

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Wednesday, August 6, 2025 @ 9:30 am**

**Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Meeting will be held virtually on Microsoft Teams (see code for meeting in your email or contact Jonathan. [Kinney@ct.gov](mailto:Kinney@ct.gov) for the code)

**MINUTES**

**Council:** Ms. Elizabeth Acly, Ms. Vincencia Adusei, Ms. Elizabeth Burgess, Chairman Paul Butkus, Ms. Marguerite Carnell, Mr. Thomas Elmore, Dr. Andy Horowitz, Mr. Kent McCoy, Ms. Deanna Rhodes and Dr. Sarah Sportman

**Absent:** Dr. Leah Glaser

**Staff:** Mr. Cory Atkinson, Mr. Kevin Berger, Ms. Julie Carmelich, Ms. Mary Dunne, Ms. Erin Fink, Ms. Deborah Gaston, Mr. Jonathan Kinney, Ms. Catherine Labadia, Mr. Todd Levine, Ms. Jenny Scofield, Ms. Elizabeth Shapiro, and Ms. Marena Wisniewski

**Guests:** Mr. Mark Diamond, Ms. Donna Douglas, Mr. Mike Forino, Ms. Sara Kaplan, Mr. Dan O'Brien, Mr. Sean O'Kane, Ms. Judy Norinsky, Mr. George Sharon and Mr. Gary Tarnoff

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m.

**II. Review of Public Comment Procedures**

Chairman Butkus read aloud the Review of Public Comment Procedures.

**III. Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest**

Chairman Butkus read aloud the Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest and asked if there were any conflicts with staff members or Council. There was one:

Ms. Carnell recused herself from Agenda Item XIII. Old Business – Discussion of structural preservation and rehabilitation of two historic sheds on Firetown Road, Simsbury, CT.

#### **IV. Review and Approval of Minutes and Transcripts**

##### **A. Minutes – July 2, 2025 Meeting**

On a motion by Ms. Burgess, second by Ms. Carnell, the Council voted to approve the July 2, 2025 meeting minutes.

(Y-8, N-0, Abstaining-2, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

#### **V. State Historic Preservation Grants – Action Items**

##### **A. Unfinished Action Items**

##### **B. New Action Items**

##### **1. Survey and Planning Grant, Town of Scotland, Geophysical Survey of Human Burials at Palmertown Cemetery, Scotland.**

On a motion by Mr. McCoy, second by Ms. Carnell, the Historic Preservation Council voted to award a Survey and Planning Grant, funded by the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut, to the below-listed applicant in the amount shown. 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. Staff recommended this application for funding.

(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

Applicant: Town of Scotland

Amount: \$5,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The Town of Scotland requested funding in the amount of \$5,000 to complete a geophysical survey of human burials at Palmertown Cemetery. Ms. Dunne has discussed it with SHPO's staff archaeologists Mr. Cory Atkinson and Ms. Cathy Labadia. This grant is non-matching, but it caps at \$5,000 and generally limits the area of survey to one acre, but, this is just a little bit over an acre, which is fine. The Town will pick up the additional \$1,700 fee. Ms. Sharon George, from the town of Scotland, was on the call to answer any questions or concerns.

Ms. Burgess commented that she thought the application was well written, and clearly the arguments from Mr. Bill Hosley are timely for many reasons. She was curious as to why this project has become a priority now. It has clearly been in the books for a while and has been discussed. Is it connected to the upcoming America 250 celebration or are there other concerns that brought this forward?

Ms. George replied that Scotland's been here an awfully long time, and they don't have any of their cemeteries mapped except for half of one. They started to put these things online to make them more public, to make it a little bit easier to work

with them and it became very apparent, very quickly, that without any maps this was not going to happen.

Part of the justification for using ground penetrating radar for Palmertown were several pictures that, unfortunately, show that the cemetery is in a poor state with several stones having been dragged off to the side. There are a lot of depressions in the earth that indicate that there may be a burial there. A lot of the old records from the town no longer exist. The previous First Selectman used to work out of his home, and when he stepped down after 20 or something years, they never got the records back, so they don't have the deeds.

Palmertown is the oldest cemetery in the Town and has the oldest graves in it. They would like to start to get that mapped and make sure it is being preserved. They might not be able to figure out where those stones go, but they do have names, and some are legible. The Town is also closing Palmertown to future burials at this point. If there is still plots that are open, meaning that person hasn't passed away yet, they will still obviously go in there. But, from that point forward The ground penetrating radar will assist in the creation of a map, and possibly placing markers where those grave sites are. They might not know who's in the gravesite, but they do know somebody is there and it is important to do this.

