the Hearing to comments or question from Board members and the staff.

Mr. Depeiza asked for confirmation on the materials. The Administrator said the proposed materials are similar to the Rock Street project. Mr. Depeiza said that the design had a nice scale to it.

The Administrator said that it was important to provide the Broadway Street elevation with addition presence and the architect was very responsive to the fenestration suggestions as well as ideas regarding unit definition. He noted that it was important for the project to hopefully get its approval from the Historic Board so that there would not be anything to hold them up at the Planning Board next week.

The Chairman said that the door on the Willie Street elevation was of a different design than the others on the building. The Administrator said that it would be changed to match the others for consistency.

Ms. Bruins asked about air conditioner units. Mr. Faneros did not have any information regarding that. The Administrator said that he would work with the project proponents on size, location, and screening of any units.

Mr. Lockhart said he was satisfied with the design and that it will be an improvement to the area.

The Chairman stated his appreciation for the applicant's willingness to work with the Board, taking into consideration design recommendations and making revisions

Ms. Jenness stated her support for the project and thanked the applicant for their working with the Board.

Ms. Jenness left the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Ms. Erickson asked if the adjacent building was part of the project. Mr. Faneros said only interior renovations were planned at this time. Mr. Erickson asked if the ground floor would remain commercial. Mr. Faneros said that it once was a beauty salon but that they had since converted it into an apartment.

Motion by Mr. Villaras, seconded by Mr. Lockhart, to:

vote to issue the Historic Permit for the to issue the Historic Permit construction of one multi-unit residential building and associated site improvements on existing vacant lot at 414 Broadway Street and 51-55 Willie Street in the Acre Neighborhood District conditional upon the following:

- Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details including, but not limited to specifications for door and window systems, porch railings/post system, paint color, and shingles prior to commencement of work. Material and color samples will be required for paint and shingles;
- Cementitious siding and pvc trim to have smooth (not raised grain) surface. Sample of final selection (including colors) to be submitted for review and approval prior to purchase and installation;
- Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to the site plan including, but not limited to, planting plan/schedule, fencing, paving, dumpsters/screens, building/site lighting, and other site features prior to commencement of work; and
- Submittal, review, and approval of any scope of work alterations and final details prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the Design Review Standards of the Acre Neighborhood District.

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

The Public Hearings were closed at 6:40 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
Conducted via Zoom
August 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeffrey Harris, Chairman
Christine Bruins
Troy Depeiza
Aurora Erickson
Richard Lockhart
George Villaras

OTHERS PRESENT

Stephen Stowell, Administrator

2. MINUTES

Approval of the Minutes of January 13, 2020.

Motion by Mr. Lockhart, seconded by Mr. Villaras, to:

approve the minutes of January 13, 2020

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Mural Policy Update

The Administrator said that the mural policy is in the process of being drafted and consists of various bullet points right now. He said that there should be a document ready to review for the next meeting.

The Chairman said that it will be good to have something to review and ultimately put in place. Ms. Bruins agreed as she noted the National Park has had a few inquiries and it would be good to get ahead of it.

B. Enforcement/Violations Update

Enforcement has generally been restricted over the past few months due to the pandemic and rules regarding businesses being open and so on. However as business have gradually been allowed to reopen, several spot checks and visits have taken place to remind businesses to remove neon/lit “open” signs and related items. Minimum maintenance targets including 62 Gorham Street and 80 Gorham Street have also returned to the forefront with a meeting scheduled next week with the 62 Gorham Street owners and Orders for Compliance being sent to 80 Gorham Street

C. Administrator's Report

The Administrator said that his report would be incorporated as part of the meeting's minutes.

Review and Permitting Activity:

Despite the pandemic, permitting has remained strong in terms of signage and maintenance. Several new businesses have opened needing signage while maintenance projects including the Boott millyard towers and masonry repointing at Appleton Mills have required review and several site visits. Projects in design review have included the rehabilitation of 29-31 Paige Street, additions to the Lowell Boys & Girls Club, and several housing projects in the Acre Neighborhood District including the two on this agenda as well as 41 Rock Street. Post-hearing review continues on projects including the new residential structures on parcels 8 and 9 in the Appleton millyard, 138 Middlesex Street, Athenian Corner/Putnam Building, 160 Middlesex Street, 50 Payne Street, and Thorndike Exchange.

In addition, review has also taken place for several public projects including the National Grid gas line work on Shattuck Street to ensure cobblestones were not affected and elements of the Lord Overpass project affecting the walls of the Pawtucket Canal.

Board Member Updates:

Letters were sent in January to those entities whose representatives had terms ending at the end of February. The terms of Troy Depeiza (American Institute of Architects/Boston Society for Architecture), Jeffrey Harris (Department of Conservation and Recreation), and George Villaras (Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce) were due to expire February 29. Diane Tradd (Division of Planning and Development Director) is by position a statutory member of the Board and renews automatically.

