

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Susanne Walker Abetti, Pat Stark and Chair Jonathan Schechtman.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Cathy Melocik, Nate Stearns and Twin Pines Housing Trust Executive Director Andrew Winter.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, April 13, 2022. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Jonathan read the hybrid meeting script followed by a roll call.

1. Changes to the Agenda: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. Minutes of the February 16, 2022 HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any revisions to the minutes of February 16th meeting. Susanne Walker Abetti noted a correction. Pat Stark made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 16th meeting with the noted correction. Susanne Walker Abetti seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.
3. Hartford Performing Arts History 2022 CLG Grant: Matt Osborn reported that with a second round of grant applications this year, grant agreements have been delayed. He noted that work on a project cannot commence until the grant agreement is executed. Matt stated that the grant agreement should be arriving the end of this week. Once the grant agreement is executed, he will begin work on the Request for Proposals. Matt noted that he will provide a draft RFP to the HHPC for their review.
4. St. Paul's Rectory: Andrew Winter, Executive Director of the Twin Pines Housing Trust (TPHT), was present to discuss their plans to replace the St. Paul's rectory with an 18-unit apartment building behind the St. Paul's Church. Andrew noted that TPHT was established in 1990 and currently manages 539 rental units throughout the Upper Valley with most located in three communities: Lebanon, Hartford and Hanover. He also noted that TPHT created 60 home ownership units. Andrew stated that federal funds are planned for the project triggering a Section 106 review. Architectural Historian Brian Knight was hired to perform an historic assessment of the church and rectory. Initially, there was consideration given to demolishing the Church. However, Brian Knight and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation (VDHP) consider St. Paul's to be an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture. However, the rectory was determined not to be historically significant since many changes have occurred to the outside of the building. Andrew also noted that an archeological review of the site was completed and did not find anything significant.

Andrew reported that TPHT is considering moving the rectory as an alternative to demolition and renovating the structure which needs extensive work. Jonathan Schechtman responded that it is admirable to consider relocation noting that it must be expensive. Andrew responded that grant funding is available. He noted that in 2004, TPHT successfully relocated a house to Connecticut River Road.

Andrew noted that based on public comment, TPHT revised architectural plans to create a pitched roof and try to keep the massing down. Cathy Melocik commented that she would like to see the rectory rehabbed and kept on site. Andrew responded that there are site constraints that pose too many challenges. As an alternative, they are trying to move the building off-site and preserve it. Susanne

Walker Abetti noted that the Planning Commission denied the application. She asked why TPHT is coming back. Andrew responded that they have redesigned the building to better fit in with the neighborhood and address concerns voiced by the neighbors. He also noted the need for affordable housing. Susanne stated that she agrees with Cathy Melocik about keeping the rectory on-site. She asked if TPHT considered converting the Church into housing. Andrew responded yes, but the VDHP wanted the Church to be preserved.

Andrew noted that although several trees will be cut, there will be more trees planted for the project than removed. Pat Stark asked what varieties will be planted. Nate Stearns responded Honey Locust, Red Maple and Hemlock are the main varieties.

Susanne suggested that the architectural plans be modified to look less institutional. Jonathan suggested embellishments to the façade. Andrew responded that they will look at it but construction is very expensive.

Jonathan thanked Andrew for presenting the plans to the HHPC. Andrew responded that he appreciates the opportunity to talk to the HHPC. He noted that he will keep the HHPC posted about the project.

5. WRJ Railroad Station Canopy: Matt Osborn reported that he received word that the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), owner of the WRJ Railroad Station, that they plan to demolish the south canopy at the station. Matt noted that he contacted State Architectural Historian Devin Colman at the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation who suggested contacting VTrans Senior Architectural Historian Kyle Obenauer. Kyle confirmed the plans for demolition and provided contact information on the project manager. The HHPC agreed that it would be a shame to lose the canopy. Jonathan said that if the canopy is demolished, it should be replaced. Matt agreed to inquire further about the project.
6. Depot Street House: Matt Osborn reported that Wilder resident Cathy Melocik contacted the Department of Planning and Development about a dilapidated house on Depot Street in Wilder. Since Cathy was at the meeting, Matt asked her if she could talk to the HHPC about it. Cathy agreed. Matt provided a photo of the building which is missing several windows. He noted that some of the windows appear to have been replaced. Cathy noted that the building was built in 1902 and is listed as a contributing property in the Wilder Village Historic District. She noted that Wilder is a tight community. She thinks the building is highly visible and poses a dangerous situation. Cathy thinks it is tragic that the building has fallen into such disrepair. Matt noted that the Town has a dilapidated building ordinance that he will review and see what can be done about the building. Susanne Walker Abetti suggested contacting the Twin Pines Housing Trust about it. Jonathan Schechtman thanked Cathy for bringing this before the HHPC.
7. HHPC & Planning Commission: Matt Osborn reported that Jonathan Schechtman met with the Planning Commission on March 7th to discuss the HHPC's role advising Commissions regarding historic preservation matters. Jonathan stated that he thought the meeting went well. Matt noted that when new applications come into the Planning and Development Department, he will meet with Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells and determine if any project might affect historic resources. If so, Matt will provide the application materials to chair Jonathan Schechtman for review and comment. The HHPC agreed that they concur with the process.

8. HHPC Opening: Matt Osborn noted that there is still an opening on the HHPC. He noted that he hasn't heard from anyone interested in joining the HHPC recently and did reach out to one person who is considering applying to serve on the HHPC.
9. Announcements: There were no announcements.
10. Next HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18th at 5:00 p.m. Pat Stark noted that she will not be able to attend.
11. Adjournment: Pat Stark made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Susanne Walker Abetti and approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.