Chairman Butkus asked Mr. Elmore about LIDAR and whether it would help identify the depressions in the ground to be surveyed by the ground penetrating radar, or is it a supplementary kind of technology that could be of use in some of these situations? Mr. Elmore replied that LIDAR captures all visible features and by using software you can highlight depressions, or you can do 2-inch contours if you desired. It would be a way to add another layer of technology if it's desired.

Mr. Elmore asked Ms. George if the cemetery was still at its original size. She replied that the original stone walls are there. When you look at the stones and date them, the ones that are still legible, it did start off with Palmertown going up on a hill, it comes down and there's a big ledge on the right-hand side and the oldest stones are set in that middle area. As far as encroachment from forest or anything, no, it's still the original size from what she can tell.

## **2. Survey and Planning Grant, Historic Neighborhood Preservation Program, Historic Resources Inventory of Town-owned buildings, Stamford**

On a motion by Ms. Burgess, second by Ms. Rhodes, the Historic Preservation Council voted to award a Survey and Planning Grant, funded by the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut, to the below-listed applicant in the amount shown. 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. Staff recommended this application for funding.

(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

Applicant: Historic Neighborhood Preservation Program, Inc.

Amount: \$18,350

Ms. Dunne presented this application. Historic Neighborhood Preservation Program, Inc. requested funding in the amount of \$18,350 to complete a historic resources inventory of town-owned buildings in Stamford. Most surveys are more geographically oriented. This focuses on town-owned buildings, mainly as preservation planning tool. The resulting survey will include a historical and architectural context as well as recommendations to the National Register. Ms. Judy Norinski from the Historic Neighborhood Preservation Program was on the call to answer any questions or concerns.

Chairman Butkus asked about whether the survey might also make a distinction between properties that could be recommended for National Register listing and State Register listing. Ms. Dunne replied that it would certainly be welcomed information. The survey is like a federal tool, so the provision is mainly for federal programs and that is why generally the surveys only make recommendations to the National Register. However, SHPO has had surveys where the consultant will make suggestions for even locally designated districts. But as following federal guidelines, the provision is for National Register.

Ms. Acly added that most of the buildings look like they were intentionally built for the city, but the Cove Island buildings and the Marybrook Lane Barn look like they might be adapted from something else. She is assuming the goal is to dig up whatever history there is on them to include.

Ms. Carnell added she is pleased to see that the City is recognizing the significance of the Main Street Bridge. It is important to remember the structures as well as all the buildings, and that's a rare survivor.

Chairman Butkus asked about the front page of the application form, where they mentioned \$18,000 and they were kicking in \$350 for reimbursables, but we're giving them the full \$18,350? Ms. Dunne replied that it is a non-matching grant and so the original budget was parsed out and they forgot to amend the actual application form, but now they will be receiving the entire \$18,350.

### **3. Survey and Planning Grant, Griswold Chapel Association, Condition Assessment for Griswold Chapel, Wethersfield**

On a motion by Ms. Acly, second Mr. Mc Coy, the Historic Preservation Council voted to award a Survey and Planning Grant, funded by the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut, to the below-listed applicant in the amount shown. 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. Staff recommended this application for funding.

*(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)*

Applicant: Griswold Chapel Association, Inc.  
Amount: \$15,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The Griswold Chapel Association requested funding in the amount of \$15,000 to complete a condition assessment of the chapel building. At the last meeting, the Council voted to put this building on the State Register. They've wasted no time in taking advantage of that and they would like to move forward with a capital improvements grant and of course the first step that we recommend is to step back and complete a general condition assessment. Mr. Tom Baldwin was not on the call from the organization, but Ms. Dunne was happy to answer any questions or concerns.

#### **4. Supplemental Certified Local Government Grant, Town of Westport, Historic Resources Inventory, Westport**

On a motion by Ms. Carnell, second Ms. Acly, the Historic Preservation Council voted to award a Supplemental Certified Local Government Grant, funded by the Community Investment Act of the State of Connecticut, to the below-listed applicant in the amount shown. 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. Staff recommended this application for funding.

(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

Applicant: Town of Westport  
Amount: \$20,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The Town of Westport requested funding in the amount of \$20,000 to complete additional historic resource inventory work. The town of Westport is great at routinely submitting updated forms or new survey forms. This is not updating the survey per say, but it is looking at survey forms to see what's still there and what, if anything, has changed. Ms. Donna Douglas from the Town was on the call for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Acly asked Ms. Douglas to give a little more detail about the project. It sounds like the 1980s survey was not abbreviated. Ms. Douglas replied, the surveys that were done in 2008 by ACRC and in 2011 by PAL are just a picture of the house and the year it was built. They did not have any of the notable feature's section filled out. There's no historical or architecture features that were filled out. It is just a picture, and a year built. So just a list as opposed to any information.

