

MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut
Plaza Level, Meeting Room E (North Building)
Friday, September 20, 2019, 9:30 a.m.**

Present: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

Absent: Dr. Feder, Ms. Sutton

Staff: Jenny Scofield, Marena Wisniewski

I. Call to Order

Mr. Edwards called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Copies of the public comment procedures were available at the sign-in table and announced by Mr. Edwards.

III. Approval of the June 21, 2019 meeting minutes

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Wigren to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2019 meeting (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

After the motion, Board members requested minor corrections to the minutes.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Wigren to reopen discussion of the minutes of the June 21, 2019 meeting (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

Ms. Scofield recorded the requests for minor corrections.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Wigren to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2019 meeting as amended (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

IV. Action Items

A. Completed National Register Nominations

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

Ms. Scofield reported that for the nominations on this agenda, the property owners were notified by mail and other interested parties were notified by email of the pending nomination, 30 days

prior to the meeting. The nominations were posted on the SHPO website and available for download during the noticing period.

1. East Haven High School (Criterion A, local)

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Herzan to list the East Haven High School on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-8, N-0, Abstained= 0).

Staff recommended the East Haven High School for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the category of Education. The building served as the town's first high school and was designed with capacity for classroom space related to curriculum for various career paths. The period of significance proposed in the nomination is the construction date of 1936 through 1969, the 50-year age cut-off.

Ms. Scofield reported that the property is still owned by the Town of East Haven. Notice of the SRB meeting was directly mailed to the Mayor, developer of the property, and East Haven Historical Society 30 days before the meeting. The Town of East Haven is not a Certified Local Government (CLG). Three letters in support of the nomination were received from the Mayor, Winn Development, and Columbus House. No letters of objection were received. Emily Dominijanni of MHA attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination.

Mr. Edwards invited the public to comment on the nomination. Mr. Adam Stein of Winn Development Company spoke in support of the nomination. He stated that Winn Development has worked with the Town of East Haven for five years and responded to the RFP to redevelop the school building. The project will involve state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. The building was vacant for about ten years and will now serve as housing for residents aged 50 years or older. Mr. Stein expressed appreciation for the availability of the state historic rehabilitation tax credit program. Mr. Herzan commented that it is good to know that the tax credits make a difference.

Mr. Edwards invited the SRB to comment on the nomination. Mr. Herzan requested that the nomination include the names of the architects of the school's additions. Ms. Dominijanni responded that the architect for the 1964 additions is known.

Mr. Herzan asked if the gym is a separate building and if the town will still use it after the development project. Ms. Dominijanni responded that yes, the pool in this space will still be used by the community.

The SRB discussed potential significance under Criterion C for architecture. Mr. Herzan asked why architecture was not proposed as a category of significance. Ms. Dominijanni explained that in consultation with SHPO staff, SHPO recommended that the argument under Criterion C was not strong, particularly as an important example of the Colonial Revival style. Mr. Wigren stated that a Criterion C argument could be made based on the design of classroom space for specific curriculum. He asked if any changes in curriculum are reflected in the design of the additions. Ms. Dominijanni responded that she did not find this information because town's school records were temporarily inaccessible for this time period.

In discussion of design, Mr. Edwards noted that the elegant historic drawing of the façade suggests that the design was originally intended as a more sensitive expression of the Colonial Revival aesthetic, but that it was possibly redesigned because of the budget. The as-built design has the portico smashed into the façade.

Mr. Edwards requested that the construction dates of each section of the building be added to the images showing the layout of the building. Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested that a photo key be added to the nomination.

Mr. Wigren requested that the terminology on p. 7-6 be changed from dentils to modillions. Also, you don't need to say engaged pilasters. He noted that the capitals are a variant of those on the Tower of the Winds in Athens, Greece.

Dr. Bucki commented that the presentation of the curriculum is fascinating. Under the Criterion A discussion, she would like to know the ethnicity of those in the neighborhood and those attending the school. Dr. Bucki noted that there is an important transition in the socioeconomics of working families during the early 1920s. Up to this time it was still common for children to leave schools after eighth grade to contribute to income generation for the family. In the 1920s, the "Commercial Track" of education is a trend, allowing native-born working families to aspire to middle class status. Nativist sentiment occurred during this time. Stephen Lasonde's book, *Learning to Forget: Schooling and Family Life in New Haven's Working Class, 1870-1940* includes information about immigrant children and education, New Haven schools from WWI to the 1930s and what the commercial training track is. The SRB discussed that when urban renewal hit Wooster Square in New Haven, some of the Italian community moved to East Haven. In terms of nativist sentiment and advancement to the middle class, Dr. Bucki noted that oral histories showed Jewish women in the 1930s were not often hired as secretaries.

Mr. Herzan stated that a number of buildings in East Haven are Colonial Revival style. This design was part of a cohesive town identity. Refer to the architectural survey for East Haven; the Colonial Revival aesthetic was clearly a vision for the town. Dr. Bucki notes that this aesthetic vision is not new and the idea of referencing the Colonial Period aligns with Nativist sentiment.

