

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Draft Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Susanne Walker Abetti (3/21/25, Robin Adair Logan (3/10/23), Pat Stark (3/7/25) and Chair Jonathan Schechtman (2/10/23).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Neil Silberman, Consultant and Rocket, Selectboard Liaison.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 in Meeting Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall. 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 asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none.
- 2. HHPC Minutes:** Jonathan asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of May 18th, July 20th and September 21st. There were none. Pat made a motion to approve the minutes of May 18th, July 20th and September 21st as written. The motion was seconded by Robin Adair and approved.
- 3. Hartford Performing Arts History Project:** Consultant Neil Silberman of Coherit Associates was present to discuss the Performing Art History Project. Neil applauded the HHPC for proposing this project that incorporates cultural heritage into our current culture. He noted that the project will involve a great deal of research. He stated that the list of venues provided by the HHPC is pretty complete. He asked if the HHPC had a list of folks to be interviewed. Jonathan responded that we don't have a list per se but have some suggestions of folks to reach out to. Jonathan added that he thinks many of the interviews will be much shorter than typical oral history interviews which tend to be an hour or so. He thinks some could be as short as 10-15 minutes. Neil agreed stating that he plans to do a few full-length interviews along with a larger number of shorter interviews. He asked the HHPC for suggested interviewees as well as their contact information.

Neil suggested thinking about ways to promote the project. He stated that he will have recommendations at the end of the report. Neil stated that he has a good idea about the project scope from the Request for Proposals but is looking for other local information. He noted that he is going to do a lot of digging up of information and that any local expertise will be very helpful to him. Susanne suggested contacting senior housing facilities, the Bugbee Senior Center and churches about the project and seeking potential interviewees. She also suggested Facebook groups such as the Town Facebook page and the "If you grew up in Hartford" Facebook Group. Pat suggested the Hartford Historical Society newsletter. Matt suggested the Town website and the Town List Serv. Matt also suggested looking at John St. Croix's "Historical Highlights of Hartford". Neil responded that he has a copy from the Cemetery Research Project that he worked on. Matt suggested working with Neil on a flyer and distributing throughout the community. The HHPC agreed. Neil noted that he will be conducting pre-interviews of folks. Robin Adair asked if the scope of work will include architectural descriptions of the former venues. Neil responded yes.

Neil stated that he is very excited about the project which he described as a transdisciplinary study. He stated that the project will show a side of history that is not normally recorded. He added that the project is going to entertain people. Neil thanked the HHPC for their input. Jonathan thanked Neil for coming to the meeting. Susanne stated that the HHPC is excited about the project and sensed Neil's enthusiasm in the proposal.

4. **Railroad Station South Canopy:** Jonathan reported that the site visit was held today before this meeting. He noted that the canopy is in very poor condition. He stated that the estimate provided by VTrans to demolish and rebuild seemed extremely high. The HHPC agreed that it would be preferable to rehabilitate or replace the canopy. Matt noted that he discussed the possibility of the canopy supporting solar with Town Sustainability Coordinator Dana Clawson noting that he believes it was done at another Vermont train station. Matt suggested asking State Architectural Historian Devin Colman to look at the canopy when he is in White River Junction next week. The HHPC agreed. Jonathan suggested obtaining a cost estimate for rebuilding. The HHPC agreed. Susanne volunteered to obtain an estimate.
5. **Historic District Signs:** Matt reported that he is still trying to track down the missing Hartford Village Historic District sign. He also reported that he is working on an inventory of the historic district signs.
6. **138 Summer Street:** Matt reported that the builder who purchased the residence decided to demolish the house. After closely inspecting the building, the builder determined that it was beyond repair. He plans to replace it with another house.
7. **2023 CLG Grant Application:** Matt reported that the CLG grant application is due December 12th. He noted that the HHPC hasn't selected a project to date. He asked the HHPC if they would like to apply for a CLG grant to do a historic district nomination for one or two of the potential districts identified in the Taft's Flat Intensive Level Survey. He noted that Norwich prepared a historic district nomination for a mid-century modern district in the last two years and is pursuing another mid-century historic district nomination in the upcoming CLG grant round. The HHPC responded favorably. Pat noted that it has been over twenty years since the Wilder Village, Hartford Village and Quechee Historic Mill Village historic districts were established. She suggested looking at possible updates to these historic districts. It was agreed for the HHPC to look at these districts in the next year. For this grant round, Matt noted that the Intensive Level Survey leaned toward Victory Circle and Watson Plaza as having the most integrity of the 5-6 possible historic districts. He offered to contact State Architectural Historian Devin Colman about the going rate for historic district nominations and whether it is possible to pursue two small historic district nominations with one CLG grant. Susanne made a motion to pursue a CLG grant application for a historic district nomination of Taft's Flat with a formal decision at the November 16th HHPC meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat and approved 4 to 0.
8. **HHPC Opening:** Jonathan noted that there is still an opening on the Commission. He encouraged HHPC members to try to find a suitable candidate.
9. **Announcements:**
 - a. Hotel Coolidge Site Visit: Jonathan noted that the Hotel Coolidge site visit is scheduled for next Wednesday, October 26th at 3:00 p.m.
10. **Next HHPC Meeting:** Jonathan noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 16th at 5:00 p.m.
11. **Adjournment:** Susanne made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.