Ms. Carnell added she wanted confirmation that the budget amount, which adds up to about \$160.00 per form is sufficient to meet the expectations of the HDC. Ms. Dunne replied, she and Ms. Douglas did discuss budget. The supplemental CLG grant now caps at \$20,000. Unfortunately, she believes they would have liked to have had more funding.

In the past, we have used a ballpark of \$150.00 per form, which would include the whole context and 25-page essay on the history and architecture of the town and designation recommendations. We're seeing surveys come in around that and we do want to accommodate more funding per form. \$160 is a little more than \$150, but if SHPO is going to be pricing these surveys in the future, the grant amount should increase based on standard prices. SHPO is hoping that it'll be enough, but the RFP will be structured. It is a good point that is being addressed.

Chairman Butkus added that the non-matching requirement doesn't really lend itself to saying that the project is only going to cost that because there's not a match required. The certified local governments should understand that they may need to chip in something. Not saying exactly how much that should be, but to achieve their goals the applicant should be subsidizing this in addition to whatever we can contribute with our limited funds. So, we kind of characterize things as if it's like a meal supplement, and not the full meal. We just want everybody to be aware that just because there's not a specific matched number that you have to achieve doesn't mean that the project can be done within the amount of funds that we are offering. Ms. Dunne added SHPO is finding that with all different types of projects, we want to keep up with what things are costing. Surveys are standard, but for a condition assessment it really depends on the complexity and size of the building and what the identified needs are. We can state that this is what we're providing, but not necessarily the whole price of the of the product.

## **VI. State Register of Historic Places Nominations**

### **A. Unfinished Action Items**

### **B. New Action Items**

## **VII. Local Historic District/Property Study Report/s**

### **A. Unfinished Action Items**

### **B. New Action Items**

#### **1. Local Historic District Study Report, East Ridge Historic District, Ridgefield**

On a motion by Ms. Burgess, second by Ms. Acly, pursuant to CGS §7-147c, the Historic Preservation Council voted to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance and boundary for the proposed East Ridge Historic District as presented in the study report transmitted by the Town of Ridgefield on June 25, 2025.

*(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)*

Ms. Dunne presented this application. She provided a brief overview of the HPC's procedure for a study report application for the newest member of the Council, Mr. McCoy. The charge here, part of the enabling legislation, is that a study report is submitted to the Historic Preservation Council and the local Planning and Zoning Department for comment as part of the local designation process. This application was received in late June. SHPO has 65 days to comment, then it is put on the agenda for the Council to review and provide comments to the

municipality. Council is voting to make comments and recommendations, especially regarding the boundaries or the content of the report itself. Those comments are then passed on to the Town which is read at a public hearing as part of the whole designation process. Amendments may be made to the report based on the Council's comments. Mr. Dan O'Brien with the Town was on the call for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Rhodes commented that she read the report of a brand-new house proposed in the district and was wondering if that can be designated as a noncontributing building in the district. Ms. Dunne replied, the statutes don't really provide any guidance on that. There is no provision for contributing versus non-contributing in the local designation process. Part of the reason, and you may know more about this than me, but because it's almost, it's not really a zoning tool. If the new buildings are on the outskirts of the district, we recommend taking them out of the boundary. If they are within the district, we don't recommend donut holes. It has created confusion for the Commissions because they aren't sure how to deal with the situation.

Ms. Rhodes added she understands the district boundaries, but feels like there should be, like on the National Register, contributing and non-contributing buildings within the district. This is a local historic district, but it feels like they can have the power to do that, and I just feel like it's not something that should be regulated by the local historic district.

Ms. Dunne replied, that's it's a very valid comment and we do not recommend land banking and things like that. If that new building were for some reason to be demolished, the Commission would need to have the right to review whatever's built in its place, so that's, you know, there's that consideration. This is local enabling legislation, so we don't have a whole lot of say. We could suggest that they identify the newer buildings and how the Commission might, in their design review guidelines, address newer buildings and whether they need a COA.

Ms. Rhodes agreed because she deals with this all the time. From a zoning and planning standpoint with the historic districts, local historic districts, that is an extra layer. If these properties aren't necessarily all contributing, she feels it's a big jump for people and doesn't necessarily think it's personally necessary on some of these dwellings.

Ms. Dunne added, the way to address that would be maybe to work with the local town attorney and put together guidelines, as maybe a blanket approval.

