

DRAFT MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
Friday, June 13, 2025, 9:30 a.m.
In-Person at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford and
Teleconference via Microsoft Teams (Recorded)**

Present: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki (Teams), Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan (Teams), Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders (Teams), Mr. Wigren (Chair)

Absent: Dr. Feder, Ms. Panjwani

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

Guests:

IV.A.1 Violet Johnson, Laura Kline

IV.A.2 Georgette Miller, Renee Tribert, Stacey Vairo, Wendy Walker

IV.B.1 Beth Ackley, Dennis Kern, Jakob Koch, Brad Schide, Philip Walker

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wigren confirmed a quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. He described the Board's role and mentioned how decisions are made using the National Register Criteria.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Ms. Scofield provided the hybrid meeting procedures.

III. Approval of the March 21, 2025, meeting minutes

Minor edits to the minutes were heard.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. McMillan, to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2025, meeting, as amended (Y-5, N-0, Abstained-1).

Board members voting yes: Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

Board members abstaining: Mr. Barlow

[Dr. Bucki joined the meeting]

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. Antone DeSant Houses, New London (Criterion A, State Level)

Ms. Scofield summarized that the property contains two Greek Revival buildings on one parcel built for whaler Antone DeSant ca. 1840 for mixed use as his home, rental, and business. The buildings were each elevated one story between 1884 and 1891; one of the buildings has a curved wall that conforms to the contour of the brook originally adjacent to the property, which had a history of flooding. Staff recommend the property for listing under Criterion A at the state level in the category of Ethnic Heritage/Social History for its association with Cape Verdean mariner Antone DeSant and his family, as an example of socioeconomic trend of multi-generational land ownership enabled through income generated through maritime activity. The period of significance is c. 1840 when DeSant purchased the property, through 1954, when his daughter Julia died.

The nomination was initiated by New London Landmarks in collaboration with the owner and was completed using a SHPO grant. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent to the owner, New London Landmarks, and City of New London mayor and Development Division. No CLG response or letters were received in response to the nomination. Violet Johnson of New London Landmarks, and Laura Kline, consultant, attended the meeting digitally in support of the nomination.

Mr. Wigren invited public comments.

Violet Johnson introduced herself as the Executive Director of New London Landmarks. The DeSant Houses are unique architecturally and historically. The nomination captures important Black whaling history, which is central to the City, but there are not a lot of structures marked in recognition.

Mr. Wigren invited SRB comments.

Ms. Saunders stated the nomination is fascinating. She requested editing of the duplicative phrases on p. 8-13, which reference the same statistic (735 ships out of 900). The second reference may be incorrect.

Mr. Wigren stated that he is glad to learn more about this curved building, the Cape Verdean history, and an earlier period of Black immigration. He noted that you hear a lot about Black families not creating generational wealth [in history] and this is proving an important exception. He requested improvement of the floor plans, which are hard to understand. They could be drawn by hand if needed.

Mr. Herzan stated that he was impressed by this nomination and was pleased that the scope of the National Register is being increasingly broadened to include minority sites.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll suggested checking the mention of the 1840s and the 1850 census on p. 8-16; it is mentioned that the DeSants started a family in 1840s and had a 10-year-old son in 1850.

Mr. McMillan stated that the nomination is well-written and an interesting history. He requested that association be added to and discussed in the integrity statement.

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second by Mr. Barlow, to recommend the DeSant Houses for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

Mr. Wigren recused himself from Items IV.A.2 and IV.A.3, which were written by Preservation Connecticut, and left the room. Mr. Herzan assumed the role of chair.

