

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Dennis Brown, Tom Hankins, Bruch Lehmann, Pat Stark and chair Jonathan Schechtman.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Tim Fariel.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, in Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. He welcomed new HHPC members Thomas Hankins and Bruch Lehmann who were appointed by the Selectboard last night. Introductions were made.

- 1. HHPC Openings:** Jonathan noted that he was happy to report that for the first time in a while there are no openings on the HHPC.
- 2. Public Comments:** Jonathan asked if there were any public comments. Tom Hankins asked about the possible demolition of the Hotel Coolidge and the Gates/Briggs Building downtown. Matt responded that there are no plans to demolish the Gates/Briggs Building and that demolition only involved the Hotel Coolidge. Tim Fariel agreed and noted that the Hotel Coolidge Building was rebuilt after a fire in 1926 and that the rebuild was done frugally and marginally. Renovation of the building was not feasible. Jonathan agreed noting that the HHPC toured the building a few years ago to see the many problems firsthand. Tim noted that the developer working with owner David Briggs is very capable.
- 3. Approval of the March 18th HHPC Meeting Minutes:** Jonathan asked if there were any comments regarding the draft meeting minutes of March 18th. There were no corrections. Dennis made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Pat seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.
- 4. Railroad Row Kiosk:** Matt reported that he met with the Downtown Business Association (DBA) about the Kiosk panels. The DBA was enthusiastic about the kiosk redesign. Regarding the map, they suggested a stylized map of the Upper Valley. They also suggested an explanation of Hartford and the five villages noting that it would be helpful to visitors. The DBA also suggested using QR Codes to reduce the amount of narrative.

Matt reported that he reached out to Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce Director Havah Armstrong Walther about the kiosk. Havah thought there was a lot that could be done with the kiosk panels. She also liked having information on Hartford and the five villages and the greater Upper Valley. She liked the idea of a map of the Upper Valley and thinks it would be beneficial to have information about the Connecticut River. Havah suggested a follow-up phone call to discuss further.

Dennis suggested providing information on log drives on the Connecticut River. Jonathan suggested including information on Amelia Earhart landing her plane at the White River Junction Airport.

Matt suggested that the HHPC continue discussions on the kiosk panels. Once we have a better idea of what we want for the kiosk, to hold a community discussion and invite public comments. Then, we would hire a graphic designer and copy writer. The HHPC agreed. Jonathan stated that we will continue discussion on the kiosk at next month's meeting.

5. **Historical District Signs:** Matt reported that sign maker Bonnie Arnold repaired one of the historic district signs and is working on another sign. Regarding new signs, Matt noted that he met with Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield and that there are enough funds to purchase 5-6 signs at a cost of \$700 per sign. Discussion followed regarding the signs needed.

- West Hartford Village (1)
- Hartford Village (1)
- Wilder (1)
- Terraces (1-2)
- Demers Avenue (1)

Pat asked whether a sign should be made for the Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District. Matt responded that it is a private community on a private road. Matt suggested contacting the owner to see if they would like a sign. The HHPC agreed.

Matt stated that the next step is to get a quote from sign maker Bonnie Arnold.

6. **Railroad Station Weathervane:** Matt provided a history of the weathervane story. He noted that we are working with State Curator David Schutz about fabricating a pedestal for the weathervane which is planned to be displayed in the Town Hall foyer under a protected enclosure. Matt noted that he is waiting for a long-term loan agreement from Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), the legal owner of the weathervane. Tim offered to advocate for the project. Dennis asked if the HHPC has funds for the project. Matt responded that there may be funds in the fiscal year 2027 budget. If not, it could be proposed in the 2028 budget. Jonathan agreed to follow up with David Schutz,
7. **Victory Circle/Highland Park Historic District Nomination:** Matt reported that he hasn't heard anything from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation about the timeline to address comments from the National Park Service regarding the historic district nomination. He has an email to State Architectural Historian requesting a time to talk.
8. **US 250th Anniversary Commemoration Committee:** Dennis reported that the 250th Committee will be participating in the Memorial Day event at Veterans Park, a reenactment event in Wilder in May and the 4th of July event. He added that a Vermont History trivia event is scheduled for Friday, April 17th at the Wilder Club.
9. **Monument Committee:** Dennis reported that the dedication of the Post WWII monument will occur as part of the Memorial Day celebration on May 25th. An Eagle Scout candidate is working on an additional flagpole at Veterans Park and will be refurbishing park benches. Dennis reported that the fundraising bricks have been delivered and the Monument Committee is investigating adding a goose to the geese sculpture to represent the sixth branch of the armed services, the Space Force.
10. **Announcements:**
- a. Annual Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference: Matt reported that the annual Downtown/Historic Preservation conference will be held on Thursday, June 4th in St. Albans. Matt noted that there are funds in the HHPC budget to pay the registration fee. He asked members to let him know if they are interested in attending and staff will take care of the registration.
11. **June 17th Hartford Community Coalition Block Party:** Matt noted that the annual Community Coalition Block Party is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17th, which happens to be the same time as the regular HHPC meeting. He suggested changing the meeting to Wednesday, June 24th. The HHPC

agreed. Pat reported that she will be staffing a table at the Block Party and offered to display HHPC materials. Matt agreed to provide materials for the table.

12. Next HHPC Meeting: Jonathan noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20th at 5:15 p.m.

13. Adjournment: Pat made a motion to adjourn. Bruch seconded the motion which was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

14. HHPC Member Terms: Dennis Brown (3/11/27), Thomas Hankins (4/13/29), Bruch Lehmann (4/13/29), Vice-chair Pat Stark (3/17/28) and Chair Jonathan Schechtman (1/5/29).