

MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
Friday, March 22, 2024, 9:30 a.m.
In-Person at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford and
Teleconference via Microsoft Teams (Recorded)**

Present: Mr. Barlow, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards (Chair), Mr. Herzan (Teams), Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani, Dr. Bucki (Teams, listening only)

Absent: Dr. Feder, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

Staff: Jenny Scofield (presenting), Cory Atkinson, Jonathan Kinney, Kevin Berger (Teams), Mary Dunne (Teams), Catherine Labadia (Teams), Elizabeth Shapiro (Teams), Marena Wisniewski (Teams)

Guests:

IV.A.1: Representative Mitch Bolinsky, First Selectman Jeff Capeci, Derek Hansen (Teams), Major Erich Heinonen, Jillian Miller (Teams), Mathew Wilkinson

IV.A.2: Michele Boyd (Teams), Mary Falvey (Teams), Toni Gold (Teams), Janice Newton, Nathaniel Schlundt (Teams), Greig Shearer (Teams), Jim Venneman (Teams)

IV.A.3: Stefan Danczuk, Sister Lany Jo Smith

General: Patrice Barrett (Teams) Christine Nelson, Evan Williams (Teams)

I. Call to Order

Mr. Edwards confirmed a quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Ms. Scofield provided the hybrid meeting procedures.

III. Approval of the December 1, 2023 meeting minutes

No edits to the minutes were heard. Ms. Scofield acknowledged that some minor corrections were received by email.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Barlow, to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2023 meeting, as amended (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani

IV. Action Items

A. Completed National Register Nominations

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the State Historic Preservation Review Board (SRB) and by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff.

1. Fairfield Hills Historic District, Newtown (Criteria A and C, state level)

Ms. Scofield stated that the nomination is for the Fairfield Hills Hospital Campus, which was developed between 1933 and 1956. The hospital closed in 1995. It was listed in the State Register of Historic Places in 1987 and a draft National Register nomination was prepared in the late 1990s but never processed. Staff recommends the district for listing at the state level of significance under Criterion A for Social History and Health/Medicine and Criterion C for architecture. The period of significance is from 1931, when construction began, through 1969, when the patient organization system changed to the geographic unit system.

Ms. Scofield stated the nomination was initiated by the Town and Winn Development. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent 30 days before the meeting to the Town of Newtown, Winn Development, and state agency property owners, which are the Department of Administrative Services and the CT Military Department. The nomination was posted on the website during the noticing period. The district boundary contains five property parcels, which are all publicly owned by the Town and State of Connecticut. One letter was received from the CT Military Department, which includes suggestions for corrections. Newtown is not a CLG.

Ms. Scofield acknowledged that several guests were present in-person and online.

Mr. Edwards invited public comments.

Jeff Capeci introduced himself as the First Selectman for the Town of Newtown. He is very familiar with this property, which is 180 acres in the heart of the town. The town has been working to redevelop the property and have done a lot of remediation. It is not financially viable without the historic tax credits that would come with designation. Two buildings will immediately be developed, and several others have potential. It went to referendum a couple years ago and the concept [of National Register nomination] was passed by the community.

Mitch Bolinsky introduced himself as the State Representative of the 106th district. He has served the town in that capacity for 12 years and had volunteered in town for 24 years. The beauty and character of Newtown attracted him. Fairfield Hills is at the center of the community and the buildings are of incredible historic character; the architecture of the campus takes your breath away. To see the buildings unused since the hospital was closed in heartbreaking; not taking advantage of these assets would be devastating. The Town acquired the property from the State in 2004. The economic viability of the property is of significance. Representative Bolinsky expressed strong support for the nomination and ability to leverage the buildings for the future of the community and to create opportunities to diversify the community with affordable housing.

Major Erich Heinonen of the CT Military Department and CT Army National Guard introduced himself and Mathew Wilkinson. They submitted a letter regarding the application. The Military Department has control of an 82-acre parcel in Fairfield Hills. In general, the Department is not in opposition to the application in full. They recognize the development opportunity for the town and the historic buildings. He stated that the CT Military Department opposes the inclusion of their 82 acres in the boundary due to a long-term plan to build an Army National Guard readiness center to provide emergency response in that area of the state, which is lacking. The proposed boundary includes 6 of their buildings, including 2 that are misidentified in the application. Acquiring state property to build the facility has been elusive. They have been applying for federal military construction funds through a long, competitive process. It usually takes about 10 years to plan the project and get the funding. Including their 82 acres in the National Register nomination would probably eliminate the project because of the competition of federal funds. Building the readiness

center would benefit Newtown; there would be a much larger contingent of soldiers and airmen there, which would help the local economy.

Derek Hansen introduced himself as a Project Director at Winn Development, the designated developer of housing [in buildings at Fairfield Hills]. He thanked the Board for their attention to the nomination.

State Representative Mitch Bolinsky stated that he was not aware that the nomination could affect the readiness center plans. He expressed support for whatever carve-out is necessary to allow the town portion of the nomination to move forward.

