HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL MEETING
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Wednesday, May 6, 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)

MINUTES

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

Absent: Dr. Leah Glaser (arrived at 10am)

Staff: 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

Guests: Ms. Elizabeth Boyce, Ms. Laurie Colgan, Mr. Stefon Danczuk, Ms. Lori Fusco, Ms. Jane Montanaro, Mr. Jordan Sorensen, Ms. Kathy Taylor, and Ms. Renee Tribert

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 none.

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes and Transcripts

A. Minutes – April 1, 2026

On a motion by Ms. Acly, second by Mr. McCoy, the Council voted to approve the April 1, 2026 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. **Supplemental Certified Local Government Grant, Town of Wilton, Feasibility Study the Gilbert and Bennet School Building, Wilton**

On a motion by Mr. Elmore, second by Mr. McCoy, the Historic Preservation Council voted to award a Supplemental Certified Local Government Grant, funded by the Community Investment Account of the State of Connecticut, to the below-listed applicant in the amount shown. All federal and state grant guidelines and 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: The Town of Wilton
Amount: $20,000

Ms. Dunne presented this application. The Town of Wilton requested funding in the amount of $20,000 to obtain the consulting services of a CFR-Qualified Architect/marketing team to prepare a feasibility study for the Gilbert and Bennett School. The applicant has invested a lot of time in the school because it is currently vacant and they would like to explore new uses for the building. There have been a number of condition assessments completed and that information is still currently coming in. An Architect will lead this project, obviously, but they will usually team up with a facilitator that can explore marketable uses for the building, interview stakeholders, and find out what the Town's needs and wants are. Ms. Lori Fusco, Town of Wilton, was on the call to answer any questions or concerns.

Chairman Butkus asked if the non-matching grants are larger than in previous years? While the amount available has been reduced, the scope hasn't changed, right? Ms. Dunne replied, yes, they were higher and they might be again, except that with the limited deposits to the CIA account it isn't certain. SHPO reduced the cap on all our grants. Even the non-match for National Register nominations still caps at $20,000. We were for a while giving them the whole amount.

They have a lot of information on the building from other evaluations. The purpose of the grant that we awarded them was to bring in a preservation architect that could also look at the building through a preservation lens.

Between the previous reports and the one that we're funding, Ms. Dunne believes they will have a good idea of what the building condition is structurally and what it's able to sustain as far as a new use. This feasibility study is sort of their next step, armed with what they know about the building, what needs to be done and what it can structurally sustain. They are hoping that they can get some viable scenarios for reuse of the building including next steps.

Ms. Acly asked for clarity about the different types of grants, if there were conflicts and how the two projects would be coordinated with each other. Ms. Dunne replied SHPO only wants to award one type of grant at a time. This is the same building, and it is sort of the same project. They have a federal grant, which was awarded last month, and then this one, which is the state funded. So that's the Federal Historic Preservation Enhancement grant. And this is the Supplemental CLG grant. So, there's no conflict there and yes, the RFP for the Feasibility Study will reference the Conditions Assessment. She believes that the RFP for the Condition Assessment also said that they were looking to find new uses for the building. So, ideally, they should be concurrently looking for a team to do the Conditions Assessment and the Feasibility Study, which could happen. SHPO must work closely with them to make sure that we don't have a new team coming in using information that they did not gather themselves. Therefore, not needing to repeat work that's already been done or paid for. It is a balancing act, but one that she has been working with the Town on so everything should be okay.

Ms. Acly also asked if there were any unique requirements with an ongoing project, you don't have to go fully out to bid for new consultants. Does that apply here? Ms. Dunne replied that could apply here, yes. If they competitively select a qualified architect under the condition assessment, which they will, they could conceivably, just as we do with the plans and specifications grants, continue to use that Architect. However, that's from SHPO's perspective. The Town may have more stringent procurement requirements.

VI. State Register of Historic Places Nominations

A. Unfinished Action Items

B. New Action Items

1. Listing to State Register of Historic Places, Dyer Farm, 10 Dyer Cemetery Road, Canton

On a motion by Ms. Carnell, second by Ms. Rhodes, the Historic Preservation Council voted to list the Dyer Farmstead, located at 1 Dyer Cemetery Road, Canton, to the State Register of Historic Places.