Chairman Butkus asked if all property owners were required to approve being part of the district? Ms. Dunne replied all property owners are sent a ballot, but only 2/3 of those ballots returned must be in the affirmative for the district to pass. If that new house owner voted no, but 98% of the rest did, then it will pass, you cannot opt out.

Dr. Horowitz added, he found the designation of the 1940s to the 1970s as the 20th century period confusing here, because there's another part that's the 1900s to the 1930s, so they might consider calling that the mid-century period.

Ms. Acly added she resonated with Ms. Rhodes comments and was just wondering if the Council in general were to all agree with that, if that can be something that we just add to the feedback we provide. Md. Dunne replied she passes along all of Council's comments in a letter in response to the transmittal. Comments and recommendations are submitted as well and read at the public hearing.

Mr. Dan O'Brien, Chairman of the Historic District added, Ms. Sara Kaplan and Mr. Shawn O'Kane, both architects, were on the call as well. On this question of donut holes, he was guided by what he saw in the State statute, which seemed to mandate that these properties be contiguous and was not allowed to have holes in the district.

Ms. Dunne added that about 10 years ago, DECD put out a policy statement saying that the boundaries needed to be continuous in a local district and the properties need to be contiguous, meaning no donut holes and no gaps. It does raise the issue of how to deal with newer properties that were built in the last 10 or 20 years.

Mr. O'Brien added, this particular house that's being built, the house that was there had a fire and the house was destroyed. It was a historic house and the owner is rebuilding, and he didn't think it was inconsistent with the area, but it is still a new house. He's also the chair of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Chairman Butkus added it seems like the intention there is to make sure that any newer building is not taking away from the other earlier resources in the district. It makes sense that they are subject to the review, not necessarily for the protection of the later structures but the earlier buildings that are in the district as well. It's kind of working hand in hand.

Ms. Burgess commented on the historic significance section of the application on pages 7 and 8. She appreciated the context of the founding of the town and moving through to the period for this proposed district. There is a sentence or two about immigrants who have first come to town, but she did not see any information about Indigenous peoples or African descended people who might have lived in this area of town. If there's a way that you can acknowledge that they were here, it would be great. Certainly, it needs to be based on actual evidence, but she feels it's important that every town in Connecticut acknowledge that people of color were here.

Mr. O'Brien replied he had a section drafted to that effect in his original draft, and basically the conclusion was they couldn't find any evidence of African Americans. Mr. Jack Sanders wrote a whole book on it, and there's plenty of evidence that they that they were in town, and they were slaves in town. He couldn't find any evidence that attached African Americans to this area and that's what I concluded and that's what I put in the section that I drafted. And I ran this whole report by Jack Sanders, who some of you might know as a historian who has written several books. He just wrote a book on African Americans in the State of Connecticut, which is a fantastic piece of work. One of his only comments on the study report was that he didn't think it was appropriate to put the section in on



African Americans if we didn't find any evidence thereof. Maybe the alternative was to talk about African Americans in the whole town or the State.

Ms. Burgess added she would still personally like to see at least a sentence acknowledging that people were in town in the earlier section of part one of that page seven, if that's at all possible. Again, because we want to make an inclusive picture of your town amongst what's happening across the state. It could be appropriate to just say, we did not find evidence of people of color in this area.

Ms. Carnell agreed with Ms. Burgess, you looked at it and you didn't find it, but her main comment is actually just building also on what Chairman Butkus said about the importance of newer construction in a local historic district fitting in, in terms of scale, setbacks, massing, detail. While she acknowledges Ms. Rhodes' point that you might not necessarily want to hold a building that was built in 1990 to the same standards as one that was built in 1790, it still is important for local historic districts to have jurisdiction over newer buildings. For example, if you know a house that was built in the 1980s needs new siding, you don't want vinyl siding in a historic district. Having jurisdiction over those newer buildings that you know are not historic perhaps yet, it really does help maintain the character of a local historic district. She found that serving on her town's local historic district for some time, not only for later 20th century buildings, but for new construction that was built on open land.

Mr. Sean O'Kane, Vice Chair of the historic district with Mr. Dan O'Brien, to Ms. Burgess' point about Indigenous and African American population on page 12, it's actually a pretty good description in the report based on research that Mr. Jack Saunders did in his book titled, "Uncle Ned's Mountain". It talks about how we could not find any evidence of... Mr. O'Brien interrupted, unfortunately, that's an early draft and that included the section that he was just referring. After Mr. Sanders' comment to him about that, they didn't have any evidence of their presence in this particular area, and they should have pulled it, which he did. He is going to circle back and now and address Ms. Burgess' comments and we'll put a reference back in. Mr. O'Brien apologized for the miscommunication.