Mr. Edwards commented that there are tens of thousands of National Register sites in Connecticut. Cotemporary architecture has been a part of every community in Connecticut; there is Nothing wrong with new construction. It has to be presented in a way that is applicable to this unique setting. It does not mean you have to build a Colonial Revival style building.

Jill Miller introduced herself as an architectural historian at PAL and nomination consultant. The campus evolved over decades with buildings of different styles and uses. The boundaries encompass every aspect of the patients' lives – more than the residential areas and treatment center. Aerial photos, historic documents and records are used when dating a building and determining the boundary. The piggery appeared to have an addition put on around 2005. state

Mr. Edwards invited SRB comments.

Mr. Barlow commented on the “cottage style” development; the first [local] institutional use was the Village for Families and Children in Hartford. He requested clarification regarding the mention of Olmsted consulting on the design of the Hartford Institute of Living on p. 8-30; Olmsted and Vaux actually prepared a plan.

Mr. Barlow asked what the WWII Memorial Building by Crabtree in New Britain is (p. 8-50). He also noted that either the reference or image is off for Figure 9. The plan shown does not look like the Olmsted plan and Vaux had died by then.

Ms. Panjwani requested that the locations of the tunnels and demolished buildings be marked on Figure 2. She also asked for a photo of the elevator in the storehouse building mentioned on p. 17, be added, if access is possible. Mention the new uses and present conditions of all buildings, briefly.

Mr. Herzan stated that the nomination is an informative overview of mental health treatment at Fairfield Hills. He noted that the term Neoclassical is broad and there are debates about what it refers to. For this era, a preference is to call the style Neoclassical Revival (rather than Neoclassical that refers to Italy). He suggested that the consultant search for the terms Classical Revival, Neoclassical, Neoclassical Revival and choose one term to use – preferably Neoclassical Revival. He also noted a typo on p. 8-42 (preceded instead of proceeded).

Ms. Scofield acknowledged receipt of comments from an absent SRB member. Those included a note that the reference to the cottage plan was a bit early; they followed a different plan first. Also, note the formality of the landscape; it was not a designed landscape.

Mr. Edwards requested for the locations of the underground tunnels to be shown on a map. He shared that in Jefferson's architecture, tunnels were used as a service route intentionally not visible above ground; he asked if patients were moving below ground.

Mr. Edward remarked on the significance of the underground passageways/tunnels. There is no documentation showing where they are; include at least a site plan showing the extent of the tunnels. In Jefferson's architecture, he used tunnels as a way of service that wasn't visible above the ground. Here, the patients that were in transit were not in sight. The nomination documents the history of this major institution; the history of the institution should be available for the public. There was a major change in the way mental illness has become more of a public concern and there is an architectural expression of it.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll stated that the labels are hard to read on Figures 2 and 3 and requested clarification. She also requested editing of a few awkward sentences.

Mr. McMillan discussed the waves of development mentioned on p.7-7 (1930s, 1940s). He suggested using a figure to show waves of development and how the campus grew over time. St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington D.C. is similar to Fairfield Hills, including the tunnels. It was built in two phases, after the Civil War and in the 1930s. Mr. Edwards noted that Walter Crabtree would have known what was in the works for the 1930s expansion. Mr. McMillan noted that the tunnels at St. Elizabeth's Hospital were used for utilitarian purposes and had a small track railroad. He stated that information about the tunnels could speak to how the hospital operated.

Mr. Barlow requested inclusion of the site plan of the campus, as designed. Ms. Scofield noted that a plan by Crabtree may not exist.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Ms. Panjwani to recommend the Fairfield Hills Historic District for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani

2. Bloomfield Avenue Church, Hartford (Criterion C, state level)

Ms. Scofield introduced the nomination as a Victor Lundy-designed Modern church constructed initially between 1962 and 1964. The period of significance extends to 1968, when the basement was completed according to original plans. Staff recommends the property for listing under Criterion C for Architecture, with a state level of significance. Victor Lundy is a skilled modernist architect working in an expressionist style. He is using skillful sculptural forms and new materials to complete his designs.

Ms. Scofield stated the nomination was initiated by the Unitarian Society. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent to. The CLG response from the Hartford Historic Preservation Commission is pending [later received as positive]. The nomination was posted on the SHPO website during the noticing period.

Ms. Scofield acknowledged that several guests were present, including the consultants from BCA, the Hartford Preservation Alliance, and members of the Unitarian Society.

Mr. Edwards invited public comments.

Toni Gold introduced herself as the Unitarian Society of Hartford and the chair of the nomination subcommittee of the Buildings and Grounds committee. The nomination elicited enormous support from the congregation. There is a celebratory event planned for October. There is an increased knowledge of architecture, historic preservation, and architectural history.

