

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Wednesday, April 1, 2020 @ 9:30 a.m.

Conference Call Meeting Dial-in: 866-453-0290, Code: 207-626-51#

Note: Rescheduled from in-person meeting due to COVID-19

MEETING MINUTES

Called in: Ms. Marguerite Carnell, Mr. Tom Elmore, Dr. Margaret Faber, Ms. Karyn Gilvarg, Ms. Kathy Maher, Ms. Christine Nelson, Chairwoman Sara Nelson, Dr. Sarah Sportman and Dr. Fiona Vernal

Staff: Ms. Mary Dunne, Ms. Deborah Gaston, Mr. Todd Levine, Ms. Liz Shapiro, and Ms. Marena Wisniewski

Guests: Mr. Mike Farino, Preservation Connecticut
Ms. Jane Montanaro – Preservation Connecticut
Ms. Mary Falvey – Connecticut Preservation Action

I. Call to Order

The Meeting of the Historic Preservation Council was called to order at 9:33 a.m.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Chairwoman Nelson reviewed public comments and procedures.

III. Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest

Chairwoman Nelson reviewed the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest statements. No conflicts were noted.

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes

March 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were approved with corrections.

Ms. Gilvarg commented that she did not receive the minutes nor the agenda in Dropbox as usual. Ms. Shapiro apologized. Due to technical issues, Ms. Gaston asked Ms. Shapiro to post the minutes, but an email was sent instead.

On a motion by Ms. Maher, Second, Ms. Carnell

(Y-4, N-0, Abstaining – 5) (Roll call)

V. State Historic Preservation Grants – Action Items

a. Historic Restoration Fund Grant, Friends of the Farm at Hilltop, Suffield

On a motion by Ms. Maher Second by Dr. Faber, the Historic Preservation Council votes to award a Historic Restoration Fund grant, funded by the Community Investment Act and administered by the Department of Economic and community Development, to the Friends of the Farm at Hilltop for \$85,000. All grant guidelines and state requirements shall be met by the below-listed applicant upon receipt of a grant as administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development.

(Y-8, N-0, Abstaining – Chairwoman Nelson) (Roll call)

Ms. Dunne presented this application to the Council as recommended by staff. Ms. Dunne, Ms. Fink and Mr. Levine met with the applicant to view the property and to discuss the fire safety system. A sprinkler system was a recommended option, due to the size of the barn. The town fire official is not able to grant a Certificate of Occupancy due to the lack of a sprinkler system. Friends of the Farm at Hilltop will be applying to the SHPO for a Survey and Planning grant. The application is missing the proof of insurance and the attorney's letter. Mr. Farino has been working with the applicant and said that both items are forthcoming.

Chairwoman Nelson referred to the property as an amazing resource. She requested more information regarding the details of the specifications, the type of sprinkler system, and the installation process be included in the specs.

Ms. Dunne replied that she would ask for that information. She asked whether the Council would like to approve the application as submitted or table the application until the information is received. Mr. Levine asked if Ms. Dunne included pictures, and added that the system was a dry spec system.

Ms. Maher added that the details are important and that only 50% of application checklist was complete. Ms. Dunne noted that she just received an email from the applicant, stating they just mailed the attorney's letter to the office.

Chairwoman Nelson added that fire suppression falls into 2 different fields and suggested a company that specializes in fire suppression water systems should be contacted. If this is a water system, and there is no town water, there would need to be a holding tank nearby. All this should be discussed before getting further into the project.

Mr. Levine clarified that he had shared photographs of the site with the state architect, Mr. David Barkin, to see if he had any issue with the level of suppression. He requested guidance from the state expert in fire suppression systems review this project.

Ms. Gilvarg wanted clarity on the budget, noting that two different grant amounts are referenced; on page 27 grant request of \$85,200 and on page 36 the resolution is \$85,000. Ms. Dunne replied this can be revised.

Mr. Elmore asked if the design is sympathetic to the barn. Mr. Levine replied that he believes it is, and shared details about the sprinkler system and how he understands it will be attached to the beams, not embedded in them.

On a motion by Ms. Maher, Second by, Ms. Carnell to vote on moving forward with the application as presented, with more detailed information from the applicant to complete the application.

(Y-6, N-0, Abstaining – 3) (Roll call)

VI. State Register of Historic Places Nominations

VII. Local Historic District/Property Study Report/s

VIII. Archaeological Preserves

IX. Threatened Properties

X. Preservation Restrictions

XI. Report on State Historic Preservation Office/Museum Activities – Ms. Shapiro

SHPO staff, as well as staff in the entire DECD, have been working at home since Thursday March 19th. DECD IT staff, supported by Commissioner Lehman, worked round the clock to deploy laptop computers and VPNs to those staff who had not been issued that equipment.

In general, the transition has been going smoothly, with the few glitches that you would expect. The agency has been trained – is had been in process – in using Microsoft Teams software, and that has been a real help for meetings, etc. New processes have been worked out for purchasing, and to some extent, contracting. The Governor has been supportive from the first about state employees working from home and enabling systems to allow state government to continue to function smoothly. SHPO staff are not doing site visits at this time.

Personnel

Andrew Rowand has been hired for the Museum Assistant position at the Eric Sloane Museum. He will start on April 23.

Director of Preservation/Museums position: Eight candidates have been identified for interviews. The interview committee completed three conference call interviews last week, and will complete the remaining five this week. It is uncertain what the next steps in the process will look like due to the public health emergency.