## **VIII. Archaeological Preserves**

### **IX. Threatened Properties - CEPA Updates - Todd Levine, Saint Peter's Church, New Britain**

Mr. Levine provided a brief update on this church, which has been threatened by demolition. The structural report is being completed this week and it should definitely be available for next month's meeting. Apparently, several weeks ago, the attorney for the Diocese reached out to Mr. Phillip Walker, who is on the side of preservation, about potentially selling the church, on the condition that it is not used for sacred purposes. That negotiation is going to begin this week.

### **X. Preservation Restrictions**

## **XI. Report on State Historic Preservation Office – Jonathan Kinney**

Mr. Kinney began his report with an update on federal funding, specifically the Historic Preservation Fund from the National Park Service. At the July meeting, he had made everyone aware that we had finally received word that the Notice of Funding Opportunity had been released for federal fiscal year 2025 funding. Those applications for the federal 2025 funding are due to the NPS by the end of August and we're ready to hit the apply button. We're just waiting on the completion of an internal State review process for some of the language that was included with the funding notice that relates to executive orders that have been released by the current administration since the inauguration in January. State folks are reviewing that language to make sure that that is ok to accept.

The federal budget process for the federal year 2026 is in full swing. Good news on that front since we last spoke, both the House and Senate Interior Appropriations Committees have recommended the restoration of historic preservation funding for federal fiscal year 2026, which is fantastic. The President's initial budget proposal had zeroed out all HPF funding to SHPOs, so this is obviously a wonderful development for Historic Preservation and demonstrates how successful all of the advocacy has been at the federal level. Congress is currently in its August recess, but we are cautiously optimistic that when they return, we will see a federal budget that's finalized with strong funding for HPF going forward.

The second announcement relates to our GIS system, ConnCRIS. In March, SHPO was notified that we were selected to receive a special achievement in GIS award at the 2025 Esri Users Conference for our new system Conncris, which is our online map based cultural resource information system. We received the award for standing out from hundreds of thousands of other sites around the world for outstanding work with GIS technology. Mr. Kevin Berger, our GIS specialist, traveled to the ESRI conference in San Diego a few weeks ago to accept the award. He's on camera holding up the award, which is glass and probably won't show up. Mr. Kinney thanked Mr. Berger for all his hard work keeping that information available to all our constituents. He also thanked the SHPO staff and our consulting firms who made that long-term project possible.

The 3rd and final update for everyone relates to our statewide historic preservation plan. We just learned on Friday of last week that our new statewide plan draft that had been submitted to the National Park Service in May has been approved. The title of the new plan is "Connecticut Statewide Historic Preservation Plan 2025 to 2035: Weaving a Thread Between the Past and Future". That new plan is now effective and will be effective until December 31st 2034. NPS had a few minor revisions and tweaks that they wanted us to make to the draft, so we'll be doing that over the next few weeks. These included minor things like formatting and relocating some information, but we'll be finalizing that and then formatting the document and sharing it out as widely as possible and shifting over to the implementation phase where we'll be working with partners, HPC included. Chairman Butkus asked if the ConnCRIS system includes the HRI list of properties or just State and National Register listings? Mr. Kinney replied yes, it does include properties that have previously been surveyed.

Ms. Acly asked if the executive orders for the federal 2025 work are related to DEI and is there a chance that is going to be a challenge? Mr. Kinney replied, he believes that it is one of the executive orders that is included in that review. There's this comprehensive

review going on at this time to make sure that what we're accepting and the associated language doesn't conflict with anything that Connecticut is doing.

Ms. Shapiro added, really the terms and conditions very much allude to federal anti-discrimination law throughout and put a little bit of a heavier burden on us as the people who are going to be accepting the awards to ensure that our compliance with those laws are across the boards and very stringently upheld.

SHPO and the Office of the Arts are totally in compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws, but because we accept funds, the State must be totally compliant with federal anti-discrimination laws. So, it's not really anything to do with SHPO at this stage of the game, nor anything to do with our practice, but things that may be in the books in the State of Connecticut that have to be reviewed before being confident about accepting.

## **XII. Report on Museum Properties – Liz Shapiro**

### **Collections**

Ms. Shapiro reported that the Prudence Crandall sampler that was delivered to the Textile Conservation Center by staff for evaluation has moved into the conservation/treatment phase. We're very happy to invest funds into this project, which has been on the back burner for quite a long time. The total conservation costs are slightly under \$5000 and will be paid for by museum program funds.

The Crandall Museum will host an event on September 5, at 1 pm, to unveil four books previously owned and signed by Prudence Crandall, the official State Heroine of Connecticut, which have been acquired by the museum. We will also announce the "discovery" of four previously unknown students at the school. Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas will be our special guest.

