

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 @ 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:Jonathan.Kinney@ct.gov) for the code)

**MEETING**

**Council:** Ms. Elizabeth Acly, Ms. Vincencia Adusei, Ms. Elizabeth Burgess, Vice-Chairman Paul Butkus, Ms. Marguerite Carnell, Mr. Thomas Elmore, Dr. Leah Glaser, Dr. Andy Horowitz, Ms. Sara Nelson, Ms. Deanna Rhodes and Dr. Sarah Sportman

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

**Guests:** Ms. Jane Montanaro, Ms. Lauryn West Mr. Jason Bowns, Ms. Anne Young

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order @9:32 a.m.

**II. Review of Public Comment Procedures**

Vice-Chairman Butkus read aloud the Review of Public Comment Procedures.

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

Vice-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 no conflicts reported.

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

A. Minutes – January 10, 2024 Meeting

*On a motion by Ms. Carnell, second by Ms. Burgess, the Council voted to approve the January 10, 2024 meeting minutes.*

*(Y-6, N-0, Abstaining-5, Absent-0, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)*

## V. State Historic Preservation Grants – Action Items

### A. Unfinished Action Items

1. Historic Restoration Fund Grant, Chester Public Library, Repointing and boiler, Chester 21 W. Main St, Chester, CT.

On a motion by Ms. Rhodes, second by Ms. Nelson, the Council voted to recall this item to the table and to retable it until the May 1, 2024 meeting due to more information being gathered.

(Y-10, N-0, Abstaining-1, Absent-0, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

### B. New Action Items

1. Survey and Planning Grant, Town of Easton, Geophysical Survey of Human Burials, Den Cemetery, Easton

On a motion by Ms. Burgess, second by Mr. Elmore, 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: Town of Easton  
Amount: \$5,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The applicant met with the staff archaeologists to discuss this project. Both of SHPO's staff archeologists are in Washington D.C. for Advocacy Week and are not here to answer any questions the Council may have. No one from the Town was on the call so Ms. Dunne answered any questions the Council had.

Vice Chairman Butkus asked about access to the information, since this is on the water company property, wondering what the long-term availability of the findings will be because it's not a readily accessible parcel.

Ms. Dunne replied that this was part of the discussion with the town and owner, they are fully supportive of this investigation.

They may want to go as far as National Register designation in the future. There is no opposition to a future designation, but they did not want commit to saying yes. The information gained from this survey will allow them to move forward with State or National Register listing should they choose. It is important to have that survey in the context of future activity. Right now, everyone is supportive.

Vice Chairman Butkus added when the information becomes available to make sure copies are provided to the local Historic Society or library.

Ms. Dunne added it is a requirement for copies to be provided, but generally, archaeologists like to keep the information secure to protect from possible theft of artifacts in that area. Information on archeological below ground resources in CONNCRIS are only available to qualified professionals that need the information. SHPO and the Town, will receive a copy and will check with Ms. Labadia and Mr. Atkinson, our staff archaeologists, on who else can receive a copy. This is publicly funded so it will be available to at least to SHPO and the Town.

**2. Survey and Planning Grant, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association, Inc., National Register Nomination for Plainfield Cemetery, Plainfield**

On a motion by Ms. Nelson, second by Dr. Glaser, 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: Plainfield Grave Guardians, Inc.  
Amount: \$14,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application with the staff's approval. SHPO has worked with this applicant for many years. The applicant has met with both Ms. Scofield, National Register Coordinator, and Ms. Wiesnewski, State Register Coordinator. There is a lot of info just about the resource itself, but the point of the grant would be to hire a qualified professional to explore the recommended listing criteria which are A and C. She, Ms. Scofield and Mr. Jason Bowns, the author of the application, were all on the call for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Nelson asked, with applications coming in for investigation cemeteries, is there a larger context that is being created by all of these individual studies. Are there any future repositories of data from cemeteries using the CONNCRIS system?

Ms. Scofield commented, a query specific to property type, which includes cemeteries can be conducted. If you wanted to isolate cemeteries that have been documented in ConnCRIS, a PDF can be pulled up. The digitized or added location points are from the Hale collection for the South half of the state, but it's possible that we would add location points for the north half of the state in the future. The Hale collection is available online, but there weren't map location points associated with it in a digital format.