Mary Falvey of Hartford Preservation Alliance requested approval of the nomination. She stated that the nomination was a collaborative effort; the society came together as a community to move this forward and benefited from a grant from SHPO. BCA included members of the Society along the way. The nomination recognizes a significant and unique local resource and contributes to the scholarship of Victor Lundy's work.

Michele Boyd of Building Conservation Associates (BCA) introduced herself as the consultant along with Nathaniel Schlundt and Shelby Schrank. They appreciate collaborating with the Unitarian Society, HPA, and SHPO. The meeting house exemplifies Victor Lundy's virtuosity of space-making, innovative use of materials, and treatment of light. She acknowledged the Society's stewardship of the building.

Mr. Edwards invited SRB comments. He shared that Ed Richardson [mentioned on p.8-21] had also served as chairman for the restoration of the Old State House and completed the state's tree survey.

Mr. Herzan remarked on Lundy's recognition for the project. He recalled that this building was featured in a progressive 1974 exhibit at deCordova Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts, called "New Architecture New England". Its significance was recognized shortly after its completion as representative of the region; it was recognized out of state for its architectural merit. Ava Jacob authored the exhibit catalog (available on bookfinder.com). It should be referenced in the bibliography. Lundy was well covered by the press at the time.

Mr. Edwards suggested advancing the level of significance of the nomination to national. There are many architectural publications that recognized the work (already included in the nomination).

Mr. Barlow asked whether the roof leaking issue should be considered when evaluating the architectural quality of the building. Mr. Edwards responded that roofing technology was still hot tar at the time and that would be an acceptable treatment. They had a special nylon roof that was an innovation; no one knew if it would work or not. Mr. Barlow asked if the fact that the roof doesn't work should be considered in conversations about architectural integrity. Mr. McMillan said that it speaks to a certain level of advancement in the fact that no one had done it before. Mr. Barlow agreed that it is important that Lundy was pushing the limits, especially if it was followed and perfected.

Mr. Edwards added that at the time to the church was built, the term "catenary architecture" referred to structures made with steel cables. Frei Otto did a show at MoMA of catenary structures built in Germany. Roofs that move wasn't normal; the product development is important. By the time Saarinen designed the skating rink [at Yale], the limitations of catenary structure were known. There was a progression of knowledge.

David Newton, head of buildings and grounds for the church, shared that the roof leaking has been corrected. Since the leaking stopped, the interior of the sanctuary has been finished in a manner acceptable to Lundy. A lighting system was installed that shows off the remarkable ceiling rays so they can be fully appreciated over the sanctuary circular space.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Edwards to recommend the Bloomfield Avenue Church for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani

3. D. and H. Scovil Industrial Historic District, Newtown (Criteria A and D, state level)

Ms. Scofield introduced the nomination as a discontinuous linear district of remaining D. and H. Scovil Company mill locations along the Candlewood Brook. They manufactured eye hoes. The period of significance extends from 1849, the date of the first forge (and a contributing site) to 1948, which is the end of management by the Scovil family. There are 12 contributing resources and 4 non-contributing resources. Mapping and counting of the landscape components were completed over a year. Staff recommends the district for listing under Criteria A and D in the categories of Industry and Archaeology. In terms of the archaeology, this is a large land area strung out along Candlewood Brook. There is one site with enough integrity to be contributing; some areas aren't investigated enough, and some are altered.

Ms. Scofield stated the nomination was initiated by a developer for the town. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent 30 days before the meeting to property owners. The district includes five property parcels owned by three owners. Haddam is not a CLG. No letters were received in response to the nomination.

Ms. Scofield acknowledged guests present for the nomination.

Mr. Edwards invited public comments.

Sister Lany Jo Smith introduced herself as an Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Director of the Retreat Center on one of the Scovil sites, owned since 1964. They have maintained the integrity of the 46 acres that they own. Bricks from the local area were used in an addition to the building. Inside, there is a display of Scovil artifacts, including a sign and gun barrels. They have tried to maintain the beauty and integrity of the property.

Christine Nelson introduced herself as a CCSU student and former vice-chair of the EDC in Haddam. Although this is a discontinuous district, members of the community still associate these structures with their historic uses.

Mr. Edwards invited SRB comments.

Mr. McMillan noted that this is a good nomination.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll remarked on the adaptability of moving from hoes to gun rods during the Civil War fascinating. Rich nomination, including historic photos of workers and the ads.

Mr. Herzan stated that the district epitomizes the classic resourcefulness of small-scale family industries in Connecticut in the nineteenth century with some specialized product developed. He also noted a typo on p. 8-30 (flood event).

Mr. Edwards shared that he was intrigued by fast moving water coming from a height into CT River; each mill had a different way of handling water management. They got better at figuring out how to use the water as a power source. Introduce a summary paragraph of waterpower use and technological improvements over time. What was the evolution of the technology.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Herzan to recommend the D. and H. Scovil Industrial Historic District for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani

V. Discussion

No items were discussed.

VI. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VII. SHPO Staff Report

No staff report was provided.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Ms. Dyer-Carroll to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 a.m.