Applications for the museum's seasonal positions closed yesterday. At this time, the intention is to move forward with hiring as planned, although the museums will remain closed at least through May. Staff at the museums are able to go into work at their sites, and/or work from home. The buildings are closed to the public and to any non-staff member.

Happy news! Happy to welcome Avery Ryan to the extended SHPO family, born to Erin and Justin Fink on March 14th. After a slightly rough start, he is doing really well as is the family.

SHPO staff been communicating with grantees, extending grant contract deadlines, and working with new grantees.

All have been able to continue with their regular work, although there has been a slowdown in new inquiries and clients due to the current emergency. That said, work continues as usual, with section 106 reviews, Good to Great grant contracts and procurement issues, CEPA work, etc. Ms. Dunne has been working on reviewing the CLG program, and Ms. Carmelich has been reviewing SHPOs online presence and social media policies.

All travel, was of course, cancelled. Section 106 training will be postponed, and plans for the Agency-wide conference in September are also on hold for now.

Museums

Sloane Museum

The CONEX boxes – all five – that were storing the majority of the non-fine arts collection were emptied into the museum last week.

For the most part, the collections came out of storage in good shape, considering they were boxed for an additional year due to project delays. Because the Governor has put construction as a critical function, the project at the museum is continuing. Remaining tasks are to paint the outside of the museum and complete the redesign of the parking lot. The museum was scheduled for a grand reopening on June 27, and at present, that is still “on”, but we will be watching the ever-changing situation.

New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine

Morgan Bengel really looks forward to having Andrew start at the Eric Sloane museum, as she has been dividing her time between the two sites. Morgan has hired three interns for the summer, all of whom are working on projects that may be completed remotely. She is continuing to work on water issues on site – with cameras going down the well to identify problems – and will be preparing the site for opening regardless of whether we will be able to open. She is also working on providing materials to teachers, as well as other resources for online public learning.

Prudence Crandall Museum

Although the pre-bid meeting was held at the museum on March 11, the bidding deadline has been extended to May 20. I’m not sure what that will mean for the project overall and the timetable. Joan DiMartino has been working at home and reporting to the museum as is needed to prepare the building for construction.

She has successfully integrated the virtual tour of the property and the museum (filmed prior to dismantling the exhibits) with the museum’s introductory video, and is creating “tags” on the virtual tour so that visitors can learn more as they move “virtually” through the property. As a reminder, this property will be closed for at least one year for the restoration project.

Henry Whitfield State Museum

Staff at the Henry Whitfield Museum have been completing the outdoor “spring” clean-up projects as usual. Staff meetings have been held as usual, using online platforms.

Curator Michelle Parrish has been working to clean-up the online collections management and sharing platform and will have items ready to share with the public shortly. Social media platforms are also being augmented and preparations are being made for enhanced online learning.

XII. Report on Museum Properties

XIII. Old Business

XIV. New Business

- a. New Funding Program, Presentation/Discussion of New Grant category under Partners in Preservation, Historic District/Place signage – Mary Dunne
Ms. Dunne headed up the discussion on the importance of signage and stated SHPO has received several requests over the years for signage for properties designated on the state, national historic registry and historic districts. It is important for public resources and knowledge to set up a pilot/educational program with a cap of \$50,000 a year for properties listed. The statutes include references for SHPO to recognize historic properties. Ms. Dunne asked the Council if they had any questions or concerns.

Ms. Gilvarg mentioned she is very interested in the program and was planning on proposing this idea. She asked if this going to be more interpretive signage or just identifying signage. Ms. Dunne replied it could be both, right now the way the statues read it is just identifying. SHPO is open to ideas and could be clarified in the guidelines.

With Heritage Tourism with other states, there is uniformity or a design to the signage. Ms. Dunne replied yes, uniformity of design will be part of the discussion to come.

Ms. Maher added there should be a vertical or horizontal design with a brief description.

Mr. Elmore added this is important so designated property can be identified. Size, shape and material are also important.

Dr. Faber added this is a wonderful idea. People do not realize their property is in a historic district or even historic nature, when wanting to demolish a property because there is no plaque posted. Could the current existing plaques be used? Ms. Dunne replied yes.

Chairwoman Nelson asked how Ms. Dunne would be making the public aware of this program. Ms. Dunne replied that the first step would be to draw up guidelines, post in our newsletter and roll out to our constituents.

Ms. Dunne asked if a cap of \$4,000 would be sufficient. Ms. Nelson commented that in her district the cost of a plaque was about \$3,500 per bronze plaque.

This would not be a matching grant program. Ms. Dunne asked for Ms. Nelson to send her pictures and dimensions of the plaque that was referred to in discussion.

XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies – Ms. Montanaro, Preservation Connecticut

Ms. Montanaro reported the staff is working remotely and is fully functional and available. Many projects that were on hold are currently being worked on, along with regular projects. PC is still holding community meetings remotely via ZOOM. This afternoon there will be a board meeting to elect officers. They are continuing the grant programs that are in progress, including Maintenance and Repair and 1772 Foundation. April and May events have been postponed. The May event in New Haven will be held September 9th.

Ms. Mary Falvey – Connecticut Preservation Action

Ms. Falvey thanked the SHPO staff for their time and commitment during our current situation. A special shout out to Ms. Dunne for processing their Institutional Support grant with lightning speed. CIA Lobby Day will not be held.

XVI. Public Forum

XVII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Gilvarg, Second Ms. C. Nelson to adjourn the meeting. Hearing no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

***Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:
Wednesday May 6, 2020 – Meeting to be determined***