2. Ezekial Beardsley/David Hare House and Studio, Roxbury (Criterion A, state level; Criterion C, local)

Ms. Scofield summarized that the property has a Greek Revival House built c. 1835 for Ezekial Beardsley; and was continually used by artists starting in 1941. There is a contributing 1941 freestanding art studio; and three non-contributing resources including two barns built in 2019 on the footprint of older barns; and a pool. Staff recommends the property for listing under Criterion A at the state level for Art and Criterion C at the local level for architecture. Under A, the property was used as a creative retreat, gathering space and residence starting with photographer/sculptor David Hare (in 1941 (with wife Jacqueline Lambda) and Arshile Gorky. Litchfield County is one of the clusters of creatives in Connecticut. Illustrator and painter Robert Kuhn also lived and worked there from 1950 to the 1990s. Under Criterion C, it is a vernacular example of side-hall Greek Revival House by a local builder and Beardsley family member. The period of significance is c. 1835 under Criterion C and jumps to 1941-1975 for the artist association. It ends at the age cutoff.

The nomination was initiated by the property owner. Notice of the meeting was sent to the owner, Town of Roxbury First Selectman, and Roxbury Historic District Commission (HDC). The CLG response was positive and a letter of support was received from the HDC. Renee Tribert and Stacey Vairo, consultants, and Georgette Miller and Wendy Walker of the Roxbury HDC attended the meeting in support of the nomination.

Mr. Herzan invited public comments.

Wendy Walker from the Historic District Commission stated that the HDC is enthusiastic about the artist connection and noted that Litchfield Hills are still like that; that was probably the genesis of it. The HDC is also excited about the Beardsleys; there are four Beardsley family Houses starting in 1750 within a mile of this property. They want to document those properties and support this nomination.

Mr. Herzan invited SRB comments.

Mr. Barlow commented that the property deserves to be listed. He requested clarification of the caption in Figure 13 (circle of friends?)

Ms. Saunders asked about the ganged windows mentioned on p. 8; she assumed they were a 20th century construction efficiency economical choice. She asked whether they pre-date the 20th century. Ms. Tribert responded that the windows were part of a rehab completed in the 20th c.; the back of the house was modified. Ms. Saunders suggested a separation of sentences to clarify.

Mr. McMillan stated that the nomination is fascinating and well-written. He noted the misspelling of Joan Miro on p. 8-15 (Joan, not Jean). He discussed the solarized photograph by Hare shown in Figure 5 – Man Ray invented or championed that technique; he asked if there is a connection to Lamba. Ms. Vairo responded that Lamba had influence on Man Ray.

Mr. McMillan asked how you identify waterpower-sawn joists; Cathy Labadia responded that water-sawn marks are up and down movements at even intervals.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested clarification of “they” at the top of p.8-16.

Mr. Herzan suggested adding mention of the studio on the line for Architectural Classification. He recommended changing the phrasing of “under Hare’s stewardship” on p. 8-14 to residency.

Dr. Bucki provided a correction of the misspelling of Heman Beardsley on p. 8-20.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Ms. Saunders, to recommend the Ezekial Beardsley/David Hare House for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-1).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders

Board members abstaining: Mr. Wigren

3. Vincent J. and Susannah K. Scully House, Woodbridge (Criterion B, national; Criterion C, state)

Ms. Scofield summarized that the nomination is for a mid-20th century Modern house designed by and built for architectural historian Vincent Scully and his family in 1950. The property is nominated under the Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern Residences in Connecticut Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) accepted by NPS in 2010. There are four contributing resources including the house, garage, car shelter, and landscape/site. Staff recommends the property for listing at the national level under Criterion B, for its association with Vincent Scully in the category of Architecture. Scully influenced the practice of architectural history and development of American Architecture during second half of 20th c.

It is also recommended under Criterion C for Architecture at the state level as an example of the “Box” type of modernist house defined in the MPDF. It has an open interior inspired by Johnson’s Glass House and diagonal sheathing inspired by the Breuer House II. Scully also designed furniture for the house like Frank Lloyd Wright; he was a proponent of Wright’s work. The period of significance is 1950, when the house was constructed until 1965 when Vincent Scully moved out and deeded his interest in the house to his wife.