Mr. Bowns responded, the Plainfield Grave Guardians have been shifting their mission more from volunteering and trying to preserve the physical landscape to partnering with the local school districts and using the cemetery as a classroom. There's been a lot of interest with the sociology teachers. We have someone who's going to help us write some curriculum modules over the summer, geared for elementary, middle, and then high school levels to align with the Common Core and the state curricular standards.

Locally, in his community, Mr. Bowns has been really trying to capitalize on that, even though there's so much there with, a slave, a freed woman of color and one of the stones is the epithet there. Revolutionary wars, African Americans who served in the Civil War, there's just so much there that nobody knows about, even people who grew up in Plainfield, so the institutional memory is so important and at least locally in our community, that's a major priority. Passing that knowledge on to the younger generations and having the teachers on board has been a real asset and using this as a classroom for everybody to learn from and to respect.

This goes far beyond the physical landscape, so this is the goal. Mr. Bowns did not know if this was a model that could be transferred to other communities but thanked the Council and SHPO for recognizing the importance of this because with neglect and the passage of time, these stories would be lost then people cannot learn from them. Their lives and their legacies are the reason why we're all here today and why we have the communities that we live in. He always thinks of himself 100 years from now and would hope that somebody would remember his community and the people who were all here in their present. He is sure the people 100 years ago in the past would have expected the same for us, as the custodians of their memories. Mr. Bowns thanked the Council and SHPO for understanding what they are trying to accomplish.

Dr. Glaser thanked Mr. Bowns, for his input. She agreed with Ms. Nelson's point, we do a lot in this state where nobody knows what the other is doing. A lot of towns have been doing this. The ancient burial ground which SHPO funded, they have a digital presence that could serve as a model in terms of raising awareness. It seems that we should think of ways of collating this information. The Witness Stones Project already has a curriculum ready to go. With all these cemetery inquiries coming in, it would be nice to have one stop just to make people aware and connect people to that information and researchers to that information.

Mr. Bowns added, Rhode Island has an excellent model, an online website that needs to be updated. They have an online repository in Rhode Island, and he believes a cemetery Commission for the whole state. It's a much smaller state than Connecticut, but you can click on it and they have a map of the whole state where you can navigate around, but that's they have contact information for local officials or whoever's in charge of maintaining it. He did not see education or curricular items, but in terms of connecting communities, if Connecticut had something like that or could create a similar website, that could be an effective tool.

Mr. Bowns would love to connect with other communities and join forces. In our region, the whole Northeast, John Winthrop owned a lot of that playing field all the way down to Norwich. It would be incredible if we could kind of coordinate because there's a lot of cross pollination that happened historically.

Dr. Horowitz wanted to join in on the praise for this really solid application and for all the thoughtful work being done, this is great and understand that our conversation now is inspired by your good work. It would be great if we put together these common resources. If we are going to fund a project on cemeteries, make a list of all the headstone inscriptions they must go in a spreadsheet that's a certain format and be submitted to this centralized agency, which would be very little work on the front end and would start building.

Who would do that? Can we be more concrete in this meeting about like, specifically, how we could move forward on that kind of project so it's not a good idea that just gets left by the way side, because it seems like it's a very small, little hump to get over in the beginning about collecting data in a uniform way and submitting it to one place that would unlock quite a powerful resource. Who's the person to ask about that?

Dr. Glaser commented, at least for African Americans, there is the Northeast slavery database that's run by John Jay College, that is trying to collate all of that information. The Witness Stones basically gives him all their information for the Northeastern region, not necessarily for Connecticut, there is something like that and to Dr. Horowitz's point, wondering if that's something that maybe should be a SHPO thing or one of the universities.

Ms. Scofield added it depends on the format as to whether it is SHPO or academic. There is a Connecticut Gravestone Association, although they focus a lot on conservation and teaching people how to maintain a headstone, we don't have a state cemetery Commission. In terms of Rhode Island, they also have, I think, a more recent comprehensive survey of the state. They have beyond the Hale Collection from the 30s, they have a survey from the 80s of every single cemetery, even the family cemeteries that are in backyards. We don't have that for Connecticut necessarily.