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

Ms. Wisniewski presented this application. Staff recommended the listing of the Dyer Farmstead, located at 1 Dyer Cemetery Road, Canton, to the State Register of Historic Places under Criterion 1, at the local level, in the area of agriculture, as the farmstead of the Dyer family for four generations, and under Criterion 2, at the local level, in the area of architecture, for the farmhouse specifically as a representative example of a late 18th century vernacular home with mid-19th century alterations. The property maintains most of its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association of a working 19th century farmstead, with the house retaining additional aspects of workmanship and materials. Ms. Renee Tribert and Ms. Jordan Sorenson, both from Preservation Connecticut and authors

of the nomination, as well as the owner, Ms. Lori Colgan, and Town Historian, Ms. Kathy Taylor, were on the call for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Acly questioned what type of stonework the storehouse was made from. She found it interesting to see it in a rural setting. Ms. Wisniewski replied she can look at some mill resources and see where they're coming from with building that structure and then maybe how it was translated here in this area. The property is on a main thoroughfare, so it may be that they wanted to replicate something they have seen before.

Ms. Acly also asked if the Collinsville Mill was connected to the Dyers Mill at all. Ms. Tribert replied, they did work there and some outside labor was from there, but, as far as she knows, that is all. There is a mill in the eastern part of Connecticut that has a similar Ashlar granite construction, but it's larger and it's a real mill with stream and water power. Ms. Acly mentioned there is the residential Jilson House in Willimantic and one in Glastonbury on Hebron Avenue. Chairman Butkus mention there is also the Collinsville Axe Factory that does have that same construction and at least one of their buildings.

Ms. Taylor, the Town Historian, added she was also the Property Manager for the factory buildings for 20 years. She agrees that she has seen a lot of that type of work for foundations. She also reread and realized Dyer helped build part of the factory back when it first started. He also took care of Albany Turnpike Road. Ms. Wisnieski commented they will add that note to relate to the factory and complimented Ms. Acly for noticing this. Ms. Acly asked when they found out the name of the construction to please make her aware.

Dr. Horowitz and Ms. Carnell congratulated the creators of this well put together application.

2. Listing to State Register of Historic Places, Hop River Mills Site, North of 23 Hop River Road, Columbia

On a motion by Mr. McCoy, second by Mr.Elmore, the Historic Preservation Council voted to list the Hop River Mills Site, located north of 23 Hop River Road, Columbia, to the State Register of Historic Places.

(Y-9, N-0, Abstaining-3, Absent-0, Recused-0) (Roll call vote)

Ms. Wisniewski presented this application. Staff recommended approval of listing of the Hop River Mill site located along Hop River Road, Columbia, to the State Register of Historic Places, under Criterion 1, at the local level, in the area of industry, for its continuous 210 years of occupation as manufacturing facilities, as well as Criterion 3, in the area of archaeology, for its potential to yield additional information about the industrial use of the site. The property maintains most of its integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Mr. Stefon Dankzuc, author of the nomination, was on the call to answer any questions or concerns, as was Ms. Cathy Labadia, SHPO Staff Archaeologist, who provided an additional review of archaeological eligibility.

Chairman Butkus asked if technically the property is going to be classified as an archaeological preserve with those types of protections, or is it just the nomination to the Register? Ms. Wisniewski replied, as of right now, this is just listing to the State Register. The Town is discussing whether they would like to pursue the preserve designation as well. They are going to go out to the site next week to do a walk and discuss that and what the restrictions would mean. It seems like that was a major focus, because the buildings aren't still there. For everybody's benefit, on these types of listings, when it's a site that had something on it previously, understanding the differences between it's a contributing resource because it's the site of something that was there in the past. But understanding if an owner happens to own a property that had something there, what level of protection is there.

Ms. Wisniewski added, there is no automatic protection. The State Register is primarily honorary unless there's state or federal funding being utilized. Yes, the preserve provides the strongest means of protection.

Ms. Burgess asked about the workers at the mill. She noticed a great discussion around pages 8, 9, and 10, and was curious as to cultures and backgrounds of folks coming to work in Columbia, and if that should be added. Ms. Wisniewski replied that she will speak with Mr. Danczuk about some additions to Ms. Burgess' point.

Ms. Acly asked about the Hop River Rail Trail. Mr. Danczuk, Preservation Connecticut replied, The Rail Trail is not connected to the site. Ms. Acly noticed in the photo of the raceway exit a large tree sitting right behind the retaining wall, which is not really part of what we're approving or looking at today, but just putting it out there when the town is consulted, that might be a potential danger to that and might be something to consider.

