

BRIEFING PAPER

LOWELL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

June 17, 1983

FY 1984 Budget

Thanks to the work of Congressman Shannon and the documentation developed by the Commission staff, the House Appropriations Subcommittee has reported favorably on an amendment to provide an additional \$2.61 million for Commission development and another \$100,000 (\$507,000 total) for operations in Fiscal Year 1984.

House passage of the full Appropriations Committee bill is anticipated. The Senate, however, is expected to develop its own budget proposal which will be closer to the Administration's recommendations. No development funds were recommended in this budget version. We are now working with the staff of Senator Tsongas' office to make the case for these additional funds in the Senate.

Operating Budget

The present operating budget of \$407,000 will not be sufficient to meet Commission needs through September 30, the end of the fiscal year. As the attached operating budget report indicates, the Commission has obligated \$320,805 as of June 15, leaving an unobligated balance of \$86,194. Staff salaries alone for this period are projected to exceed that figure. This is due to uncompensated salary and benefit increases as well as essential positions which must be maintained. Other budget line items are on target for the year. As a result, the Commission could face a deficit of approximately \$25,000 based on the present expenditure rate.

A number of steps have been taken to reduce this projected deficit figure: Only essential obligations for the remainder of the year will be made; certain cultural grants will be deferred until October; and revenues from rent collections will be used to cover some of the deficiencies. In addition, the Commission is owed a \$7,500 grant for services provided to the Department of the Interior for time spent researching a publication on mill windows. These actions would reduce the deficiency to \$13,000 to \$15,000.

The Commission staff has contacted the Regional Office to discuss this situation and appeal for additional funds. The Budget Committee will be discussing this situation before Monday's meeting.

Central Street/Pawtucket Canal

Intensive negotiations are presently underway between the Commission and Leon Trivers, the owner of the Martin's Clothes Building, in an effort to settle complex relocation issues that could delay the demolition of the building. Key issues are requests for an advanced hardship payment for relocation to Merrimack Street and the reestablishment of utility systems in the leased portion of the operation, (Male Stop) that will remain opened in an adjacent building. The Commission is expected to receive a recommendation from the NPS Regional Lands Office and Solicitor that an advance payment be granted of between \$10,000 and \$15,000. The justification for this payment will be reviewed and a request for payment made at the next meeting. The Solicitor and U.S. Attorney have also determined that the Commission is responsible for reconnecting certain utilities to the adjoining leased property that will be affected when the Martin's Building is razed. Authorization for the hiring of an engineering firm recommended by the U.S. Attorney to cost out and document the building systems will also be sought.

If all goes well, Martin's Clothes should be out of the building by mid-July and demolition will start in August.

Another property owner along the Pawtucket Canal, Larry Ansin of Joan Fabrics has made a major commitment to improve the facade of his mill facing Central Street and to undertake landscape work along the canal. This work would be done at the company's cost. In return, the Commission will be asked to approve an arrangement similar to the one with the Lowell Sun, which calls for us to provide technical plans and specifications in return for a guarantee to do the work. CBT, the architectural firm responsible for other design of the Commission's improvements for the Central Street work, is being asked for a cost estimate for this work. Outside assistance is necessary because all design work must be complete by July 15 to order and install windows this construction season.

Meanwhile, CBT is well underway with construction documents for the Commission landscaping and walkway project. The deadline for this work is also July 15.

Trolley

Specifications for construction of the overhead line system were advertised in May with bids due June 29. The pre-bid meeting, held June 14, was attended by five firms who inspected the sites with Commission and Contracting Office staff. To avoid delay in starting construction, Commission members will be asked to authorize the contracting officer to award the contract to the low bidder.

A price of \$28,969 has been negotiated with Louis T. Klauder and Associates for the next phase of engineering for the trolley system. As discussed at the May meeting, this would involve preparation of specifications for track work to be done by the Boston and Maine railroad, inspection of construction work of the overhead line, and design all planned track and electrification extensions under this contract. The initial proposal was submitted for \$37,584 but this was eventually reduced to under \$30,000. A motion will be made to extend the current contract to cover the above items.

Planning Committee

In order to prepare submissions for the FY '85 development budget, a joint meeting of the Planning and Budget Committees will be scheduled at the next Commission meeting. The meeting will review the staff's future projects agenda.

Boott Mill Boarding House-Mogan Cultural Center

Plans and specifications for the exterior construction phase are complete and will be advertised in the next few weeks. A September start of construction is expected. Final approval has been received from Washington for the acquisition, thereby assuring that the building will be available on schedule.

The scope of services for the next architectural/engineering contract - to complete the interior of the building - is being reviewed by the NPS Contracting Office. Qualifications will be requested shortly from firms interested in being considered to perform the services. The technical committee appointed at the last meeting will meet in July to evaluate the submissions.

In addition to planning the historic exhibits, classrooms, and archival uses of the Cultural Center, the staff and Pat Mogan have also been exploring the special educational and research dimensions of the project. Meetings have taken place with the Trade Union Program at Harvard University, and with the Dean of the School of Management Sciences at the University of Lowell, Benjamin Chinitz. Both meetings were extremely productive. Joseph O'Donnell of the Harvard Trade Program has introduced the project to the Massachusetts State Labor Council. Dean Chinitz, in conjunction with President Hogan at the University of Lowell, is organizing an interdisciplinary faculty meeting at the University for mid July. Dr. Mogan and Commission staff will also attend the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to seek ways to expand and strengthen the ties among the University, the Cultural Center and the community.