### **Prudence Crandall Museum:**

We will finish installing security cameras at the museum early this month. Thank you to Marena Wisniewski from the SHPO staff who has been patiently fielding questions about installation locations!

The museum has experienced a steady stream of visitors for the guided tours that we offer. We love it when visitors post reviews, and this one was posted on Google last week. "Five stars! Very informative, extremely pleasant and enthusiastic staff. I can't emphasize enough what great personalities the staff had while giving us the layout of the land and being very attentive and accommodating to my grandson, who was being a little fussy during parts of the tour. You won't see a lot of artifacts here; just great information told with great gusto."

### **Eric Sloane Museum:**

Last month the museum hosted an adult blacksmithing class that went very well, and regular children's activities are now happening at the Noah Blake cabin on Saturdays. This month the museum will be hosting a kid's class on electricity, a spoon carving workshop and the CT Antique Machinery Associations New Firefighter Muster / Festival.

Staff at Sloane has been working with staff at Old New-Gate to bring their Trades Festival to New-Gate later this month. They were at the Whitfield Museum last weekend.

The Friends of the Museum are completing work on the education pavilion, which is a covered space that was located at the end of the museum, and it is now enclosed with removable walls for use in all weather conditions. This will allow museum staff to offer additional on-site education programs.

### **Henry Whitfield Museums**

The museum will be featured on WFSB for their “We the People 250” series. It will air on August 11.

Archaeology field school at the museum will be finishing this week, and I’m heading over on Thursday to take a look. I’ll keep you posted on what was found!

WelcomeFest will return to the museum on Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup>, and this year we will host Flamenco dancers, as well as talks and activities for all visitors.

The museum recently had a study done about the feasibility of replacing the gas heating system in both buildings with geothermal energy. It looks like this will be possible, which is exciting. We will be meeting with the full team to discuss whether we have the funding to move ahead. The geothermal system would provide heating and cooling.

### **Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine**

Staff is currently working on moving forward two physical plant projects, the stabilization of the four-story cell block (total project cost of \$656,304, with NPS funds of \$317,000 and a match from museum Community Investment Act funds of \$348,627) and plans to move forward on improving and mitigating poor conditions at Viets Tavern. Work on the tavern that is the highest priority and will fit into our current budget identifies moisture control as the top priority for building stabilization. This will include exterior drainage, a concrete slab in the basement, and HVAC system (electrical). We have a next steps meeting set for later this week.

Staff continue working on the Museum Makeover grant, which will result in a new exhibit in the Guardhouse. This exhibit will profile those who have been incarcerated at the prison.

The museum is applying for a NEA grant to fully produce a play about the events that happened at the museum in the colonial era. The play was written as a partnership with Plays in Place and will move audience members to various locations in the prison yard. While we hope to get the grant, we will be moving ahead to produce the play and be able to present it to audiences in 2026 as the main 250<sup>th</sup> programming at the museum.

Meanwhile regular programming continues at the museum, including our traditional Escape from New-Gate program featuring reenactors, the Gem and Mineral Show (last weekend) and the upcoming Historic Trades Day.

Finally, the DECD Agency picnic was hosted onsite on July 23 featuring music, a food truck and tours of the mine. It was the best attended summer staff event in several years.

### **XIII. Old Business**

#### **1. UPDATE - Structural preservation and rehabilitation of two historic tobacco sheds located on Firetown Road, Simsbury, CT. (Approved by HPC on 2/1/2023)**

Mr. Kinney gave a brief update on this application and then gave the floor to Mr. Levine, and possibly some other members of staff who have been more closely involved, but essentially, yes, this was a previous HRF award. SHPO has been working with the town and other organizations to fund this project, which is the overall preservation and restoration of as much historic fabric at Meadowood as possible. Staff was recently notified by the Town that the proposals and the bids that they've received in response to the RFP that they had gone out with have come in higher than anticipated. This update was brought to the Council because of what is contained in the Town's letter, which Mr. Levine read into the record. There can be a discussion about whether any formal action needs to be taken. Unfortunately, the town is not present today. Representatives from the Town could not make it to the meeting, so maybe formal action will take place in September.