Mr. Edwards commented that on the location map shown on p. 25, it is not clear where East Haven is. Ms. Scofield noted that the map was created in color, but that the printed copies of the nomination distributed to the SRB are black and white. However, the NPS requires that the map be reproducible in black and white. Ms. Dominijanni clarified that the color version of the map shows the location with yellow highlight.

Mr. Barlow requested that the word "despite" in the last paragraph on p. 8-15 be changed to remove negative connotation.

The SRB discussed how many local schools are listed in the National Register. Ms. Scofield noted that this is a common property type. Dr. Bucki asked what larger trends could strengthen the argument for local significance.

Mr. Herzan asked where the architect Roy Foote's records are kept. Mr. Edwards noted that Foote worked in Douglas Orr's office (in New Haven) early in his career. Mr. Herzan commented that schools were an architect's bread and butter.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll asked if there was a similar approach to the curriculum of the Hamden High School referenced on p.8-15 of the nomination and the East Haven High School since they were constructed one year apart. Ms. Dominijanni responded that the National Register nomination for the Hamden High School was early so is less detailed, but that the Hamden school was a more elaborate building. East Haven appears to have minimized extra construction costs. Mr. Herzan commented that these schools are an interesting comparison.

2. Uncasville Historic District (Criteria A and C, local)

A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Mr. Barlow to list the Uncasville Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-8, N-0, Abstained= 0).

Staff recommended the Uncasville Historic District for listing at the local level under Criteria A and C in the categories of Industry and Architecture. The district is a small mill village of 27 contributing resources, including 15 within the textile mill complex and 12 outside. It is significant for nineteenth through mid-twentieth-century production of textile goods, and examples of nineteenth-century mill housing and industrial architecture. The period of significance extends from 1823 through 1964. Ms. Scofield noted an error on the nomination cover form (to correct the end date from 1963 to 1964).

Ms. Scofield reported that the nomination was initiated by the owners of the mill complex, which is proposed for redevelopment. Owners of property within the district were notified of the SRB meeting by direct mail, 30 days before the meeting. A copy of the notice was sent to the mayor of Montville. There are a total of 22 owners of private property in the district; DOT owns a bridge and two small land parcels. One letter of support was received from the owner of the former paymaster's house. No letters of objection were received. The Town of Montville is not a CLG. James Sexton attended the meeting as consultant for the nomination. Ms. Scofield noted that Mr. Sexton was recently engaged to represent the nomination and edit the existing draft in a short amount of time, which is not a typical circumstance. Ms. Scofield also noted that new photos would be taken of the dam in the district, for which select portions were recently removed.

Mr. Edwards invited comments on the nomination. Mr. McMillan requested that more detail regarding the interiors of the mill buildings be included in the nomination such as construction type/framing. Also add more description of the chimney stack – is it still in use? It is an important feature of the complex.

Mr. Wigren requested that the consultant make more of the 1820s mill in the significance narrative. This mill is early in Connecticut. Mr. Wigren also noted that the photo references are off. The historic images in the nomination are helpful in telling the story of the mill.

Mr. McMillan commented that the map shown as Figure 2 is hard to read. Adding labels to identify the buildings (not just the parcels) would be helpful.

Mr. Edwards stated that Samuel Slater (the famous Rhode Island manufacturer) endowed the Norwich Academy in Connecticut and had tremendous influence in Southeast Connecticut. He requested that the nomination reflect the influence of the Rhode Island textile mill models by

adding more comparison of regional similarities. Mr. Wigren asked if any of the mill owners were from Rhode Island. Mr. Sexton responded that they were not, to his knowledge.

Mr. Herzan commented that it is interesting that the paymaster's house is brick. Make a point of that (the fire-resistive, permanent quality reflects its use).

Ms. Dyer-Carroll asked that the mapping of the district boundary in the nomination be changed so that it is reproducible in black and white (it is currently shown in red).

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested the addition of narrative to place this mill in context with other mills in Connecticut. Mr. Herzan mentioned the HAER inventory as a source for this information. Mr. Sexton responded that he used the HAER inventory for this mill but could look at it for others. Mr. Wigren added that the Making Places website is another good source. Dr. Bucki requested the addition of a couple paragraphs on other mills in eastern Connecticut. In terms of mill models, Slater mill is important. Mr. Herzan noted that a lot of early industries in eastern Connecticut were established with Rhode Island money. Mr. Edwards stated that it is worth some effort to look into that context. Also compare models of labor (there was a lot more child and family labor here rather than single farmers' daughters living in boarding houses like in Lowell, Massachusetts).

