

MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut
Plaza Level, Meeting Room E (North Building)
Friday, December 6, 2019, 9:30 a.m.**

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

Absent: Dr. Feder, Mr. McMillan

Staff: Jenny Scofield, Elizabeth Shapiro, Marena Wisniewski

I. Call to Order

Mr. Edwards called the meeting to order at 9:42 a.m.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Mr. Edwards referenced the public comment procedures.

The SRB reorganized the beginning of the agenda for efficiency. Agenda items were heard in this order: Lodges Historic District National Register nomination, Approval of the September meeting minutes, Riverside Historic District National Register nomination. The rest of the agenda remained the same.

III. Approval of the September 20, 2019 meeting minutes (Agenda Item III.)

The SRB provided staff with minor edits to the September minutes. Ms. Scofield recorded these amendments.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Barlow to approve the minutes of the September 20, 2019 meeting, as amended (Y-7, 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.

1. Lodges Historic District, Norwalk (Criterion A, local)

This nomination is for a district of two properties, which have the same owner. Staff recommended the Lodges Historic District eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A

in the category of Social History for its association with mutual aid societies. These societies were critical and prevalent in South Norwalk during the early twentieth century and supported a population that rapidly developed simultaneously with local industry and railroad connection. The period of significance begins in 1923 and staff recommended extending it to 1970 because of the continuous use of the properties as lodges.

Ms. Scofield reported that the nomination was initiated by the property owner, who has undertaken a rehabilitation project. Due to the timing of the project and SHPO's workload, there was not time for the nomination consultant to address edits on the nomination prior to the end of the noticing period. Notice of the SRB meeting was directly mailed to the owner and emailed to the mayor 30 days before the meeting. The City of Norwalk is not a Certified Local Government (CLG). No letters of support or objection were received. Tod Bryant of Heritage Resources attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination and Robert Barton, the property owner, attended in support of the nomination.

Mr. Edwards invited public comment on the nomination. Mr. Barton spoke in favor of the nomination. He thanked the SRB for their volunteer work, the consultant, and SHPO staff. Mr. Barton stated that he has owned the larger property for 40 years, which he purchased to house a family business. South Norwalk was a good location because the local population knew how to cut and sew; he was making sailboat sails in the building. Mr. Barton mentioned that the historic rehabilitation tax credit program became a huge asset. He used it to get a bank loan. He has a tax credit reservation certificate and was not aware of this step in that process. Mr. Edwards noted that the role of the SRB has to do with the National Register nomination. It is to discuss the merits of the nomination, history of the property, and evaluate the qualities of the buildings that make them eligible for National Register listing.

Mr. Bryant provided a summary of edits to the nomination that he has been working on, based on the SHPO staff comments shared with him and the SRB. He made better connections between the district and labor history, made technical edits in the description section, added more references, and added more text about the IOOF. Mr. Bryant added a reference in the text to James Davis, a secretary of labor who was a Moose member; in a progressive way he changed the focus of the labor department and tried to reduce labor management tensions. Mr. Bryant added more text on the history of South Norwalk. Norwalk was divided – South Norwalk functioned as an independent city, separate from the Borough of Norwalk. Mr. Edwards noted that that is an important point in terms of why the mutual aid societies were located in South Norwalk. Ms. Scofield clarified that the version of the nomination shared with the SRB is the same that is available to the public during the noticing period and that once a nomination is placed on the SRB agenda and owners are notified, the official draft nomination is not edited again until after the SRB meeting.

Mr. Wigren asked why the Moose building was called a home. Was anyone living in it? Mr. Bryant responded that he would look that up.

Mr. Wigren noted that both buildings in the district are Neoclassical style as evidenced by the belt course.

The SRB discussed the third building mentioned in the nomination, which is around the corner at 3 Hanford Place, but outside the proposed district boundaries and was formerly used as IOOF

housing. The SRB asked how long the IOOF owned the building. Mr. Barton stated that when he bought the property, 3 Hanford Place was included. He renovated the building, along with other Victorian houses in the area after establishing a non-profit organization called Fairfield County Mutual Housing. Mr. Wigren asked if the district boundary should be changed to include 3 Hanford Place; the reason for excluding it mentioned in the nomination is that it is already included within another historic district. Ms. Scofield clarified that a property can be within multiple historic districts. Mr. Herzan commented that inclusion of 3 Hanford Place in this nomination is not a deal-breaker; the history is covered in the nomination.

