

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Wednesday, June 4, 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 for the code)

MINUTES

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

Absent: Dr. Sarah Sportman

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. Pamela Hughes, Ms. Libby Mitchell, Ms. Jane Montanaro, Dr. Daryn Reyman-Lock and Ms. Stacey Vairo

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 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. Burgess recused herself from agenda item V.B.1. - Partners in Preservation Grant – Preservation CT

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes and Transcripts

A. Minutes – May 7, 2025 Meeting

On a motion by Ms. Acly, second by Ms. Carnell, the Council voted to approve the May 7, 2025 meeting minutes with corrections.

(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. Partners in Preservation Grant, Preservation Connecticut, SFY 2026 Circuit Rider Program, Statewide

On a motion by Ms. Rhodes, second by Mr. Elmore, the Historic Preservation Council voted to recommend the award of a Partners In Preservation 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-8, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-1, Recused-1) (Roll call vote) (Ms. Burgess was recused)

Applicant: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation doing business as Preservation Connecticut

Amount: \$150,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. SHPO has been partners with the Connecticut Trust/Preservation Connecticut since the early 1970s, but the Circuit Rider Program has been increasingly valuable and SHPO wants to make room in our budget to support it. Ms. Montanaro, Dr. Mike Forino, and Ms. Stacey Vairo were on the call for any questions or concerns.

The current request is based on SHPO's projected budget for FY26. We are keeping a watchful eye on deposits to the CIA and hoping that with the passage of the bill that increases deposits that more funding would be available. There were some other inclusions in the bill that might simultaneously scale back any increase to our deposits. SHPO would need to see what our budget is going to look like before we can commit to additional funding.

The Council, in the past, has increased available funding, based on various circumstances. For example, a grant may have been approved for \$15,000 for a certain project and then it turned out the applicant needed more. The Council approving additional funding is not an issue, it's just a matter of seeing what the deposits and the rest of the budget are going to look like.

Chairman Butkus asked Ms. Montanaro if they would be able to come up with the additional \$100,000 for her staff? Ms. Montanaro replied that they have a board meeting tomorrow, when they are presenting their Fiscal Year 2026 budget. They have budgeted \$250,000 for the Circuit Rider program and they are presenting a small deficit to the board tomorrow. This does present a strain to not have the full \$250,000 for the program. We have a few opportunities to maybe look for some private funding, but those are not guaranteed.

Ms. Acly asked if \$250,000 was budgeted for the program and \$150,000 is what Council is approving, is the program going to be similar to last year or is PCT anticipating any major changes? Ms. Montanaro replied, the Circuit Rider Program is well-established and they will try to keep up with all site visits and sharing information about SHPO programs. One thing they would like to do slightly differently for next year is add more educational programs, as well as try to consolidate some of the individual site visits and the time of Circuit Riders meeting with folks individually, although that is still a priority. They are going to try to get ahead of that and provide more education opportunities for next year in addition to the LHD trainings and others that we have already committed to with SHPO.

Dr. Horowitz commented that he obviously supports this proposal and celebrates Ms. Montanaro and staff's good work. His question is about how to stagger the payments or has the scope of work been changed? What happens if you don't get the next \$100,000, do you stop work at a certain point through the year? Are you doing 60% of the visits? Is that defined? He imagines that once you know that you've satisfied the terms of the contract, a smaller version, but also if you aren't at the unfortunate position where you need to seek outside funding, it might be useful to say what piece of the pie you're trying to fill more specifically? He was not totally comfortable giving a \$150,000 grant award for \$250,000 worth of work and saying good luck. We should be clear about what 60% of the funding gets us. Understanding from a logistical or programmatic point of view, it may be the same as going back to give more funding, but this is not like the budget for the approved scope of work came in higher, later and so we need to give more for materials. It's a profoundly smaller amount of money, so Dr. Horowitz thought it might protect Preservation Connecticut more if we're clear about what you can do with \$150,000 and then you could be clear to other people about why you need outside investment. Ms. Dunne replied it makes a lot of sense, SHPO can work with Ms. Montanaro and Mr. Forino to create the \$150,000 budget and take it from there.

Dr. Horowitz stated that if it is clear that the funding is for a certain number of months, then you could make a case to legislators or private funders that we need to continue the program past a set date.