If there was a survey, we do have a cemetery survey form. If it was documentation in that regard, it would be something SHPO would maintain. If it was more compiling social history on a website, that would be a greater discussion with other parties who aren't present today. In addition to us, there are conservation groups and multiple volunteer associations engaged in cemeteries. Some are accessible and some are not, some have municipal or volunteer groups maintaining them, and some do not.

Mr. Bowns added they had a grant, fortunately, from Connecticut Humanities that allowed us to create the website. They've been able to partner on their own with the Daughters of the American Revolution, we had volunteers doing genealogical research on so there have been different forces.

He thinks it's important to do what the Commission is suggesting, shifting more towards the humanities ends and the education piece and the stories of the people that are buried there. Ms. Ruth Shapley Brown, she is the Connecticut gravestone network. She does this on her own. She doesn't really have many resources at all. In terms of the humanities piece, I don't know anything else in this state that's looking at or even other communities that are really trying to capitalize and create curricula for, based on that local history. The Witness Stone Project has come to Plainfield. There's one particular grave there of a slave who they've worked with the schools on, but that would be great if there was more of humanities focus that extended beyond the conservation groups that are around. That will create respect and appreciation and make these sites matter and trickle down and make people want to preserve it when they see the value.

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

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

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

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

### 1. Local Historic Property Study Report, 243 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich

Pursuant to CGS §7-147 q (c), on a motion by Ms. Nelson, second by Ms. Burgess, the Historic Preservation Council voted to recommend approval of the proposed ordinance and boundary for the proposed Putnam Cottage (Put's Cottage) / Israel Knapp Tavern, 243 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT as presented in the study report transmitted by the Town of Greenwich on February 26, 2024. Staff recommended approval of this listing.

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

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The task before the Council is to comment on the ordinance and boundaries of this of this study report.

However, the Council's comments are appreciated and vital to the local historic district Commission. The Study Report Committee will take them into account and present them at a public hearing. There have been a couple of these in the last couple meetings and this is a technically complete report. Ms. Dunne is here to just collect any comments about the content or whole process of locally designating a property. Ms. Anne Young was on from the town to answer any questions or concerns.

Ms. Young commented the last time that they presented a local historic study report to the Council was concerning Bruce Park. Council certainly had some very interesting questions, and the Town did incorporate those questions as well as responses into the report. She asked the Council to feel free to ask anything regarding the cottage, because it helps to prepare a much fuller report.

Dr. Glaser added the discussion regarding patriotic societies just needs to be made a little more nuanced and complex. the Daughters of the American Revolution in the past, there's been some, issues with nativism, make that a fuller a little more nuanced and inclusive story rather than just leave it at Patriotic societies and their presence there. Dr Glaser would be happy to provide some resources for that.

Ms. Acly commented, switching from the social to the physical, the architectural technology of the frame and the building seem interesting, a 1710ish construction, but that could be a future source of scholarship to understand and maybe do some dendrochronology and understand a bit more about the architectural history.

Ms. Young added she would like to get some suggestions from the Council, touching on Dr. Glazer's comment. When she was doing research in the deeds, unfortunately some of them have faded quite a bit, some of the words are a bit difficult to determine and one word which would really give a wonderful insight was a 3-letter word. You can make out the word N and the word W, but that vowel could look like an E or an O. She believes dendrochronology can certainly provide some great insight, but also hoping for someone with some type of digital expertise, AI or anything that can really help to determine what letters are being used at that time. It can obviously influence how we look at a new structure that was built in the 1700s according to the deeds or something that has a little bit more history to it.

If any of you have had experience with trying to understand vowels back with 18th century literature, please make her aware.

Ms. Burgess asked if the town has any way to get a high-res scan of the document? Maybe someone in the town has the capability of contrasting within different software so that you can pull out that missing letter and certainly there are people with the expertise in reading this type of script. Ms. Burgess asked Ms. Young to contact her offline for further assistance.

