

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
PUBLIC HEARINGS
Arthur Hammar Conference Room, JFK Civic Center
January 13, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeffrey Harris, Chairman
Christine Bruins
Troy Depeiza
Aurora Erickson
Kerry Regan Jenness
Richard Lockhart
Diane Tradd
James Wilde

OTHERS PRESENT

Rick Feldman, YMCA
Rachel Young, Bargmann Hendrie/YMCA
Stephen Stowell, Administrator

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Chairman said that the Board would begin the meeting out of order and begin with Old Business and the continuation of the hearing for DLHD-20-09 (41 Warren Street), then return to the Public Hearing portion of the agenda.

A. DLHD-20-13: 35 YMCA Drive

Application for an Historic Permit for construction of an approximately 1,000 sq. ft. addition to the rear of existing building.

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 consultant Rick Feldman and architect Rachel Young from Bargmann Hendrie who proceeded to describe the plans for a small 1,000 square foot addition to the rear of the existing YMCA building. Ms. Young noted that much work will be undertaken to various interior spaces with no impact to the exterior. The new addition will include an entrance for the YMCA's youth development center, gallery, and a community room. It will also impact the existing playground which will be extended further into the parking lot to make up for some loss of space.

Ms. Young said that the exterior of the addition is comprised of a mixture of glass, metal, and cementitious panels.

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.

Ms. Tradd asked if the playground equipment supplier had been chosen yet. Ms. Young said that it had not, that they were at 50% schematic design for the playground.

Ms. Jenness inquired about the playground surface. Ms. Young said that it would be approximately 50% asphalt and 50% wood chips which was being driven by the budget. The poured in place soft surface rubber material would not be used due to recent studies showing lead concentrations in the material.

Ms. Tradd asked if there was a 10 foot width strip available along the parking area outside the playground area to possibly introduce some trees for shading parts of the playground. Mr. Feldman noted that the area was tight due to the vehicle drop off area and there would not be room. Ms. Young said that she would like to introduce trees to deal with the harsh sun in that location but the site is just too tight. Ms. Tradd suggested sun shade/canvas material and Ms. Young said that is the direction they are moving towards.

Motion by Ms. Jenness, seconded by Ms. Bruins, to:

vote to issue the Historic Permit for the construction of an approximately 1,000 square foot addition to the rear of the existing building at 35 YMCA Drive in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

- Submittal, review, and approval of material and color samples for cementitious siding, metal, glass, and paint. On-site samples will be required for review and approval prior to commencement of individual work items;
- Submittal, review, and approval of final signage designs including existing building signage adjustments and any proposed new site signage;
- Site/landscape and playground plans to be submitted for review and approval prior to commencement of individual work items; 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 Section 3.2 of the Design Review Standards of the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved, 8-0.

The Public Hearings were closed at 6:45 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
Arthur Hammar Conference Room, JFK Civic Center
January 13, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jeffrey Harris, Chairman
Christine Bruins
Troy Depeiza
Aurora Erickson
Kerry Regan Jenness
Richard Lockhart
Diane Tradd
James Wilde

OTHERS PRESENT

Josh Burgel, UTEC/Lemon Brooke
Tara Mizrahi, UTEC/Affirmative Investments
Stephen Stowell, Administrator

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. DLHD-20-09: 41 Warren Street

Renovation, additions, and enlargement of existing open space in front of the former St. Paul's Church (1839). Continued from December 9, 2019.

The Chairman noted that this project was a continuation of a Public Hearing from December 9, 2019. The Chairman recognized project proponents for UTEC including landscape architect Josh Burgel from Lemon Brooke and consultant Tara Mizrahi from Affirmative Investments.

Mr. Burgel noted that he was unable to attend the previous meeting due to illness. He said the updated presentation includes items that addresses the Board's concerns from the prior meeting, primarily the turf surface and the storage container. He noted that metal material of the proposed entry signage is reflective of the metal found on the building's addition.

Mr. Burgel addressed the concern regarding the proposed synthetic turf. He said that this sort of material can be used year round, especially by child care facilities like the one associated with UTEC. Natural lawns in New England cannot withstand the use, especially when damp. Thus the proposed synthetic turf will withstand the use even when wet. Another reason for the synthetic turf is the area's dual use as a function space that could also damage natural grass, especially when wet.