Ms. Montanaro commented, the Circuit Rider program is lean. It is mostly staff and travel. Then there is the TAC program and, in this climate where grant funding is very limited, the TAC program is more important than ever because that is where we can really provide direct assistance and get an assessment done immediately. To save ourselves, we could put TAC on the back burner, but that does a great disservice to our Circuit Riders in the field who don't have that tool to offer and to our constituents who don't have a lot of other options at this time either. It's a tough decision. The \$250,000 is only covering two of our Circuit Riders. They have a team of four Circuit Riders. Preservation Connecticut is already matching about half of that budget. The real circuit rider budget was over \$350,000, they are asking the SHPO to fully fund two circuit riders and the TAC program essentially.

Ms. Acly added, if the salary was reconfigured so that it wasn't a full two Circuit Riders, but a percentage of all the circuit rider salaries, maybe the time-limited piece Ms. Montanaro suggested would be better. These funds would be for about nine months and that way this will give them full ability to use the TAC.

VI. State Register of Historic Places Nominations

A. Unfinished Action Items

B. New Action Items

1. State Register of Historic Places Nomination. District 15 Schoolhouse, West Cornwall District Schoolhouse, 35 Lower River Road, Cornwall

On a motion by Dr. Glaser, second by Ms. Carnell, the Historic Preservation Council voted to list the District 15 Schoolhouse, West Cornwall District Schoolhouse, located at 35 Lower River Road, Cornwall, to the State Register of Historic Places. Staff recommended approval of the listing.

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

Ms. Wisniewski presented this application. The District 15 Schoolhouse W. Cornwall District School House, located at 35 Lower River Rd. Cornwall, is eligible for the State Register of Historic Places under Criterion 1, at the local level, for its association with the development of education within the town of Cornwall, and Criterion 2 at the local level, in the area of architecture, as an intact example of a rural district schoolhouse with 20th century modifications following its conversion into a library. Most of the alterations are related to the renovation campaign and the building retains most of its integrity of location, setting design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association of a small schoolhouse serving the former District 15. Dr. Daryn Raymond Locke, author of the nomination, as

well as Libby Mitchell of the West Cornwall Library and Pamela Hughes, granddaughter of the original benefactor of the library, are all on the call to help answer any questions or concerns the Council may have.

Chairman Butkus stated that it was a great nomination and topic, but he had some questions about the development of the building and which section was built first. He believes there may be an issue that they reverse of what was claimed in the nomination is true, based on Figure 2. When you look at that, it feels like it's the right hand, the northern wing that's parallel to the road with the chimney and that also shows up in the current photos of the project. He wondered if that could be double checked. From the topography, where it's sloping down from the northeast to the southwest, that back corner that's shown does look like it's the rear corner of the building. Also, the lean-to utility room on the back, when you look at the interior photos, it's up against larger block that goes perpendicular to the street.

Ms. Acly commented, she hadn't fully processed what Chairman Butkus' observation was until just this moment. Her question was similar, which is she is very familiar with one room schoolhouses, but much less familiar with two room schoolhouses. She was just wondering if a statement of the uniqueness of this property type could be added to the nomination. The offset entrance as opposed to the two entrances is a little different than the one-room configuration that she is used to seeing.

Dr. Reymen-Lock replied she would be happy to add that to the nomination.

Ms. Wisniewski added that Dr. Raymond-Lock has become an expert on the rural schoolhouse typology and she just noticed when she was putting together notes for this meeting that last June, we designated two district schoolhouses in Ridgefield at the same meeting, one which was, to Ms. Acly's point, a very typical single room schoolhouse, and the other one had early 20th century modifications.

It would be a good thing to answer Chairman Butkus' original comment, to make sure that their orientation and segments are named and dated appropriately.

Chairman Butkus added, in general, all these nominations would really benefit from a first floor plan because you start reading the description and it talks about the north facade or the south facade and a floor plan would make that easier. It would also be helpful to have a key plan level. Ms. Wisniewski agreed with adding the key plan to the final nomination.

Dr. Glaser added that she thought this was a great nomination and was also curious about how unique the property type was. It would help to add a bit more context, maybe beyond even Connecticut.

VII. Local Historic District/Property Study Report/s

A. Unfinished Action Items

B. New Action Items

VIII. Archaeological Preserves

IX. Threatened Properties - CEPA Updates - Todd Levine

Mr. Levine provided an update on Saint Peter's Church in New Britain. There have not yet been enough letters of inquiry submitted for SHPO to do an official investigation, but because of timing we will be putting the New Britain Church on the State Review Board agenda in two weeks to confirm the building still retains integrity.

Chairman Butkus asked if everything was in place to support efforts to preserve the church? Mr. Levine replied, our track is separate. They potentially would ask our office to intervene, but right now there is already an injunction place or at least an agreement between the owners. Those concerned with saving the church state that demolition has been halted temporarily and are Cirrus Engineering, Ms. Acly's company, will be brought in later this month to do an official third-party structural analysis. Then from there we'll see what happens. So theoretically, SHPO, in that time period, would do our own investigation. But right now, it's been paused while they allow Beth Acly's company to go in and do a structural analysis.

FIRE ALARM GOING OFF IN THE BUILDING

X. Preservation Restrictions

XI. Report on State Historic Preservation Office – Jonathan Kinney

Mr. Kinney reported from outside the building, while the fire alarm was still sounding. The first item is SHPO's funding concerns. There's been no major update on the federal side since the last meeting. We still do not have the Notice of Funding Opportunity for our FY25' money. FY26' funding is remains zeroed out in the proposed federal budget. SHPO is out of FY24' money as of the end of May and we are currently utilizing another existing pot of state funding, which is administrative money from the CIA. That is being used to support those five federal positions as well as three additional people who are usually paid out of that fund. This not a permanent fix. We're allowed to use 10% of that money that comes in from the CIA for administration to support staff. After that, the funding is really a question mark.

We understand that there may be a special session of the State legislature in September to look at issues created by federal funding shortfalls, but right now we're sort of in a holding pattern. We did receive some good news recently. The state budget passed, which included an increase to Community Investment Act funding, which supports a lot of our grant programs. This will also add an additional \$95,000 to Preservation Connecticut's line item. Hopefully, SHPO will see some additional funding on our end, which can be sent back to communities in the form of grants.

Ms. Ackly asked if the HRF program was on hold? Mr. Kinney replied that we are in the middle of that process right now. Applicants submit their letters of intent and SHPO has narrowed that down to those projects for which we would like to see full applications. Mr. Kinney asked if Ms. Fink was on the call. She may be able to give you those numbers, but we did narrow it down to a pool of applicants that we are interested in inviting to apply. I

believe the total asks for this round of funding were over \$5,000,000 and we have budgeted \$1,000,000 because that's all we have. So, the program is completely oversubscribed and there is a lot of demand for capital work, but we're trying to be cautious in our budgeting.

Ms. Fink added that the program received 36 letters of intent, representing a total ask of about \$5.2 million. SHPO is inviting 26 applicants to apply; their total funding request is about \$3.5 million. Just a reminder, the budget is about \$1,000,000 and we did let applicants know that the \$1,000,000 budget may decrease depending on our funding. Everyone said that they understood, and they do plan to submit a full application. They know how tight the budget is and understood.

XII. Report on Museum Properties – Liz Shapiro

No report (Attending conference)

XIII. Old Business

XIV. New Business

XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies – Jane Montanaro

The only thing to report from CPA and Preservation Connecticut is that we are keeping an eye on the budget. The CIA increase was part of the budget that passed the House and the Senate, so waiting for the governor to sign it. There is a statutory payment written in for Preservation Connecticut of \$380,000. In the new statutory language, it is raised to \$475,000.

This is the first increase that we've received in 20 years and that goes towards supporting Preservation Connecticut staff, not Circuit Rider staff, but her, Chris Wigren, the other staff, Connecticut Preservation News, programming and outreach, rent, and sometimes grant programs. We used to use a lot of that money for our Maintenance and Repair grants. But, over the years we've had to cut that back because of the funding pressures. This would be a huge benefit and very welcome increase, but it's just part of operating. It doesn't really support the Circuit Rider program specifically.

Chairman Butkus inquired, while waiting for SHPO staff to come back from their fire drill, if there were any sorts of training sessions that members of Council would like to schedule at some point in the future.

XVI. Public Forum

XVII. Adjournment

On a motion by Ms. Rhodes, second by Ms. Acly, this meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

*Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:
Wednesday, July 2, 2025 – Meeting Format TBD*