Mr. Levine added that he put a copy of the Town's letter into the chat for the Council to review, especially the second page. Initially there were 6 barns on the site and the reason why he read it into records instead of Ms. Fink was because he had been involved with the project since it started in 2019 when DECD gave a \$800,000 grant to the Trust for Public Land to help be a part of the funding stack to purchase land to save it from potential development and preserve the tobacco sheds. Initially there were six barns on site. Mr. Levine read the letter into the record and answered any questions. "This memorandum is a status update on the Meadowood Barn Restoration project. The project was previously presented to HPC on February 23 for the permanent restoration of two tobacco sheds along Firetown Rd. Following approval from HPC, the project was designed by Self Engineering for the barns and building risk Category 2, which would allow access to the interior in a case-by-case basis." The reason why that's important is because on the interior of these tobacco sheds, in charcoal used in curing the tobacco, were the signatures throughout all the interiors of the Morehouse College students. To continue the letter, "the town of Simsbury solicited bids in 2024 for an anticipated construction period of 2024 and received one bidder, who provided a \$2.3 million base bid for restoration for barns #3 and #4 and then \$1,000,000 to deduct one alternative for the demolition of one barn in lieu of restoration. Next is a breakdown of our funding stack for the preservation of these tobacco sheds. You can see that there's \$300,000 grant from the Good to Great fund from 2019, \$500,000 of that \$800,000 went to purchasing land, and \$300,000 was put aside for restoration of the tobacco sheds. Simsbury put in some money as well.

Obviously, what's in question for HPC is the \$200,000 from the HRF grant. There were also a couple mitigation components that were negotiated for other losses in in Simsbury, particularly \$85,000 for the Scammell project and there was also mitigation for \$300,000 from a solar project. Note that TPL has an admin of \$45,000 for that \$300,000 listed. That's not accurate and will be corrected. Through consultation with SHPO and TPL staff at a meeting on 7/14/25, it was determined to redesign Barn 4 to a building risk category one, which would

drastically reduce the cost of work but not allow visits to the interior. The permanent restoration would be within our budget. The Town has requested a proposal from Silva Engineering for the redesign of this project with the intention of bid solicitation in the coming months for an anticipated spring 2026 construction period with a potential future demolition of tobacco barn #3. Initially, this grant was to restore two tobacco sheds. But, it looks like costs are too high to do that and in fact, the restoration to include interior viewing is not possible under the constraints. This started in 2019 and prices have continued to increase. What we're faced with is saving one tobacco shed now, even though the grant was for two.

Ms. Acly stated Mr. Jim Grant had provided some feedback in an e-mail chain and that the Town had pushed back a little bit on that feedback. Was that accurate? Mr. Levine replied, from his understanding, they took some of those recommendations, incorporated into the reduction of scope so that they can afford to at least have some stabilization. I don't know exactly what they incorporated into the new design, but they did say that they were going to incorporate some of it.

Ms. Acly added, one of Mr. Grant's comments was about the bracing on the long sides (East and West sides) and pushing back a little bit on the fact that they're rigid anyway. One of the tricks that structural engineers familiar with preservation will do, (not sure that most conventional structural engineers are familiar) is something called a Vierendeel trust. Second, you can assume with a little bit of analysis that the nails in the pieces of horizontal sheathing are acting like braces and it doesn't look to her that was considered. It looked to her like there's more structure that they're not interpreting or engaging some of the existing structure inherent to the building. Obviously, there's been a lot of deterioration and there's been racking, so that complicates matters. She believes there might be more inherent capacity in the structure than they're taking into consideration. Mr. Grant's comments build on that. She does not know which ones they've taken on board versus not but then building on that is the veer and dealing action.

Ms. Acly's second comment is when she had to use the category, the building official would have to sign off on this. It can be used by anybody, but the limitation is on weather. If it sounds to her that the big constraint here is wind, that's where that category's coming from. The level two versus level one wind and the safety factors. If there are under 20 mile an hour winds on any given day, the loads that they're concerned about are not part of it. In the past she has used this for floor limitations, live loads, and historic structure. Maybe the live load code live load requirement is we cannot accommodate that but per the code, we can say what the occupancy is and so each room can only hold 15 people. Maybe there's a way to do that for this too, so people can come in and say, you know, if there are no winds or storms and it's a bright, sunny day, people can come in.

Chairman Butkus stated that our initial approval was based on two barns, for a certain amount, based on a certain budget. The construction documents came out a year later. What are we approving when these requests come in, at what level of definition of the design documents and to have the costs, you know they mention a \$400,000 project or \$500,000 project and we were giving \$200,000 and now it's over one million for each building. That's a big concern. When we get these

reviews for funding again, it's a supplement. It's not meant to be the whole thing. Are we getting accurate pricing information to judge on? You know how many barns actually are required? We only have two left out of the site that had five on that side of the road. If you only have one, it totally changes the context of the interpretation, thinking that it's just one barn out in the middle of nowhere. With these old fields, when you have the two and demarcation of the former footprints, it contributes to that story.