Mr. Burgel presented photos of natural turf and the wear and tear that can occur in areas of similar use to that of the project site. A photograph of a playground in downtown Boston was also presented the Mr. Burgel designed in 2015 that despite high use, has no wear and tear. Samples of various types of synthetic turf were presented for viewing including one of varying lengths, widths, and colors, more of thatch look that was more believable as natural turf. For comparisons, other samples illustrated older, less appropriate versions of synthetic turf.

Mr. Burgel is recommending that the synthetic turf proposed for the project site be the more realistic, thatched appearance of varying and blended lengths, widths, and colors.

Mr. Lockhart asked if the turf was porous. Mr. Burgel said that it was and that storm water would also be stored beneath the turf surface.

Ms. Tradd asked if the proposed synthetic turf would use a recycled rubber base like seen at some athletic fields. Mr. Burgel said they were not, that a pad base would be used which is appropriate for playground use. Athletic fields use the recycled rubber bases due to the high impact activities found there. Mr. Burgel also noted that they recommend a groomer or a sweeper that is used occasionally to keep the turf from matting and getting flattened and that smaller electric or gas versions exist for smaller spaces like here.

Mr. Wilde asked how the synthetic turf is adhered to the ground. Mr. Burgel said that it is staked. And crushed stone beneath assists in proper drainage.

Mr. Burgel stated that he believes the proposed synthetic turf is a good, durable material, that it would not need replacement for potentially 10-12 years.

Ms. Tradd said she feels the material is a good choice and solution for this small space and its multi-use function, that the use of natural turf in this area is not realistic from an upkeep perspective. Mr. Lockhart agreed. She noted that a similar material will be used in the courtyard of the new high school project.

Mr. Wilde asked what the square footage of the space was. Mr. Burgel said it was approximately 1,000 square feet.

Ms. Erickson asked that when the turf is replaced down the road, that the same quality would be used. Mr. Burgel said yes and that the technology is always evolving so future products could even be better aesthetically.

Ms. Tradd asked about the MOU that will allow UTEC to use City property as part of this expanded outdoor space, that a requirement regarding replacement could be included in it. Ms. Mizrahi stated that could be included in the MOU.

The Chairman asked if future renewal of the turf would require Historic Board review and approval. The Administrator said that it would be Minor Development review at the staff level and review would ensure that the renewal turf was equivalent to the Board's original approval or better.

Mr. Burgel addressed the question of the storage container and specifically the doors. He showed an image of a raw storage container and the vertical locking mechanisms that look obtrusive. He suggested keeping the same doors with more refined hardware and locking system. Another option Mr. Burgel suggested was to clad the doors in metal similar to the proposed site signage or the building's addition and provide different hardware.

Ms. Tradd asked if the use of the storage container was for site furnishings and so on. Mr. Burgel said that it was for that as well as play equipment.

Mr. Wilde inquired about the type of lock. Mr. Burgel said it would be a typical handle with a lock cylinder.

Mr. Wilde asked Mr. Burgel if he had a preference to the type of door. Mr. Burgel said he would lean toward the painted door option as it was simpler and requires less customization and detail. The consensus of the Board was that the painted door option with unobtrusive hardware was preferred.

Mr. Wilde asked what the dimensions of the storage container were. Mr. Burgel said it was 8 feet wide by 20 feet long with the deck on top.

Ms. Tradd asked what the use of the deck was. Mr. Burgel said it would be for expanded function space.

Ms. Tradd asked if there was a way in which small plantings could be incorporated into the fence rail of the deck to soften the edge. Ms. Mizrahi noted that the preference is to keep it open so that sightlines are maintained. Ms. Tradd clarified that she was thinking more toward the bottom of the storage container along the street edge. Mr. Burgel said there was a 2 foot setback at the bottom that they were planning to use paving material within but that plantings such as ivy could be planted there that would grow upward.

Ms. Jenness said that Mr. Burgel satisfactorily addressed the Board's questions and was glad that the synthetic turf samples had been provided.

The Chairman asked if there were any further questions or comments from the Board members.