The nomination was initiated by the property owners (Vincent Scully’s sons). Notice was also sent to the Woodbridge First Selectman and Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society. Woodbridge is not a CLG and no letters were received in response to the nomination.

Mr. Herzan invited public comment. None were heard.

Mr. Herzan invited SRB comment.

Mr. McMillan requested that the photos and figures be organized in order of how they are cited in the document. He also suggested that the integrity statement include an explanation of how workmanship is conveyed for the house, because there is no ornament. He asked what the workmanship is for this house.

Mr. Barlow stated that he was intrigued by the Wright connection. He asked that more information about the dismissal of Wright's plan be added, other than that it was too expensive, and if there was any correspondence about that. He requested documentation of the ornamental pool and tree allée with a photograph [or other means].

Dr. Bucki asked how the pergola (cupola) design came about because it seems unusual for a modernist house. Ms. Scofield answered that Scully was studying lots of themes in architecture at the same time and traveled. He incorporated those ideas into house and spoke about his influences in his publications. The cupola design was inspired by Borromini.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested that the photo citations run consecutively for readability.

Mr. McMillan stated that the nomination was well-written. He shared that it was refreshing to read about the exuberance about building the interior walls.

Mr. Herzan noted that it is wonderful to have this property connected to the thematic group; this is an important addition to the collection of Modern houses in Connecticut and Scully was an important part of the movement.

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Ms. Dyer-Carroll, to recommend the Vincent J. and Susannah K. Scully House for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-6, N-0, Abstained-1).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders

Board members abstaining: Mr. Wigren

Mr. Wigren was invited back into the room and resumed the role of Chair.

B. Changes to National Register Listed Property

St. Peter's Church, 98 Franklin Square, New Britain (New Britain Downtown Historic District)

Mr. Wigren provided an overview. The SRB reviews whether a property still meets the criteria that qualified it for nomination and whether it has integrity, meaning whether it has been altered or changed over time. He summarized the definition of integrity. Mr. Wigren clarified that districts are places of overall significance comprising individual elements that may not be eligible by themselves, but when taken together, contribute to the significance of the district. He stated that this is an advisory opinion that does not formally change the National Register status of the property. The SRB is asked to evaluate whether the property known as St. Peter's Church, located at 98 Franklin Square, New Britain, continues to contribute to the Downtown New Britain Historic District because it is proposed for demolition.

Ms. Scofield stated that the property owner was notified of this agenda item one week before the meeting by mail and email, in accordance with the SRB Policy statement. The attorney representing the owner shared a condemnation order and structural engineer's report for the property, which was

provided to the SRB. Philip Walker, representing proponents who wish to save the church from demolition is in attendance.

Marena Wisniewski of SHPO summarized the documentation of the property in the nomination and information packet provided by SHPO. The Downtown New Britain Historic District was listed on the National Register on May 3, 2016, under Criterion A and C as the historic commercial center of one of Connecticut's most prominent industrial cities and for its concentration of high-style nineteenth through mid-twentieth century commercial and civic architecture that developed in correlation with the city's industrial economy. The church was designated as a contributing resource at the time of the listing. There were four structures on the parcel at the time of listing; however, only St. Peter's Church is under consideration for demolition.

The City of New Britain has a 180-day demolition delay ordinance, which much be enacted by the Historic District Commission. At the February 24, 2025 regularly scheduled meeting, the Commission did not enact a demolition delay for the property. Currently, SHPO has received several letters in support of preventing demolition. A private individual has sought to prevent demolition by invoking the Protection Act on their own.

Mr. Wigren called for public comment.

Violet Johnson of New London Landmarks commented that she is familiar with this church. As an outsider walking through New Britain, the church stands out. She supports this [maintaining the contributing status of the church to the district].