Dr. Sportman commented, she thanked all for bringing this up. More of these sites deserve archaeological attention in Connecticut because they reflect such an important aspect of our local history as industries moved from the small-scale colonial mills, up through the industrial sites, oftentimes just repeatedly building and building upon these same sites creating these incredibly complicated archaeological landscapes. She congratulated everyone who worked on this application for doing a really great job of trying to bring all the tools in the archaeological toolkit together. In many ways, it's been a model for industrial archaeology in the state, which we haven't had a lot of in recent years, as well as to engage people, volunteers, local community members to bear that aspect of history. While this is mostly focused on the industrial archaeology and the actual components of the industrial site over its 200-year use, she believes it would be great if somebody would be interested in bringing in some of the more social aspects of this site and creating a broader narrative to go along with it, along with the things about workers. She was excited to see a site like this coming up for review.

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

1. 649 Howard Avenue – New Haven

Mr. Levine reported that the owners, Cornell Scott Hill, have agreed to a sit-down meeting with the Office of the Attorney General and SHPO for the week of May 18th. They are currently working on another 30-day member moratorium while we have this meeting. SHPO will be setting the stage for a subsequent meeting with the nonprofit arts group, which is now potentially a shepherd to come in and work out a deal. We were poised to make an injunction, but at the moment, the owners are trying to work with us.

2. 956 Main Street – Willimantic

The Office of the Attorney General, SHPO, and structural engineer did a site visit about two weeks ago. The preliminary results from the structural engineer show a lot of integrity issues. There will be a final report, but we got an interim report which stated that if we were to move forward with a preservation project or rehabilitation project, there would be so much lost to stabilize the building that you come to the point of, is it preservation or is it reconstruction because of the loss. The A side sill was completely rotted out. The B side sill was broken throughout the building and was rotted. And of course, the middle of the building is open because the chimney was removed some time ago.

There were some very interesting components of the building. There is a 20-foot summer beam. The plate is like 30 feet of continuous solid wood, and the foundation of the center chimney, because it was built on a ledge, extended all the way to the front of the building, which was very interesting. We will share the final report with everybody. The Office of the Attorney General is not going to move forward with an injunction. We met last week with the owners and talked about what the community had asked for, which is salvage historic materials that we can adaptively reuse in other historic projects. The local historic society is going to walk through and take some artifacts there. There are other interesting elements, for instance, the corner joints are English tie joints. They have the building listed as circa 1890. It's probably 90 years older than that, based on the timber frame construction of the building. They will probably cut off the post and the two plates so that they can have that as an exhibit. The historical society is going to do an interpretive exhibit. Finally, there will be interpretive signage in the lobby of the new hotel when it is completed, discussing the history of this site and the demolition by neglect. We wanted to make sure that that was a component of the interpretive signage.

Chairman Butkus added that at least one of the outcomes should be a controlled demolition so they can salvage key elements. It would have been nice if they had facilitated the entry prior to coming before the Council. Hopefully we can encourage people to follow that route in the future.

X. Preservation Restrictions

XI. Report on State Historic Preservation Office – Jonathan Kinney

Happy Historic Preservation Month! Today is the last day of our state legislative session. We are waiting to see whether House Bill 5508 will be passed today. That bill has been undergone several amendments in the past few weeks. You may remember that the first few measures were related to local commissions and their appeal process, whether municipal projects were subject to their review, etc. Those measures have now been removed and are to be addressed through a legislatively created working group. They are still technically in play, but at least now it is a conversation with those local bodies and commissions to understand their concerns and hopefully address those in a way that will work for the Commissions. Our biggest concern is making sure the right people are appointed to that legislative working group, and we'll advocate, to the best of our ability, and work with our partners to make sure that the Commissions are well represented and have a voice in that conversation.

The other piece of that legislation is the revisions to the commercial tax credit program. We are still working to include some property types that have not previously been eligible, and those are primarily smaller one to four unit properties. So that language is still on the bill, and we will see what happens today. And I'll keep you guys posted as to whether that passes. The revisions, the last revisions will push out the implementation of that change in the tax credit program to next July 1st, if it does pass.

On the federal side, last year's SHPO funding crisis occurred over the summer, as a result of the Notice of Funding Opportunity having been delayed for several months back to the end of July. I am happy to report that the NOFO for Federal Fiscal Year 2026 was released a week ago, Friday. That is great news for SHPOs across the country. We will continue to operate this year using those funds.

The President's Fiscal Year 27 budget proposal does essentially zero out the HPF fund again. We are hopeful that Congress will again refute that proposal and restore that funding, and hopefully increase it in line with advocacy efforts going on in D.C.

Finally, SHPO is sending out a save the date for Thursday, May 28th at noon. We are hoping to put together an hour-long, probably lunchtime webinar unveiling the new statewide historic preservation plan which we've been working on diligently over the last few years here. We are finally at the finish line. We are putting some final touches on it and getting it ready for distribution. We are looking to do just sort of a quick webinar event on that day to unveil it and let people know how they will be able to locate it. We also will be printing hard copies for anyone interested.