V. Discussion

A. Draft National Register Nominations

1. Villa Rosa Historic District, Milford (Criteria A and C, local)

Ms. Scofield requested that the SRB provide comments on the content of the Villa Rosa Historic District nomination. The nomination was completed as a draft only and is not proposed for listing at this time. Staff does not seek a recommendation/vote for eligibility. Ms. Scofield explained that through a partnership with the Milford Historic Preservation Commission, SHPO initiated this nomination in an effort to document this resource for planning purposes. The proposed district is in a waterfront location, vulnerable to potential storm surge. A resident and descendant of the original owner of the former complex advised on the history presented in the nomination.

Ms. Scofield reported that SHPO completed outreach to owners of property within the district through direct mail on multiple occasions, email correspondence, phone conversations, and two community meetings held in Milford. Owners were engaged in these conversations and communicated appreciation for the preparation of the nomination document. However, a majority of owners expressed that they do not wish their properties nominated to the National Register at this time. Also, if the district is placed on the State Register of Historic Places as a result of a SRB vote, these properties would be subject to a local historic preservation ordinance; a majority of owners communicated that they do not support that outcome.

The district is a 3.5-acre family residential compound created by theater magnate Sylvester Poli, from 1917 to 1929. It includes a mansion (with steel pier and garage/loggia), 10 villas, and a perimeter wall and seawall. The district meets National Register Criterion B for its association with Poli and Criterion C for architecture.

Mr. Edwards introduced the Villa Rosa Historic District nomination as a discussion item. The SRB agreed that since the nomination is presented for comments, but no formal action, a motion is not necessary.

Mr. Herzan referenced the mention of the district as a rare example of the Mediterranean Revival style in Connecticut on p. 8-14 of the nomination. He requested that this statement be rephrased because examples of the style are not rare in the state, but this concentration of Mediterranean Revival-style buildings is. In the list of other examples of the style provided on p. 8-31, Mr. Wigren requested the addition of Beaver Hills in New Haven. Mr. Herzan stated that other shoreline examples of the style exist on Ocean Drive in Stamford and Rogers Island in Branford. The SRB requested that more generalizations about the Mediterranean Revival style along the Connecticut shoreline be added to the narrative.

The SRB discussed other properties historically associated with Sylvester Poli, mentioned on p. 8-25 and 8-26 of the nomination. Mr. Edwards noted that Villa Rosa was not initially Poli's full-time residence.

Mr. Edwards and Mr. Wigren noted that one of the buildings in the district was a hotel that was relocated to the district, but it is not clear where it was moved from.

Mr. Edwards stated that he disagrees with the use of the term rotunda and suggested that covered pavilion be used instead. He asked if there was a term associated with this structure specific to the Mediterranean Revival style.

Mr. McMillan requested clarification in the description to explain which buildings retain historic windows and which have non-historic replacement windows. Also, it is unclear if panels of leaded glass and clear lights were in some kind of specific arrangement.

Mr. McMillan suggested that Poli's connection to Villa Rosa be bolstered to strengthen the narrative under Criterion B.

Mr. Edwards stated that the Poli family became socially prominent in the Italian community in Connecticut and the family was also recognized by monarchs in Italy. Douglas Rae's book, *City: Urbanism and Its End* (2003), includes a passage about Poli's involvement in New Haven's City Plan Commission.

Mr. McMillan stated that he would like to know more about the sea wall. Add detail to the description, including information about the viewpoint from the water. The water presentation of the district is important because people arrived from the water.

Mr. Barlow requested that the nomination include more history about the site plan of the complex. Who were the designers?

Mr. Herzan stated that the architectural firm of Brown and Von Beren, mentioned on p. 8-31, was prominent in Connecticut and prolific in New Haven. Add more text about the firm. There is a monograph about the firm at the New Haven Museum.

Mr. Edwards stated that it is important to recognize that Poli chose a local architect for the design of many of his buildings; he had concentrations of theater holdings in New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, but did not go to New York City for an architect.

Mr. McMillan stated that there is something to be said for the branding of this compound. Mr. Edwards and Mr. Herzan suggested comparing Villa Rosa to the house at Cornfield Point in Old Saybrook designed by Alfredo Taylor.

B. SRB Informational Presentation – Architectural Integrity in National Register Evaluations

Ms. Scofield summarized that NPS recommends annual training on National Register topics for State Review Boards. Rather than doing an annual training, Ms. Scofield suggested it may be more time-efficient to have more frequent discussions on specific topics. We will try this out today with a ten-minute discussion about architectural integrity. Mr. Edwards suggested that the SRB have ten-minute topic-specific presentations each meeting.

Ms. Scofield gave a PowerPoint presentation on considering integrity in National Register nominations. The SRB discussed each aspect of integrity and how it applies to various resource types, individual properties versus districts, and resources eligible under different National Register Criteria.

VI. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VII. Staff Report

Ms. Scofield announced that the job opening for an Architectural Preservationist at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was reposted. She also announced that SHPO received an African American Civil Rights grant from the National Park Service to document properties related to Morehouse College students who worked in Connecticut's tobacco industry from 1941 to 1954.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Dr. Bucki to adjourn the meeting (Y-8, N-0, Abstained= 0).