

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Draft Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Robin Adair Logan, Pat Stark and Chair Jonathan Schechtman.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Peggy Adams, David Briggs, Kristina Harrold, Bruce King, Jess Neubelt, Kyle Obenauer and Rocket, Selectboard Liaison.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, September 21, 2022 in Meeting Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Jonathan read the hybrid meeting script followed by a roll call.

- 1. Changes to the Agenda:** Jonathan Schechtman asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.
- 2. Railroad Station South Canopy:** Bruce King and Kyle Obenauer of VTrans were in attendance to discuss plans for the south canopy of the Railroad Station. Kyle noted that the canopy has not been used in many years and is in a deteriorated state. Constructed in 1936/37, VTrans looked at several alternatives. Their preferred alternative is removal due primarily to cost. Kyle noted that removal would have an adverse effect on a contributing resource. Bruce added that presently, the canopy is unsafe. They are proposing removal it and creating a clean asphalt surface. Jonathan Schechtman stated that the canopy is part of the Railroad Station and had an historic purpose. He noted that its removal will have a visual impact. He asked why the canopy is not being replaced? Bruce responded that there is no need for the canopy and is currently unsafe. Kyle added that there are upgrades planned for the platform. Robin Adair Logan asked why the canopy can't be renovated? An alternatives analysis was conducted and the cost for rehabilitation was \$155,000 and replacement would be \$285,000. The state would bear 100% of the cost. He noted that there are opportunities for mitigating the adverse impact. He also noted that VTrans is working on returning the stolen weathervane to the Railroad Station. Pat Stark stated that she would be disappointed to see the canopy removed. Jonathan suggested a more realistic cost estimate. Robin Adair suggested looking into grants. She noted that Hartford is currently experiencing a loss in historic buildings and the HHPC is very concerned about it. Kyle responded that they will be presenting the proposal to the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Jonathan thanked Kyle and Bruce for attending. He noted that the HHPC needs to evaluate the proposal and send a letter to the Advisory Council. He added that the Railroad Station is part of the tradition of a railroad town. Kyle stated that they will be presenting to the Advisory Council and will wait for formal comments from the HHPC.
- 3. Hotel Coolidge:** David Briggs, owner of the Hotel Coolidge, noted that he has been the owner of the Hotel for the past 38 years. He also noted that he is in-charge of the Gates Block. He reported that he has been working on plans for the Hotel's future for the past ten years. He stated that he has a memorandum of understanding with Evernorth (formerly Housing Vermont) and is working with the Twin Pines Housing Trust. Jess Neubelt of Evernorth stated that they are working on plans to include a combination of affordable housing and a hotel. She noted that the building has constraints and opportunities and they are presently looking at options. She suggested that the HHPC attend a site visit to get a better sense of the constraints and opportunities. The HHPC agreed. David noted that the Hotel currently has 52 guest rooms. Originally, it had 160 guest rooms. David noted that the past and current management has been a "mom and pop" operation. He stated that for a stable and predictable future, they would need professional management which would require more guest rooms than the current 52. Robin Adair stated that she supports adaptive reuse of historic buildings and

acknowledged the desperate need for more affordable housing. It was agreed to schedule a site visit. Jess noted that the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation will be joining us on the site visit. Jonathan stated that he appreciates David's vision and thanked David, Peggy, Jess and Kristina for attending the HHPC meeting.

4. **Historic District Signs:** Matt reported that he is still trying to track down the Hartford Village Historic District sign. He also reported that he is working on an inventory of the historic district signs noting that so far the signs seem to be in good shape but the sign posts need to be sanded and painted.
5. **Hartford Performing Arts History Project:** Matt reported that three proposals were submitted for the project. The HHPC and Matt served as the review committee. Coherit Associates, consultants for the Cemetery History project in 2018 had the highest score of the proposals and there was consensus to hire them. Matt checked their references and noted that they were extremely good. He noted that we had an excellent experience with them on the cemetery history project. Robin Adair Logan requested that in the future, Matt share his view of the consultant's work. The HHPC agreed. Matt reported that he will be submitting a procurement memo for the Town Manager and for the CLG program.
6. **138 Summer Street:** Matt reported that he was contacted by the new owner of a house on Summer Street. He is a builder who was planning to renovate the house. Once he started, he realized that there were too many problems and decided to demolish the house and build a new house on the site. Matt suggested to him that he should contact the Preservation Trust of Vermont to get their input about options. Robin Adair Logan stated that it is a prominent Vernacular house. Matt agreed to follow-up with the owner.
7. **99 Depot Street:** Matt reported that restoration work is underway by the owner of the house located at 99 Depot Street. Matt agreed to provide the HHPC with a recent photo of the house. There was concern expressed by a Wilder resident last spring that the house was in poor condition and needed intervening. The HHPC was pleased to see improvements to the historic house.
8. **2023 CLG Grant Application:** Matt reported that the CLG grant application is due in December. He suggested that the HHPC start thinking about possible projects. He will add the item to the October 19th agenda.
9. **HHPC Opening:** Matt reported that the new Hartford resident who was interested in applying has since taken a new job and will not be able to serve at this time. Matt suggested contacting Dennis Brown again about his interest in serving.
10. **Announcements:**
 - a. World War I Memorial: Pat Stark reported that the effort to restore the Hartford World War I Memorial is underway with Mary Kay Brown leading the effort.
11. **Next HHPC Meeting:** Jonathan noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19th at 5:00 p.m.
12. **Adjournment:** Robin Adair Logan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat Stark and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.