XII. Report on Museum Properties – Liz Shapiro

Old New Gate

The museum season has officially kicked off! Sometimes we really start with a bang. Last weekend, we started a scavenger hunt at Old New-Gate Prison, which is run by the Friends of Old New-Gate, who have become really important and highly credible partners in running the site. For those of you who have worked with nonprofit organizations that have a friends group, we are incredibly grateful for all the things that they have accomplished themselves, the partnership that they have offered, and the things that they have allowed us to accomplish that are our goals. New-Gate also hosted this year's Reentry Hall of Change dedication for this year's class of eight people, four men and four women, who have been making contributions to society for over five years, having come out of being incarcerated. There were almost 100 people there this year. And it's a really moving, fabulous event. Things are off to a running start. Also, we are really moving ahead on the stabilization of the four-story cell block over there, including the archaeology. We've just been able to amend the contract that we have, although it hasn't been fully approved yet, but we're hoping we can amend it to get a few more things done while everyone is on site. They are just waiting for the final approval. It is exciting when you see the opportunities and the state can move in real time to address an opportunity that only becomes obvious when you're in the midst of another project. We have a full complement of seasonals for all the museums right now. All the folks at New-Gate this year are returning. So that's also very exciting.

Eric Sloan Museum

It is opening weekend at the Eric Sloan Museum. The weekend before they had the night at the museum for the Friends of the Eric Sloan Museum, which is a special evening with access to a special tour for members of the friends group. We always try to give the friends groups that are active at our museums a little bit of an advantage, like a little perk about being able to access the museums before anyone else can access them during their season. So super happy about what I'm seeing.

Henry Whitfield Museum

Shout out for all of the behind-the-scenes work, and really big accomplishments, to Ms. Beth Burgess who spent the day with our museum team at the Henry Whitfield Museum. We had all museum staff there except for Ms. Bengal who had to be on site at New-Gate with the contractors.

We basically packed up and moved things into the front room of the Henry Whitfield House to prepare for the work that will be happening there this summer and that included even building little rooms within some of the rooms to house and protect some of the larger pieces during the time that these projects are going to be going on. In the biggest shock to all of us, even though the work had been started, there was still an expectation that there would be two full days of work to be done. We were done by about 3 o'clock that day with everything that could be packed up and moved. At this point, it has all been moved out of the house to climate-controlled storage for the time that it will take until the project is complete and we can return the objects home. The museum is going to be open. Entry is going to be half price. There are going to be multiple free days, but in fact, it's a very different experience. In some ways, it's a much more interactive

experience that the visitor is getting because they see the building not quite empty, but pretty much empty. We can focus on the building. And it is also allowing staff to be creative as a team to think about what we want to bring back into the museum when we reopen and what are the opportunities? Because, for those of you who have been there, you know that things look static for a long time, even though the interpretive story has changed. We did have an opportunity here to not bring everything back, which is so exciting. Ms. Burgess is smiling, because she was in many of these conversations. We were running around and cleaning things that hadn't been cleaning prior to packing them and so she had a lot of sort of small conversations and then some large group conversations about when you see something that looks different, all of a sudden, sometimes your imagination opens up to actually be able to envision a different way of moving forward. She is very excited about the opportunities that we're going to see at the Henry Whitfield House over the next year. As always, we welcome you to visit any of the museums and the calendars of events are all posted on the website. Let her know when you are going to be there, she is there often as well.

XIII. Old Business

XIV. New Business

XV. Liaison with Public & Private Agencies - Jane Montanaro

Ms. Montanaro began her report wearing her Connecticut Preservation Action hat for a moment and saying thank you to Mr. Kinney and the SHPO staff for all their assistance this legislative session and providing technical guidance for the numerous bills that were coming our way and the bills that we were trying to move forward. Thank you to them for always being available and for helping us get the legislation right the way that we needed it to be. To all the Council members who provided input and testimony. Thank you very much.

Wearing her Preservation Connecticut hat, Ms. Montanaro reported that they are gearing up for the annual Preservation Awards tomorrow evening. They expect to be busting at the seams with capacity, so if you haven't registered yet, please do so. PCT is looking forward to seeing many of you there and quite a few of our Council members are going to be receiving awards and on project teams. It is going to be a great evening.

XVI. Public Forum

XVII. Adjournment

On a motion Ms. Burgess, second by Ms. Acly, this meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Deborah D. Gaston

Next regularly scheduled Council meeting:
Wednesday, June 3, 2026 – Meeting Format TBD