

Methuen Historic District Commission
May 28, 2009 at 7:00 P.M.
Great Hall – Searles Building
41 Pleasant Street
Methuen, MA 01844

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order of Regular Meeting

Chairman Dufresne called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Roll Call

Raymond Dufresne, Chair	Present	Joseph Fisichelli	Present
Joseph Bella	Present	Christine Metzemaekers	Absent
Peter Cameron	Present	Katherine Robinson, Alternate	Present
Robert Fabino	Present	Ralph Belmonte, Alternate	Present

Others in Attendance

Alene Reich, Historic Planner, City of Methuen
Dick Doherty, St. Monica's Parish

Chairperson Dufresne welcomed Ralph Belmonte to the Commission.

3. Acceptance of March 26, 2009 Minutes

MOTION by Commissioner Robinson to accept the minutes of the March 26, 2009 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Fisichelli.

UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATIVE VOTE.

4. Old Business

a. Talent Bank Applications

Reich asked Commissioners to help recruit by gathering talent bank applications from interested residents and also to return Talent Bank applications when up for renewal. There is one vacancy for a member and one vacancy for an alternate.

b. Sign Guidelines Update

Commission established that Chairman Dufresne will scan the multitude of documents available for review in updating the sign guidelines. The information will be broken down into to files that may be emailed, for a paperless/less-paper process, except in the case that a Commissioner does not use email.

5. New Business

a. Public Hearing: Dick Doherty, St. Monica's School, 212 Lawrence St.

Mr. Doherty introduced himself and his ties to Methuen and St. Monica's Parish. The applicant explained the overall project of renovation at the Parish, including the church, rectory, and school. Current efforts include replacing the roof on the church and replacing the windows at the school.

Chair Dufresne interjected to explain that the roof replacement had been granted a Certificate of Non-Applicability earlier in the month because the replacement utilized like materials.

Mr. Doherty explained the failure of the old materials and the urgency of the situation. He continued by explaining that the windows are the next step in the renovation.

Commissioner Robinson asked if the model proposed was the same as the windows that were approved for the rectory. Mr. Doherty confirmed that it is the same model, but that seven years later, the quality and technology has improved.

Chair Dufresne asked if there was anyone who would speak in favor of the project? Against the project? Hearing none, he opened the issue to discussion by the Commission.

Chair Dufresne began by explaining that vinyl windows are generally not accepted in the Historic District and asked after the reasoning for approving the rectory windows. Commissioner Robinson, who was on the Commission when that case came for review, said that there were economic considerations and that since the rectory was set back from the street, with few windows obviously visible from the public way, that the windows were approved.

Mr. Doherty added that the trim will be encased in matching vinyl.

Commissioner Robinson raised concerns about the pervasiveness of inexpensive, low-quality vinyl windows that are not reglazible and generally have a lifespan of 20 years at best. Mr. Doherty cited that the windows have a 25-year guarantee and that the windows at the convent were holding up well. Commissioner Robinson explained that a longer-term replacement is encouraged.

Chair Dufresne pointed out that the school windows will endure more usage than those at the rectory and that commercial-grade windows would be more appropriate. Mr. Doherty expressed his understanding of that concern, but stated that the cost of 192 windows of that grade would be prohibitive. The applicant had explored other options, including custom exact replacements, but the price was prohibitive.

Chair Dufresne said that he had visited the convent and the rectory and that the windows have held up well for those applications, but that the school's use will be different. Mr. Doherty expressed that the situation is dire; the windows do not open and that they are not energy efficient.

Commissioner Fabino made a MOTION to approve the application as presented. Commissioner Bella seconded the motion. UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATIVE VOTE.

Mr. Doherty confirmed with Alene Reich that the Building Department would be notified.

b. Elections: Chair Dufresne entertained nominations from the Commission for Chairperson of the Commission.

Commissioner Robinson nominated Ray Dufresne, asked if he would be willing to serve. Chair Dufresne affirmed that he would. Chair asked for additional nominations. Commissioner Robinson MOTIONED to vote to nominate Raymond Dufresne as Chair of the Commission. Commissioner Fabino seconded the motion. UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATIVE VOTE.

Chair Dufresne entertained nominations from the Commission for Vice Chairperson of the Commission.

Commissioner Fabino nominated Commissioner Bella. Commissioner Robinson nominated Commissioner Fabino. Commissioner Bella nominated Commissioner Fabino. Chair Dufresne asked for speeches from the nominees. Commissioner Bella removed his name from consideration. Commissioner Fabino stated that he was willing to serve. Chair Dufresne asked for additional nominations. Hearing none, he called the nomination to a vote. UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATIVE VOTE.

6. Announcements

None. Chair Dufresne asked about the status of the City's Historical Collection. Reich reported that the Historical Commission met with the Mayor to discuss an emergency move. The spaces the City has offered as alternatives are either not big enough or are not appropriate. A few private entities are considering offering space. Commissioner Fisichelli asked about the space needs, to which Reich answered that we need more than 3,000 sq.ft. Commissioner Robinson asked about environmental controls. Reich reported that the priority is to move the collection out of bad conditions they are in and then deal with environmental controls. Reich reported that the Office of Community Development is actively working on this issue.

MOTION to adjourn by Commissioner Robinson. Seconded by Commissioner Fisichelli. UNANIMOUS AFFIRMATIVE VOTE.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Alene Reich