Acquisition

The Department of the Interior in Washington has approved the acquisition of H&H Paper Company Building. Closing should take place within the month and the 90-day notice to vacate was sent to the tenants on June 16.

The Solicitor's office is continuing to work on the purchase and sale agreement for the Wang/Capehart Building.

The NPS Regional Lands Office is reviewing the appraisal report on the Boott Mill Countinghouse and Coal Pocket and will begin negotiations to acquire these properties as authorized by the Commission.

Relocation

A meeting was held with a representative of the Sullivan family on the relocation claim for the business housed in the World Furniture Building. We are awaiting documentation in order to recommend a revised claim at the upcoming Commission meeting.

Leasing

A lease is presently being negotiated with "Sweaters & Letters," owned by David Frawley, owner of Highland Towel in Lowell. Mr. Frawley has renewed his interest in 1200 square feet of space at Market Mills.

Discussions also are continuing with perspective Book Store and Wine and Cheese operators.

A Brush With History

The artist studios will be entering their second year of operation in July. There are twelve studios, representing six visual artists and six craftpersons. Nine of the 12 artists are due for lease renewal on July 1, 1983. All are planning to renew. To date, some studios have been more successful than others. In all cases, the individual artist has benefitted from the high public visibility. The Commission staff has been particularly pleased by the artists' response to the project and to the visiting public. The artists have conducted many community workshops and special programs, and have assisted the Commission and National Park on several occasions. On Monday, June 27, they will be again opening their studios for our reception following the National Park tour.

Summer Performances

For the fourth consecutive year there will be evening summer performances in downtown Lowell. The Chamber of Commerce is again coordinating a series of musical and comedy performances at the Market Mills Park. The performances will be on Thursday evenings beginning June 30 and continuing through September 8. The first performance is the band "Real Steel" followed by the "New Yankee Rhythm Kings" on July 7. A printed program will soon be available. Also participating with the Chamber in coordinating and supporting the performances are the National Park, State Park, and the City. This summer program is a direct continuation of the Commission efforts of four years ago beginning with the Shattuck Street Theatre.

Wang/Hotel

Efforts to encourage Wang Laboratories to construct a training center on the Rex Lot that meets historic standards and takes full advantage of the dramatic site have ended with only minimal success. Wang did agree to move the building site to eliminate parking along the Pawtucket Canal and is using red brick. The building itself, however, will be a hexagon form with Wang tower type vertical windows. The architects for the Commission, National Park Service, and hotel developers consider the design out of context with the features of the Rex Lot and surrounding buildings. While Wang participated in several meetings, the company never really changed their building design. This was in spite of efforts by Chairman Duff, Senator Tsongas, and City Councillor Armand LeMay.

The Hilton Hotel for Lowell will soon be a reality. Final financial arrangements are now being worked out by developer Arthur Robbins and potential equity partners. Complex discussions are now underway with the various parties to work out a schedule for hotel and garage construction. The Commission staff is working closely with these groups to coordinate Lower Locks improvements. Discussions have also been held with the Lowell Revitalization Corporation to discuss other potential development projects for the Central Street area which may be prompted by the hotel go ahead.

284-286 Worthen Street

Valley Properties, a real estate trust controlled by Supermarket developer Mike DeMoulas has proposed demolishing the 1840 brick residence at the corner of Worthen Street and Broadway. The building is one of just a handful of remaining pre-civil war brick residences in the city and is given the highest rating, "A-1" in the Commission's historic index. No reason has been given for the proposed demolition. Three years ago, the local historical Commission which has jurisdiction in the area refused permission to demolish an adjoining wood frame building owned by Valley

Properties. The building subsequently burned down. At the time, Mr. DeMoulas' representative indicated that the wood frame building was to be taken down to allow for parking and open space so that the brick residence could be restored and turned into a Greek Cultural Center. There are already several vacant lots in the area, and the size of the building lot to be created would accommodate no more than eight or so cars. On this basis, the hardship provision being used to justify the demolition is difficult to justify.

It is strongly recommended that the Commission go on record opposing demolition of this important building and perhaps look for ways to financially assist present or future owners to restore the building. The local commission intends to hold a public hearing on the demolition proposal on July 11.

Assistant Architect Hired

Alan E. Taylor of Newton has been hired as Assistant Architect for a period of four months. Alan was considered the most qualified candidate for the position based on his experience in both design and construction supervision. A registered architect in Massachusetts, Alan has worked independently for the past several years. Prior to that he was employed by the Waltham Housing Authority and by several private firms. Alan has been the architect in charge of a number of building renovation projects and has designed high tech facilities and housing. His construction supervision experience includes work on the Jaycees Elderly Building on Bowers Street in Lowell. Alan has a B.A. degree from Cooper Union in New York and a Masters from Princeton University. He began work for the Commission on June 14 and will be concentrating on Lower Locks area improvements.