Ms. Erickson stated that she was unhappy about the loss of portions of the historic fence. She said that although the design solution was reasonable, she would not want to see any further historic elements of the building or site lost. The Administrator said that he raised the fence issue on day one of the project's design review and was told that the pointed pickets, as well as the spacing, were not desirable in an area where children would be. He stated that he then directed the project team to develop an acceptable alternative that would retain as much of the historic fence as possible. Mr. Burgel noted that the historic posts remain but that the infill pickets would be properly spaced with no spikes.

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

vote to issue the Historic Permit for the renovation, additions, and enlargement of the existing open space at 41 Warren Street in front of the former St. Paul's Church in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

- Submittal, review, and approval of specifications, material, and color samples for all hardscape elements of the plan including, but not limited to, paving, fencing, lighting, signage, furniture, and storage container prior to commencement of individual work items;
- Submittal, review, and approval of planting schedule for all natural elements of the plan;
- Securing of any required City of Lowell approvals necessary to execute the approved site plan. If such approvals are not obtained, revised plans must be heard and approved by the Board at a future meeting;
- If turf needs future repair or replacement, replacement material must be equivalent or better than turf approved under this Historic Permit;
- Storage container to have painted doors with unobtrusive hardware; 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 Section 5.41 of the Design Review Standards of the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved 8-0.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Mural Policy Update

The Administrator noted that the draft policy is in the process of being developed and that when completed, will be distributed for review and comment.

B. Lowell Telecommunications Update

The Administrator said that beginning with February, the Board will no longer be meeting in the DPD Conference Room and that all meetings will occur in the Mayor's Reception Room in City Hall. This is due to the restricting public evening access to the JFK Civic Center at the request of the Police Department. Ms. Tradd noted that this is for building security.

The Administrator said that since the Mayor's Reception Room is wired for LTC access that when they're ready and the logistics are determined, that the Board's meetings will be able to be broadcasted.

C. Enforcement/Violations Update

The Administrator requested a vote for the issuance of the Order for Compliance sequence of letters for 80 Gorham Street as no response was received to the staff-issued Request for Compliance (DLHDV-20-02) hand delivered to the property owner on December 10, 2019. A similar Request was sent to the owners of the nearby 62 Gorham Street for minimum maintenance issues but the owners reached out and staff is working with them on addressing the concerns at the property.

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

vote to send the Order for Compliance sequence of notices to the property owner of 80 Gorham Street for minimum maintenance violations (DLHDV-20-02).

Unanimously approved, 8-0.

D. Administrator's Report

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

Review and Permitting Activity:

FY20 permitting is running consistent with FY19. Several projects are in design review including the rehabilitation of 1 Middlesex Street, the rehabilitation of 29-31 Paige Street, an addition to the YMCA on YMCA Drive, and construction of a new commercial structure at 268 Mt. Vernon Street in the Acre Neighborhood District. Planning is also underway on design for solar panels on the roofs of the Renaissance on the River condominiums in the Lawrence millyard. 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. This is in addition to everyday signage and maintenance applications.

Community Preservation Act:

With the passage of the Community Preservation Act by Lowell voters back in November, work is ongoing to draft an ordinance required by state law to create a Community Preservation Committee that will put the wheels in motion to implement the CPA in Lowell. The Administrator has been working with relevant City departments to assist in this effort. The Historic Board has a statutory seat on the Community Preservation Committee that

will be created so at some point the Board will designate a member to sit on that committee. The primary responsibilities of the committee is to develop a community preservation plan, review and recommend projects for CPA funding, and keep records/report on the CPA budget.

Doors Open Lowell:

The 19th annual Doors Open Lowell will be held May 8-9 as part of National Preservation Month. Preliminary planning and fundraising efforts are underway while both the event's website and Facebook page has been updated to reflect the upcoming event.

Downtown Lowell Historic District Building Markers:

24 new markers are in the process of being developed that will be installed in phases through the spring and in conjunction with Preservation Month in May. 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 5,286 "likes" while individual posts continue to reach thousands. Other platforms include Twitter (662 followers), Instagram (1,228 followers), and Pinterest (23 followers).

Next Meeting:

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the Mayor's Reception Room in City Hall.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Jenness, seconded by Ms. Bruins, to:

adjourn the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Unanimously approved, 8-0.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator