

## MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board  
Friday, June 18, 2021 9:30 a.m.  
Teleconference via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:** Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki (via phone) Mr. Edwards (Chair, via phone), Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan (via phone), Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders (via phone), Mr. Wigren

**Absent:** Ms. Dyer-Carroll

**Staff:** Jenny Scofield (presenting), Marena Wisniewski (presenting); Jonathan Kinney, Catherine Labadia, Jane Schneider

**Guests (by Agenda Item):** Peter Segalla, Jordan Sorensen, Renee Tribert

### **I. Call to Order**

Mr. Edwards called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

### **II. Review of Public Comment Procedures**

Ms. Scofield provided the digital meeting procedures and announced that the meeting will be recorded. She requested that each person wishing to speak state their name before giving comments. Ms. Scofield introduced State Review Board (SRB) members and guests in attendance.

### **III. Approval of the March 26, 2021 meeting minutes**

Mr. Edwards requested comments on the September minutes. No comments were heard.

**A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Wigren to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2021 meeting (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-1).**

**Board members voting yes:** Mr. Barlow, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

**Board members abstaining:** Dr. Bucki

### **IV. Action Items**

#### **A. Completed National Register Nominations**

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the State Historic Preservation Review Board (SRB) and by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff.

**1. William and Mary Ward House (Criteria A and C, local level under the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut MPDF)**

Mr. Wigren recused himself from this agenda item because he works at the same organization as the consultants for the nomination. He left the meeting during the discussion.

Ms. Scofield summarized that the Ward House is recommended by staff for National Register listing under Criteria A and C at the local level. The building is a cube-shaped, two-story Modern house built in 1964 and designed by John Martin in collaboration with the first owner, William Ward. Both were on the faculty at Wesleyan University in the theater, design, and creative arts programs.

The nomination is proposed for listing under the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut multiple property context (MPDF). This is the first nomination presented under the MPDF since National Park Service acceptance of the context and case study nominations in 2010. The property fits into the historical themes identified in the MPDF, for the social and intellectual networking that proponents of modernism engaged in and architectural design. The context document includes a property types section and each nomination listed under it fits into one of the described property types. This nomination is consistent with property type Geometric I.

Ms. Scofield reported that the property owner and initiated the nomination. She visited the property in 2019. Notice of the meeting was sent to the owner, City of Middletown, and Middlesex County Historical Society 30 days before the meeting. No letters were received in response to the nomination. Middletown is not a CLG. Guests attending the meeting are the property owner, Peter Segalla (by phone), and the consultants, Renee Tribert and Jordan Sorensen of Preservation Connecticut.

Mr. Edwards invited the public to comment.

Mr. Segalla shared that he initiated the nomination because as a design professional he recognized that the house seems to be a derivative of the Charles and Ray Eames Case Study 8 House in California. It appears to have the same dimensions, double-height kitchen and living area, and coloration of the exterior. He feels it is important to protect the house and leave it better off than how he found it.

Mr. Edwards invited comments from the SRB.

Dr. Bucki recognized that the nomination is proposed for local significance.

Mr. Herzan stated that he's pleased that we're scouring the state for other examples of Mid-Century Modern domestic architecture outside the well-known pockets of moderns; the outliers are exciting and enhance the significance of the theme. It shows the interest in that period was more widespread than we think it was.

Mr. Edwards mentioned that he knew the architect, John Martin. He and John Martin both served as members of the Wesleyan Landmarks Advisory Council founded in 1975, which existed for

about 5 years and influenced the university's reinvestment in campus buildings. The group also included Henry Russell Hitchcock, Bill Jordy, Richard Dietrich. It was a project that Nancy Hammill, the wife of the university president, supported. Mr. Edwards realized that John Martin had a significant local architecture practice in Middletown and is pleased to see an example of Martin's design work.

Mr. Edwards asked if the list of Modern houses provided in the MPDF has been checked since the acceptance of the document, to see how many of the properties have since been listed on the National Register. Ms. Scofield replied that it has not. Mr. Edwards asked about William Lescaze's Sun Terrace in New Hartford. Mr. Herzan clarified that it was listed as Sun Terrace [in 1978]. Mr. Edwards also mentioned the nineteenth-century house on High Street in New Haven that architect Paul Rudolph purchased in 1954 when he moved to New Haven. He renovated it with his office on the top floor and put a significant addition on the back.