Mr. Herzan stated that the architectural significance of the district is downplayed. Ms. Scofield asked if the SRB felt the buildings retained enough architectural integrity to satisfy Criterion C. SRB members noted that Criterion C was not checked in the nomination. The SRB discussed the potential for recognizing properties under Criterion C as examples of specialized property types (rather than for architectural style) and whether all examples of that are significant. The SRB did not require the addition of significance under Criterion C.

Mr. Herzan noted that the nomination reads as though there are multiple authors. He requested that the author read it over to make sure the text is cohesive and makes sense throughout the document. For example, the middle paragraph on p, 8-13 is out of place. Mr. Bryant read a revision of the paragraph out loud.

Mr. Edwards noted that Norwalk was primarily a port until the railroad came and the railroad did not go through the center of town. The alignment of the railroad contributed to the development of South Norwalk. Mr. Herzan requested that the significance summary paragraph be edited to make more of the point mentioned earlier – that there is a concentration of mutual aid societies in South Norwalk. You need a flat-footed (direct) sentence saying that. Mr. Herzan referenced the importance of the summary paragraph in concisely explaining why the district has historic significance. He made a comparison to a newspaper reporter – if the *New York Times* was writing an article about this district, the summary paragraph is where a reporter would look.

Mr. Barlow asked if it is normal for mutual aid societies to be located together. Mr. Bryant responded, not necessarily. He did not know a specific reason why these two organizations were adjacent and thought it was just available space.

Mr. Barlow asked if there is any information on the stained glass windows. Mr. Edwards thought a Moose was involved in that. Mr. Bryant did not have any additional information.

Mr. Edwards asked which property became a fraternal organization first. Mr. Bryant stated that the IOOF erected their masonry building first. The Moose had been in a wood-frame building prior to that. The Moose later replaced the wood-frame building with the current building on the property.

Dr. Bucki stated that the history of social organizations in Norwalk is fascinating. These were important institutions.

The SRB discussed the nomination process. Members asked what level of edits can happen after an SRB vote to recommend a nomination for listing. Ms. Scofield clarified that pursuant to federal regulations, if the boundary of the nominated property changes, a nomination must be re-noticed and brought back to an SRB meeting. Other edits can be made after the SRB vote. However, Ms.

Scofield would also place a nomination back on a SRB agenda if the period of significance, themes of significance, or National Register Criteria identified in a nomination changed after an SRB vote. These are major edits for which the SRB should review. Ms. Scofield noted that less substantive edits to the nomination can occur after the SRB vote and that she can share that draft of the nomination with the SRB prior to submittal to the National Park Service.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll asked if there is any information on how the interior spaces of the buildings were used. Mr. Bryant responded that performances were held in the double-height third floor, the fourth floor had apartments, the second floor had offices, and the ground floor was retail.

A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Mr. Herzan to list the Lodges Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

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

Ms. Scofield summarized previous SRB discussion of the Riverside Historic District nomination. The SRB reviewed the nomination at the June 21, 2019 regular meeting and voted to table the nomination for revisions at that time. The SRB requested changes to the proposed district boundary to include other adjacent properties that appeared to share the same historic associations. National Register boundaries are drawn based on history and the architectural integrity of extant resources. The SRB also requested revisions to the period of significance; and substantive edits to the significance statement, such as more information about who lived in the neighborhood during the period of significance, information about the former estates and changes in development patterns, and better connections regarding how this area of Westport fit into a broader historical context for the town.

A revised nomination is now presented. Staff recommended the Riverside Historic District eligible for listing at the local level of significance under Criterion A and C in the categories of Community Planning and Development and Architecture. The themes of significance have not changed. The period of significance was expanded from 1851-1923 (in June) to 1835-1950. The proposed district boundary was revised to add the properties at 50, 56, and 64 Post Road West; 169 Riverside Avenue; and 170 Riverside Avenue. More text was added to the significance statement, including information about community buildings in the district and a paragraph about residents based on census research.

