

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Dennis Brown (3/11/27), Pat Stark (3/7/25) and Chair Jonathan Schechtman (1/9/26).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Bonnie Arnold, Harry Kendrick, Phil Sargent, and Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 in Meeting Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. He read the hybrid meeting script followed by roll call.

1. **Changes to the Agenda:** Jonathan asked if there are any changes to the agenda. There were none.
2. **Public Comments:** Jonathan asked if there are any public comments. There were none.
3. **Historical Signs for Kilowatt Park:** Bonnie Arnold, Harry Kendrick, Phil Sargent were present to talk about their interest in developing historical signs for Kilowatt Park. Harry started by noting that he spoke with Parks and Recreation Department Director Scott Hausler about adding historical signs at Kilowatt Park. Scott suggested speaking to the HHPC. Harry noted that the Wilder Village and Kilowatt property have a rich history that should be shared with the visiting public. Pat Stark noted that Vermont is planning for its 250th anniversary in 2026. She suggested exploring the possibility of a Highway Marker on Route 5 about Wilder being the first planned community in Vermont. Others agreed. Harry suggested doing a kiosk with photographs and text on history at Kilowatt. Lori Hirshfield suggested using QR codes to access additional information. Others agreed. Pat added that the Hartford Historical Society has many photographs of the paper mill.

Harry asked who would they work with on Kilowatt Park signage. Lori responded that the Parks and Recreation Department and Planning and Development would work together on it. Matt noted that Certified Local Government (historic preservation) funds could be used for sign design but not fabrication. Other grants could be looked into as well. Matt noted that Great River Hydro (GRH) is currently going through a relicensing application process for Wilder Dam with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The Town is requesting that GRH update the Kilowatt Park Master Plan. Matt thinks that a signage plan should be part of the Kilowatt Master Plan.

Dennis Brown suggested including information on log drives and the fish ladder in the Kilowatt Park signage. Others agreed.

Harry concluded that it sounds like the HHPC is interested in working with Harry, Bonnie and Phil on developing signage for Kilowatt Park. The HHPC agreed.

Matt noted that the Town submitted a letter to FERC requesting that GRH be required to work on a Historic Property Management Plan for the property and that the HHPC be designated as a consulting party and be actively involved in the development of the plan. He distributed a copy of the Town's letter.

4. **Veterans Park Kiosk:** Lori Hirshfield reported that a new kiosk at Veterans Park was recently installed with the original panels. The kiosk was installed in the 2000s and was badly corroded and needed to be replaced. She stated that funds have been designated for new panels beginning July 1st and she would like the HHPC to be involved in the design. Lori noted that changes have occurred in the park including the World War I and II monument. The panels will reflect the history of the downtown and the railroad as well as noting the new monument. Dennis added that the monument description needs to be shortened. Lori noted that Mary Kay Brown of the Monument Committee is willing to work with us on revisions. Matt suggested including historic photos of Railroad Row on the panels. Pat suggested including the history of the Town Hall. Jonathan suggested considering kiosks for all five villages. Lori suggested that we don't need the scenic byway panel.

Others agreed. It was also agreed to keep the first paragraph of the Veterans Memorial Park panel but eliminate the second paragraph on the dedication. Instead, include language on the history of the WWI & II monument. Pat noted that the Civil War Memorial is located in the Maple Street Cemetery.

5. **HHPC Minutes:** Jonathan asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of March 20th. Pat Stark noted a correction. Dennis Brown made a motion to approve the Minutes of March 20th with the noted correction. The motion was seconded by Pat and unanimously approved.
6. **Taft's Flat Historic District Nomination Update:** Matt reported that Architectural Historian Brian Knight prepared the first draft nomination of the Demers Avenue Historic District. He reminded the HHPC to keep track of the time spent reviewing the draft. Matt also reported that Brian began work on the Victory Circle nomination and is in close contact with State Architectural Historian Devin Colman. Matt noted that the first community meeting on the nominations is scheduled for June 12th.
7. **Hartford Performing Arts History (PAH) Project:** Matt reported that Susanne did a thorough proof reading of the PAH final report. Matt made the changes and did additional proofreading as well. He is working on closeout of the CLG grant. Matt reported that he talked to Lori Hirshfield about hiring Neil Silberman to interview Bill Bitteringer for the PAH and transcribe the interview and that Lori thought we had the funds to do it. Lori asked Matt to look at the per interview cost of past oral history projects.
8. **Historic District Signs:** Matt was pleased to report that the Wilder Boy Scout Troop 260 completed scraping, sanding, priming, and painting all of the historic district signs except for the West Hartford and Jericho signs. Matt said the signs look great. The HHPC expressed their gratitude. Matt stated that Tim Schaal provided photos of the Troop members doing the work. He will have them posted on the HHPC webpage which is in the process of being updated. Jonathan asked about replacing security screws on the signs to reduce the chances of sign theft. Matt will follow-up on it.
9. **World War I & II Monument:** Dennis noted that dedication of the monument is scheduled for Memorial Day, Monday, May 27th at 1:00 p.m. Several dignitaries have been invited to attend. Town Manager John Haverstock will be speaking at the ceremony.
10. **HHPC Openings:** Jonathan noted that there is still one opening on the HHPC.
11. **Announcements:**
 - a. Vermont Annual Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference: Matt reported that the annual Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference will be held on June 5th in Bellows Falls. He suggested registering soon since the conference regularly sells out.
 - b. Hartford Historical Society Annual Meeting: Pat reported that the Hartford Historical Society is holding its annual meeting on Sunday, May 19th at 2:00 p.m. at the Hartford Village Church.
 - c. 250th Anniversary: Pat reported that the U.S. 250 anniversary will take place in 2026. Preparations are underway for Vermont events.
12. **Next HHPC Meeting:** Jonathan noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 12th at 5:15 p.m. The first community meeting on the Taft's Flat historic district nominations will follow the meeting.
13. **Adjournment:** Pat made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Dennis and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.
14. **HHPC Member Terms:** Susanne Walker Abetti (3/21/25), Dennis Brown (3/11/27), Vice-chair Pat Stark (3/7/25) and Chair Jonathan Schechtman (1/9/26).