Mr. Levine added SHPO had gone through with this project in 2019 and when he was administrator for the Good to Great program, and our commissioner asked what site should we invest in? This one came up because there were 5 historic barns or tobacco sheds, and there were 5 letters that Martin Luther King Junior wrote home while he was working in these fields.

Ms. Adusei asked, "Where are they on their project? As we're talking right now? Is it on hold until the budget is figured out? She has a follow up question depending on this answer, where are we on the project today? Mr. Levine replied, right now they're ready to go to bid based on the approval from HPC to approve the change in scope for the HRF grant. Ms. Adusei added, this project was started in 2019 and it looks like the first issue to bid was June 2024 and was estimated to be completed in October 2024. It's safe to say that did not happen. There is this prevailing wage as a part of this project, and I can tell you right now that certain rates, especially carpentry and plumbing, have gone up more than 400%. What does that mean? That means that on a recent project that we were involved in, which is a small project, a \$5 million project, the increase of the prevailing wage from June of last year to June of this year brought the budget up by almost \$500,000. Just to put things in perspective, that is something that is important to anticipate. There have been two increases in the prevailing wage. She took a quick glance at it, and it looked like they were using the old rates. The budget was \$1,000,000 back in 2022, that budget is sure to double. If they are using the old rate, she recommends that before anything is approved, they should check the project manual that is in their documents because otherwise, she fears that we'll be back here next month or next year requesting more money for this project.

Mr. Levine will include both of those in his comments back to the municipality. Would you have recommendations for an independent cost estimator for something like a historic tobacco shed? Ms. Adusei replied they can speak offline. She does know some independent cost estimators, but specifically, this type of scope, including tobacco barns, she must think about it.

#### **XIV. New Business**

#### **XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies – Mike Forino**

Dr. Michael Forino, of Preservation Connecticut, presented in Ms. Montanaro's absence. We're happy to announce that earlier this summer, in our 15th year of partnership with the 1772 Foundation, they awarded 17 matching grants to nonprofits across Connecticut. That list has been published. The Finnish Hal in Canterbury, Bacon Academy in Colchester, Ogden House in Fairfield, Hillstead Museum in Farmington, Merwinsville Hotel, Gaylordsville Highland House in Guildford, The Cape Well Horse Nail Company office building, which is in Hartford, the Wadsworth stables in Lebanon, the Manchester,

History Center, which is the former Cheney Brothers machine shop building, the Steven Main Homestead in North Stonington, the Pomford Old Townhouse and the Phelps House in Simsbury, the Yellow Farmhouse Education Center in Stonington, The Hicks Stearns Family Museum in Tolland, the Gunn Memorial Library and Museum in Washington, the West Cornwall Public Library in West Cornwall, and the Jilson House in Willimantic.

For the second consecutive year they are organizing a series of public check presentation events that will have the recipients there, but also local leaders, First Selectmen, and State Representatives. They use this as an opportunity, obviously, to promote preservation both on the local and state level. If any of you are interested in attending any of the check presentations that are being arranged now feel free to reach out to them. The 1772 Foundation has recommended its partnership to Preservation Connecticut for the next two years so these small capital grants will continue to be available through 2027.

The Technical Assistance Consultancy Program, which is part of the Circuit Rider program funded by SHPO and the Historic Preservation Council, and that gives the circuit riders the ability to hire certain, depending on the situation, different experts, engineers, and architects, who problem solve different issues. Mr. Jim Grant worked with the Simsbury tobacco barns, for example, as part of one of those TAC projects. It's a useful tool for us to get into a site quickly and give evaluations, maybe to stop demolition, maybe to give pause, or even to stop removal of historic elements for a building.

There are two projects going on right now. One is they are evaluating the feasibility of maintaining the 1840s barn in Haddam and they are also working on a scope of work to restore or and reuse original doors in a Carpenter Gothic church in eastern Connecticut following some insurance issues which was pushing the congregation to remove those elements.

Finally, Preservation Connecticut has been trying to expand its educational programs and the audience it reaches with those programs. They are presenting a series of three webinars and one in person event on historic preservation for municipal officials through the Connecticut Council of Municipalities. This has been a group that Preservation Connecticut has been trying to get in front of for a few years now. SHPO staff have been invited to be guest speakers at some of those sessions. There's going to be a preservation (Preservation 101) type session and one on sustainability in historic buildings, another on tax credits, and then there's going to be one on municipal tools. If anyone's interested, we're going to be putting them out in their postings and in emails, the dates are 8/13, 9/10 and 10/8 and 11/6.

## **XVI. Public Forum**

## **XVII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Ms. Carnell, second by Ms. Rhodes, this meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully,  
Deborah D. Gaston



***Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:  
Wednesday, September 10, 2025 – Meeting Format TBD***