Philip Walker introduced himself as counsel for Franklin Square Preservation Society, the plaintiff of the action pending in the Connecticut Superior Court in New Britain. They are seeking to prevent the demolition of the church. The building retains its character-defining features, which qualify it as a contributing structure in the district. They will have their own engineering consultant inspect it and submit a report, potentially around the end of July.

Dennis Kern introduced himself as a parishioner of St. Peter's Church and shared some history. The church was founded in 1873 by German immigrants who came to New Britain to work in the factories. The basement was completed in 1890 and the superstructure was completed in the French Gothic style in 1900. A pastor from Belgium spoke both French and German; French Canadians joined the church because of the language. The church thrived for many decades. In 1936, stained glass windows were imported from the Franz Mayer studio in Munich, Germany and those still adorn the church. The parishioners of the church object to the demolition and feel the engineering report provided by the owner is deficient in terms of its analysis. There is no evidence of exterior structural issues. They have hired another engineer. They were told to stay out of the church 1.5 to 2 years ago. The church is a highlight of the district and you can see the spire from all over New Britain.

Jakob Koch introduced himself as a member of the church. There have not been any changes to the church since 2016 [date of the nomination]. Jakob shared that the building has been the same since he emigrated from Germany in 1953. In the past 5 or 10 years, the owners neglected to make corrections. For example, the downspouts were disconnected long before the storm damage mentioned in the structural report. The age of the deterioration was caused by the disconnection. The parishioners asked for them to be reconnected.

Brad Schide of Preservation Connecticut stated that he wrote a letter to SHPO. The structural report was flawed and led to the city's unsafe building notice. The temporary injunction will allow time for an alternate report.

Mr. Wigren called for SRB comment.

Mr. McMillan stated that the building appears unchanged since the 2016 nomination. It is an anchor point in the heart of downtown New Britain. There is nothing that detracts from what made it historically significant as part of the district.

Dr. Bucki commented that the church still contributes to the historic district and is a magnificent structure.

Mr. Barlow commented that he knows the area well; the church is contributing to the Franklin Square area. He did not find the engineering report compelling – there are too many questions.

Mr. Herzan shared that he feels strongly that the church deserves another chance; it is not only an architectural landmark, but is integrally woven into the 19th and 20th century history of New Britain. It would be sorely missed if it was gone.

Mr. Wigren addressed the mention of 36 CFR 67.5 from the owner’s attorney (federal regulations pertaining to the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program). He noted that the City’s notice of unsafe structure says you need to demolish the building or repair the damage – it does not require demolition.

Mr. McMillan noted that there is a difference between historic integrity and condition.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Ms. Saunders, to confirm the contributing status of 98 Franklin Square to the Downtown New Britain National Register Historic District (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

V. Discussion

The SRB discussed how the confirmation that the church contributes to the Downtown New Britain Historic District is part of the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act process; the Board recommendation can be considered by the court.

VI. New Business

Mr. Wigren mentioned that the SRB will review the bylaws at the next regular meeting in September. He also noted the passage of an increase in the fee collection on real estate transfers, which generates the CIA fund.

VII. SHPO Staff Report

Jonathan Kinney provided an update about SHPO’s current federal funding situation. FY25 funds have not been released and the president’s FY26 budget proposes zeroing out all federal funding for SHPOs, THPOs and grant programs. Five staff are paid through SHPO’s annual allotment of the Federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). Mr. Kinney expressed the seriousness of the situation; some states have already laid off staff. SHPO is in close contact with Connecticut’s federal delegation. SHPO is out of FY24 funds and switched over to CIA funds, using that to pay 8 staff, instead of just 3. 10% of SHPO’s CIA funds can be used for administration/staff. That buys time; SHPO will have no funding as of September. There may be a special session in the state legislature to universally address the federal funding shortfalls. Mr. Kinney acknowledged

the positive news about the CIA increase and noted that it is not expected to cover any additional SHPO staff positions.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Barlow, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:45 a.m. by unanimous vote.