Mr. McMillan noted that he enjoyed reading the nomination. He asked if original interior floor plans exist for the house and whether the modular design carries into the interior floorplan. Ms. Tribert responded that she interviewed one of William and Mary Ward's daughters, who thought that all of the plans were thrown out. Ms. Scofield asked if the consultants checked the City of Middletown permit records. Ms. Tribert reached out to the building department and will check her records, but due to COVID-19 no research appointments were available. Mr. Herzan asked if there are any archives of John Martin's work at Wesleyan. Ms. Tribert answered that she accessed some of the information used in the nomination from the university's archives but was not able to return for more research due to COVID-19 restrictions.

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second by Mr. Herzan to recommend the Ward House for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-0).

**Board members voting yes:** Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders

Mr. Wigren rejoined the meeting.

## **B. Review of Eligibility Status of National Register Listed Property**

### **1. Charles A. Strong House, 157 Main St, Belltown Historic District, East Hampton**

Ms. Scofield summarized that the SRB is asked to review the current status of National Register-listed properties that are proposed for demolition potentially or for which demolition is considered as an option. The representative for the owner of 157 Main Street was notified of this meeting per the SRB policy statement accepted and posted online last December. The meeting materials were available online through the SHPO website prior to the meeting.

Ms. Wisniewski provided an overview of the property. The property is a contributing resource to the Belltown National Register Historic District, listed in 1985. It is identified in Section 7, p. 14 as the Charles A. Strong House, built in 1858. There are two structures on the same parcel, but only 157 Main Street is the structure under question. The district is significant under Criterion C for architecture and under Criterion A for industry as the only known mill town in the nation

devoted exclusively to bell making. Based on the photos and maps, the property is a brick masonry structure with a flat rolled composite roof. The interior is currently divided into three units and there have been alterations, presumably including the removal of a central stair. However, this property was listed as part of a district. The house was proposed for demolition for a potential development proposed on an adjacent site. The proposal for the local zoning amendment was denied; the owner is reviewing alternatives to the proposed plan.

Mr. McMillan disclosed that he has been involved with this at the local level as a resident and will recuse himself from the discussion. Dr. Bucki clarified that recusing typically means not voting; the SRB invited Mr. McMillan to stay in the meeting.

Mr. Edwards opened discussion.

Ms. Saunders stated that the building appears compromised because of all of the staircases and the doors punched in. She understands that the SRB is looking at the district as a whole and how the property fits into the manufacturing history but asked the SRB and SHPO staff how you know when something is too compromised. Mr. Edwards responded that the rear element of the design looks like a historic part of the house. It is Italianate and balanced geometric form. The doors were replaced, and the central stair was removed, but the building has its original cross-shaped form. The exterior stairs could be removed. Ms. Wisniewski added that doors were added within existing window openings that were lowered. Mr. Edwards stated that a measure for evaluating the house is whether it is still a good example of Italianate design that deserves to be part of the historic district.

Dr. Bucki commented that a few doors down there is a more elegant example of the Italianate style. This appears to be an expression of working housing, which represents part of the totality of the design. Mr. Wigren responded that he does not think the house was originally worker housing because of the size – it was originally a single-family home; and brick construction. It was a period when the aesthetic was stripped down. There likely would have been porches and some simple bracket work. It has a simple geometric design. Mr. McMillan shared that there is another house further south on Main Street with similar brick Italianate design; the houses were built by brothers.

Mr. Herzan asked if the conversion of the house to a multi-family building occurred before the district was listed on the National Register. Ms. Wisniewski answered that photographs of the property were not included in the nomination, but based on interior alterations and finishes, it appears that the living units were created prior to 1985. She noted that searching for the building permits might provide this information.

Mr. Herzan asked the SRB if this building would be missed from the district. He stated his opinion that it would; the building retains its historic Italianate form and much of the fabric. The changes could be reversed.

**A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Dr. Bucki that the House at 157 Main Street continues to contribute to the significance of the Belltown Historic District (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 1).**

**Board members voting in favor:** Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

**Board members abstaining:** Mr. McMillan

**V. Discussion**

Mr. Wigren announced Preservation Connecticut's and the State Historic Preservation Office's Olmsted landscape documentation project, which will coincide with the Olmsted 200 initiative. The consultant is Red Bridge Group. They will complete a context focused on Connecticut and a survey.

**VI. New Business**

No new business was discussed.

**VII. Staff Report**

Ms. Scofield announced that the National Historic Landmark meeting planned for June was postponed and that the NHL nomination for the Barnum Museum is scheduled for the next agenda, whenever the next meeting occurs. She shared that SHPO employees will return to the office in July. Staff is working through a part-time in the office and part-time telecommute schedule. Ms. Scofield can explore the idea of in-person meetings once staff is back in the building. Mr. Edwards encouraged an in-person meeting in September. The SRB discussed a preference for a hybrid meeting- to be held in person with capacity for video/phone participation.

**VIII. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second, Dr. Bucki, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

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