

Monday, January 23, 2017
Worcester Telegram & Gazette

City Hall Notebook

By Nick Kotsopoulos
Telegram & Gazette Staff

Old building, new life

A vacant, historic two-story office building at Mechanic and Commercial streets has been given a new lease on life.

The Historical Commission Thursday night unanimously voted to waive the city's one-year demolition delay waiver for historic structures so the building can be renovated and preserved by its owner, MCPHS University.

MCPHS wants to convert the basement of the building into a parking garage, while the future use for the first and second floors of the building have yet to be determined, according to Mark Donohue, a lawyer representing the school.

MCPHS has owned the building, which was constructed in 1926 and is formerly known at the Duncan and Goodell Hardware Building.

Mr. Donohue said the original plans were to demolish the 41,000-square-foot building so an open-air parking facility could be constructed in its place to support the university's newest program, its New England School of Acupuncture at 19 Norwich St.

After a fair amount of analysis and study, he said it was determined that the building could be preserved and a parking garage located in its basement.

"The rest of the building will be left for future use of the college in a yet-to-be-determined fashion," Mr. Donohue said.

The university worked with Preservation Worcester on coming up with a re-use plan for the building. The plan calls for the restoration of the building's facade to its original state.

Because the building is listed on the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System, it is subject to the city's demolition-delay ordinance, which automatically puts a one-year hold on the razing of historic structures or renovation work done to the exterior of the building.

The Historical Commission is able to grant a waiver to the delay if it feels the work to be done will not negatively impact the historical or architectural resources of the city.

In another matter, the commission Thursday night also gave the city the green light to proceed with a \$3.1 million window and door replacement project for the former Granite Street Elementary School, now known as the Gerald Creamer Center.