Troy Depeiza was again nominated by the AIA/BSA for their seat, was appointed by the City Manager, and confirmed by the City Council on 3/3/20 for a two-year term expiring 2/28/22.

The DCR Commissioner appointed Jeffrey Harris as their representative for a two-year term effective 3/1/20 and expiring 2/28/22.

George Villaras was again nominated by the Chamber for their seat, was appointed by the City Manager, and confirmed by the City Council on 3/3/20 for a two-year term expiring 2/28/22.

At present, all nine Board seats are filled, updated, and no one is in a carry over or hold over status.

Community Preservation Act:

With the passage of the Community Preservation Act by Lowell voters back in November, the work to draft an ordinance required by state law and the creation of a Community Preservation Committee has been completed. The Historic Board has a statutory seat on the Community Preservation Committee whose primary responsibilities include developing a community preservation plan, reviewing and recommending projects for CPA funding, and keeping records/reporting on the CPA budget. As previously-noted, the Chairman has designated Troy Depeiza as the Board's representative on the CPC. To date, the CPC has not been formally created, as a few statutory entities have not designated representatives, and the membership has not been formally presented to the City Council for confirmation.

Ms. Bruins asked when the first round of funding requests for funding might occur. The Administrator noted that first the CPC needs to create the community preservation plan to establish goals and objectives in the four CPA funding areas. So the timing would probably be sometime in early 2021.

He said he is hopeful that one early project that can be funded is the restoration of City Hall's stained glass which has been on the radar for many years. The Administrator also said that the CPA funds are both for public and private projects and that there could be some really innovative things that could be done with the housing component like pay down interest or points on mortgages to make housing more affordable. He also said a variety of recreational projects could be funded like splash pads that are popular in Lowell.

Whistler House Building Committee:

As previously-noted, at the request of the Whistler House's director Sara Bogosian, the Administrator has been serving on their building committee that is developing plans to replace the existing Parker Gallery with a new, modern gallery. Other committee members include Peter Aucella, Adam Baacke (former DPD director/Historic Board member/current UML director of facilities), Steve Joncas (development consultant), Todd Lee (architect), Jay Linnehan (Greater Lowell Community Foundation director), and Will Soucy (contractor). Prior to this formal committee being created, myself and former National Park architect Charlie Tonetti had been advising Sara informally on architects and design.

A few weeks back, the committee met and held virtual interviews with four architectural firms. The result of that is that an architect has been selected by the committee but is confidential until the Whistler House makes a formal announcement. But it will be exciting for both the institution and the community at large.

Lowell District Court:

The Lowell District Court on Hurd Street has been in the news lately as a possible demolition project with the site being used for parking and a future development parcel. Constructed by the Commonwealth in three stages, the original courthouse was constructed in 1924-25, two wings were built in 1945 (as well as the surface parking lot to the rear, and a final addition in 1967. It is located within the Downtown Lowell Historic District but is not in any other district, nor the National Park area.

A Project Notification Form was submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission who determined that the demolition would be an adverse effect. MHC requested that consultation be initiated between them, the owner (Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance), and the City to determine ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the loss of the structure. To date no consultation has occurred and DCAMM still needs to follow state procedures for the disposition of state property.

Ms. Erickson said she appreciated the update on the courthouse. The Administrator said that the Board would be part of any MHC consultation process if the project moves forward. In addition there is a very specific process of how the State disposes of properties that someone else may be ahead of the City in the disposition process.

Ms. Erickson said that it seems like a reach to demolish the building to solve a parking problem blocks away. Ms. Bruins said especially since it is within sight of an existing parking garage.

Ms. Erickson asked to whom someone should reach out to if they had a concern regarding the courthouse. The Administrator said MHC, the City Manager, or City Council.

Downtown Lowell Historic District Building Markers:

24 new markers are in the process of being developed that will be installed in phases in over the next several months. To date, 44 markers have been installed.

Social Media:

Social media continues to be a very popular and effective education and outreach tool for the Board. The Board's Facebook page has 5,699 "likes" while individual posts continue to reach thousands. Other platforms include Twitter (690 followers), Instagram (1,335 followers), and Pinterest (23 followers).

Next Meeting:

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 14, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and is expected to be held virtually via Zoom.

The Administrator noted that he thought the Zoom meeting went well, especially the public hearing component, for the first time out for the Board. The Chairman stated his appreciation for the Board's willingness to use this new way of interacting and reviewing projects.

The Administrator said that he is in the office five days a week now and that City Hall is open to the public on Tuesday and Thursday. The Chairman said that is a bit surprising to hear as all State workers are working remote and are more conservative. The Administrator said that he received a nice email from the National Park Superintendent who appreciated that fact that he was able to be around, keeping an eye on historic issues, when many National Park staff were remote and isolated. He noted that he was always out and about, taking care of business, being sure to do things within health guidelines and being safe.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Lockhart, seconded by Ms. Bruins, to:

adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Unanimously approved, 6-0.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator