

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Wednesday, March 4, 2026 @ 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)

MEETING

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, Ms. Deanna Rhodes and 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. Jenny Scofield, Ms. Elizabeth Shapiro, and Ms. Marena Wisniewski

Absent: Ms. Catherine Labadia, Mr. Todd Levine

Guests: Ms. Sara Abbatemarcco, Ms. Carol Jones, Ms. Priyanka Panjwani

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 were two:

1. Ms. Acly recused herself from agenda item V.B.1.
2. Mr. McCoy recused himself from agenda item V.B.1.

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes and Transcripts

A. Minutes – February 4, 2026

1. Minutes – February 4, 2026 Meeting

On a motion by Mr. Elmore, second by Ms. Carnell, the Council voted to approve the February 4, 2026 meeting minutes.

(Y-8, N-0, Abstaining-3, Absent-0, 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, Trinity Parish (Episcopal) Feasibility Study for Accessibility, Wethersfield

On a motion by Ms. Rhodes, second by Ms. Burgess, 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.

*Ms. Acly and Mr. McCoy were both recused from this item.

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

Applicant: Trinity Parish (Episcopal)

Amount: \$7,500

Ms. Dunne presented this application. Trinity Parish is working to introduce better accessibility to their church and other buildings. They did competitively select a qualified architect and engineer team. This is phase one of the project, which is essentially going to be information gathering, looking at programming, and completing a feasibility study to determine if and how they can introduce accessibility features and measures. The total project cost is \$15,000, so they are asking for half and matching the other \$7,500. Ms. Carol Jones from Trinity Parish was on the call to answer any questions or concerns.

Chairman Butkus asked if there has been a change in the policy of applying due to the difference in recent applications. Ms. Dunne replied it was not a policy change, but a preference. Potential applicants are instructed to not solicit any bids or information prior to receiving the grant. They're never sure how much to ask for because they don't know and are not familiar. She can give them advice based on other projects' costs. If they have already selected an architect, she just asks for the RFP that they sent out and copies of all the proposals that they received so that she can determine that they solicited qualified people, got several responses, and selected a qualified person from the pool. They are correctly doing it up front. If they don't do that, then they will not be eligible.

2. Survey and Planning Grant, Unionville Museum, condition assessment, Unionville

On a motion by Ms. Carnell, second by Ms. Acly, 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-10, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-0, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

Applicant: Unionville Museum
Amount: \$15,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. She and Ms. Fink conducted a site visit to the building. This is a small one room building that is wonderfully intact, and its exterior features are beautiful. It is a former Carnegie Library. Their main concern is the front vestibule, as you read in the application. While on the site, possible concerns were discussed and SHPO recommended that they do a comprehensive condition assessment. SHPO recommended that they asked for \$15,000 with a match of \$15,000 because it is a small, simple building except for the vestibule. Ms. Sarah Abbottamarco, Unionville Museum, was on the call to answer any questions or concerns.

Ms. Carnell commented, on Page 3, the “National Historic Landmark” designation should be changed to “National Register”. Ms. Dunne replied, she doesn’t believe it’s even on the National Register. It is on the State Register through its local designation.

Ms. Acly mentioned that it looks like the columns have some deterioration and are sitting on pedestals. That’s somewhat unusual. Anything that can be dug up internally about whether those were previously replaced or any information or insight that could be given to the consultants would be very helpful.

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

VIII. Archaeological Preserves

IX. Threatened Properties - CEPA Updates – Todd Levine

Mr. Levine was in Washington D.C. for National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week, but will provide an update to Council, on both 649 Howard Avenue in New Haven and 956 Main Street in Willimantic when he returns.

X. Preservation Restrictions

XI. Report on State Historic Preservation Office – Jonathan Kinney

National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week is taking place in Washington, D.C. this week. Two members of the SHPO staff, Deputy SHPO Cathy Labadia and Todd Levine, are there representing Connecticut. This annual event is a week-long series of programs hosted by Preservation Action and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices, also known as NCSHPO, and it is essentially a gathering of preservationists and SHPO staff from all over the country to talk about the latest hot topics at the national level. There are in-depth discussions and briefings on current policy issues. Monday was the annual meeting for NCSHPO and a great roundtable on the use of technology and data in SHPOs. There are also tours held throughout the week and networking opportunities and Wednesday (today) is when preservationists from all over the country descend on Capitol Hill and visit their congressional offices to share information on pressing preservation related matters. There are several “asks” for the legislators this year, which include the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act (HTCGO). This is a bill that has been in the works for some time. Essentially this would allow the tax credit to go back to being claimed in one year when a building is placed in service, would restore more predictability for investors and it also makes it easier for smaller properties and rural properties to take advantage of the credit.

The second topic is the Section 106 consultation process. You may recall that last fall there was a hearing in the US Senate to talk about the Section 106 process and potential streamlining measures. There is an ongoing effort by the current administration, through the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, to open the Section 106 regulations and/or National Historic Preservation Act to look for opportunities to streamline and expedite projects. SHPO is working very hard, in cooperation with our federal partners, to identify areas where there is an opportunity for potential changes while also being very careful about making sure that protections and safeguards aren't lost for historic properties.

The 3rd item is the HPF Reauthorization Act. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) is the critical pot of federal funding that is distributed to all 59 SHPOs and all of the Tribal Historic Preservation offices across the country. Congress appropriates funding annually to the HPF. It has been authorized at the \$150 million level since 1976. Adjusted for inflation, that is \$800 million, but it has not moved off that \$150 million mark since 1976. Congress has previously appropriated larger amounts, but the authorization still sits at \$150 million. We are looking to have the funding authorized for as long a time period as we can. The current request to Congress is a 10 year authorization at \$250 million annually. They're trying to get \$250 million in HPF for the 250th anniversary of the US. Mr. Kinney will keep the Council updated on this effort.

The State's legislative session, as you know, is in full swing. Along with our DECD legislative staff, SHPO is tracking several proposals that intersect with our work and your work. These include proposals to allow one-to-four-unit properties to be eligible for the state rehabilitation tax credit. There are proposals for bond funding directed to specific

historic properties for rehabilitation. There are also several housing and zoning bills which touch on our preservation work.

DECD has included an emergency funding proposal for SHPO within State Senate Bill 307. Chairman Butkus asked about it ahead of today's meeting and there was a public hearing yesterday, so Mr. Kinney wanted to take a few minutes to explain the intent of this language, correct any misinformation that folks may have heard, and answer any questions that Council may have. The proposal as it stands right now states that if the Historic Preservation Fund, which is the federal funding Mr. Kinney was just talking about, administered by the National Park Service, is eliminated or if the state allocation for such funds is fully exhausted, up to 50% of the funds distributed to the DECD through the Community Investment Act (CIA), including any balances from previous years, may be used by such department to pay wages or salaries of employees in the state whose wage or salaries have been previously paid from the Historic Preservation Fund.

There has been some concern that this is an effort by DECD to come in and raid the CIA fund or jeopardize the CIA fund. This proposal is completely a contingency measure, and it does not automatically redirect funds. It would take effect only if federal funding were eliminated or fully exhausted, and it is intended to maintain continuity of preservation services in Connecticut. While some testimony has suggested that there is no federal funding risk, Federal Fiscal Year 2025 HPF funding was delayed nationwide, causing SHPO offices across the country to exhaust their funds and lay off employees. In addition, the President's Federal Fiscal Year 2026 budget proposal eliminated HPF funding to SHPOs entirely. Eventually, a one-year authorization was enacted. Both Houses of Congress reinstated funding in their Interior appropriations bills, but it does not guarantee future appropriation levels. This proposal is designed to address this documented federal instability. The language in DECD's proposal allows up to 50% to be used only if HPF is eliminated or fully exhausted. It's conditional, temporary and emergency triggered. It does not automatically redirect funds, nor is the intent to institute a permanent change. Several people have testified to their strong support for SHPO staff while opposing this temporary stabilization measure and suggesting a reliance on the state's general fund. While that is certainly a policy option, there is no defined pathway that's been identified at this point to ensure that the funding would be available in time to prevent disruption. It is also important to recognize that the five federally supported positions in our office administer critical designation, incentive, and regulatory programs. These include environmental review, federal and state tax credit processing, national and state register nominations, CEPA review, and overall program administration. Without staff capacity, grant funding for preservation planning and or capital work cannot be administered, millions of dollars in tax credits that incentivize revitalization cannot be approved, and thousands of development projects across the state that require regulatory review would be stopped. This proposal seeks to maintain both preservation funding and the operational structure necessary to carry it out. It's essentially a safeguard against the worst-case scenario intended to provide flexibility during federal uncertainty. Its purpose is to ensure preservation work in Connecticut continues uninterrupted.

XII. Report on Museum Properties – Liz Shapiro

Ms. Shapiro was on vacation.

XIII. Old Business

XIV. New Business

XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies – Jane Montanaro

Ms. Montanaro was in Washington, D.C. for National Historic Preservation Advocacy Week.

XVI. Public Forum

XVII. Adjournment

On a motion Ms. Acly, second by Mr. McCoy, this meeting was adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

**Respectfully submitted by:
Deborah D. Gaston**

***Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:
Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – Meeting Format TBD***