Dr. Horowitz commented he admires this project. On 18th century paleography handwriting, do not go barking up the AI tree. What you want to find is someone who has spent 30 years reading 18th century handwriting, you will find that person at a sort of rare book and manuscript library and bring the document to them and ask for assistance in reading it. Try the William Reese Company in New Haven or the Beinecke Library at Yale and talk to one of their subject matter experts on the 18th century. You will discover someone who all they do is read faded 18th century documents and figure out what the letter is. Do not get seduced by the computer. Go find the expert with the clean reading glasses and they will give you a more definitive answer. Dr. Glaser added information for Ms. Young in the chat.

### **VIII. Archaeological Preserves**

### **IX. Threatened Properties - CEPA Updates**

### **X. Preservation Restrictions**

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

Mr. Kinney reported that the Connecticut legislative session is in full swing.

SHPO is anxiously waiting to see what legislation will be proposed by the Commerce Committee, because of the recently wrapped up SHPO CEPA working group.

We are also tracking bills that involve funding for historic sites related to America's 250<sup>th</sup>, a bill related to the historic homes rehabilitation tax credit, which is administered here at SHPO by Erin Fink, and a potential increase in funding for the Community Investment Act. The CIA is what funds most of our grant programs that are awarded by Council, so we are watching that closely. Hoping that the increase in funding for the CIA will go through.

That would mean more funding that we would be able to send out to our constituents through these processes.

In addition, two members of our staff are, as Mary mentioned earlier, currently attending the Federal Historic Preservation Advocacy Week in Washington, DC that event is hosted by Preservation Action, SHPO and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Offices.

This event features in depth policy training and briefings, tours, networking opportunities, and most importantly, an opportunity to meet with our Connecticut congressional delegation to discuss some ongoing federal presentation policy and any hot topics that are floating around at the federal level that involve our work.

For next month's meeting for the April meeting, Mr. Kinney is going to prepare an updated list of HPC member terms of service. There are some terms expiring this year. There is still one vacancy. Written confirmation for Vice Chairman Butkus' appointment to Chairman is still pending.

Ms. Nelson continues to share her time and expertise very generously and very graciously with us on a very expired term. Mr. Kinney will provide that update at the April meeting.

Moving forward on our training schedule, SHPO would like to do a maybe a lunchtime webinar on SHPO programs for Council. Just an overview and will send out some potential dates for that.

Now that we've had the full launch of ConnCRIS, our GIS system, training will be set up for the Council as well.

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

Mr. Kinney reported on behalf of Ms. Shapiro:

- The museums in total hosted over 20,000 visitors in 2023!
- At the next meeting, Ms. Shapiro will provide a full update on the treatment at **Old New-Gate** for the four-story cell block project that is funded by the Save America's Treasure's Grant.
- Still in resolution negotiations for the ceiling plaster failure at the **Prudence Crandall** House, with luck that will be resolved in the next two weeks.
- Staff received 42 applications for our seasonal positions and candidates will be chosen and interviews will start in the next two weeks.
- Looking forward to a very robust 2024 Museum season with lots of new and expanded programming!

More to share at the April meeting.

## **XIII. Old Business**

## **XIV. New Business**

## **XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies – Jane Montanaro**

Ms. Montanaro reported that the legislative session is ongoing and this Friday there is a hearing about the Community Investment Act, Senate Bill 351.

You can submit testimony or testify in person Friday at 10:30 a.m.

Friday's hearing is with the government Administration Elections Committee and then hopefully later will be in front of the Finance Committee.

This is the first step in a process of trying to get \$5 added to the land transaction fee for the Community Investment Act. This is important funding for Preservation CT. If anyone can support it, that would be greatly appreciated.

We were at the Historic Preservation Round Table yesterday at the Legislative Office Building. Mr. Kinney and the SHPO team presented all the programs and activities of the SHPO to



interested legislators. This is the first step in trying to build a historic preservation caucus at the legislature. Good job, Mr. Kinney, and team.

March 28th at the Keeney Cultural Center in Wethersfield CPA is having its annual Spring Gathering and fundraiser. CPA will be recognizing the contributions of Charlie Jansen for historic preservation and trying to raise much needed funding to pay for the lobbyists that CPA uses. Hope some of you can attend that event as well.

#### **XVI. Public Forum**

#### **XVII. Adjournment**

On a motion by Dr. Glaser, second Ms. Nelson, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Deborah D. Gaston

*Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:  
Wednesday, April 10, 2024 – Meeting Format TBD*