Ms. Scofield reported that the nomination was initiated by some property owners and a portion of the area was designated as a Local Historic District in late fall. An informational meeting was held at town hall on May 21, 2019. Property owners were notified of the May 21 informational meeting and June 21 SRB meeting by direct mail. Notice also sent to First Selectman and Historic District Commission. The CLG response for the June SRB meeting was positive. After the proposed district boundary was revised, property owners were re-noticed of this meeting by direct mail on November 6. This mailing included the additional properties. A positive CLG response was received from the First Selectman and the HDC will respond after their regular meeting next week.

Letters of objection were received from three property owners (of properties within the original proposed boundaries of the district). One owner owns seven properties in the district, including

five contributing and two non-contributing. The other two owners each own one contributing property. Prior to the June SRB meeting, three emails in support of the nomination were received from five people representing four properties in the district. One property owner and resident also attended the June meeting in support of the nomination. There is a total of 47 owners of property within the district. Tod Bryant of Heritage Resources attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination.

Mr. Wigren stated the SRB's role in the National Register nomination process. The SRB is reviewing the nomination based only on the historic significance of the area and the historic and architectural quality of the properties within the district. No other information is relevant to the SRB's discussion or responsibilities.

Dr. Bucki acknowledged the revisions made to the nomination document based on the SRB's June meeting comments.

Mr. Herzan requested a more direct statement in the significance summary paragraph; not all readers will know the insights elaborated on later in the text.

Mr. Wigren noted that Section 8 jumps around; he requested editing so that the text reads as one voice with reasonable flow.

Ms. Saunders asked the consultant to re-check the resource counts. The text states that the 13 non-contributing properties are mostly garages, but she only counted four.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested that contributing and non-contributing properties be shown on the district map. The SRB and staff discussed that it is ok to have an 11 x 17 map in the nomination if needed to accurately show the district; the district map does not have to be fit onto a letter-size page.

Ms. Saunders noted that the address of properties do not always match between the text and the district data table.

Dr. Bucki stated that Wilbor Cross had an important role in the school. He was influenced by his studies at Yale, then implemented curriculum changes at Staples High School. Dr. Bucki just attended a lecture at the New Haven Museum presentation by author/editor Justin Zaremby, who wrote the foreword for a reprinted autobiography of Wilbor Cross. Zaremby noted that Cross, in his early career, was appointed as the second principal of Staples High School in Westport in 1885. There, Cross implemented a new curriculum in English literature and made other innovative curriculum choices.

Mr. Wigren commented on a new reference in the text about the horse railway. This railway would factor into the development of the neighborhood. He asked the consultant to discuss that as part of the story of the neighborhood in the nomination. When did it start and what years did it operate? Ms. Saunders also noted the stables, shown on the historic map, which was integral to the function of the horse railroad.

Mr. Wigren asked for clarification in the text regarding broad development patterns. For example, are there bigger houses situated on the river? Are there specific waves of development? If so,

elaborate on these and provide the dates. Mr. Herzan asked what the social history corresponding to the waves of development was. That is still not clear. Mr. Bryant responded that there are no streets listed in the census data. Mr. Herzan noted that when phrases like “rapid development” are used, there is usually a corresponding social history that contributed to the development.

Dr. Bucki requested that the consultant improve the topic sentences in the nomination.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll commented on the historic commercial development along the east side of the neighborhood. She asked what that was and where did it go. Mr. Bryant responded that it was industrial. Ms. Dyer-Carroll asked the consultant to add a clarifying statement about that development, to explain that those properties were industrial and for example, were replaced by residences or offices. Mr. Herzan added that this suggestion speaks to his comment.

Mr. Bryant stated that he was glad the SRB suggested the inclusion of the schools and the Sherwood House in the district.

Mr. Wigren noted that William Tubby is the only architect who gets a bio in the nomination, but several architects are mentioned. He suggested that the mention of Tubby be shortened. Make a point that he was Bedford’s architect because he also designed the YMCA. Mr. Edwards pointed out that they may also have been connected because they were both Episcopalian (connected to other parts of town). Mr. Herzan added that the Avery Index is a good source for finding information about architects. You should routinely check that when doing research. Mr. Barlow noted that the Avery Index can be accessed at the Trinity College Library.

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second by Dr. Bucki to list the Riverside Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

V. Discussion

A. 2020 Schedule

Ms. Scofield asked the SRB if there were any conflicts with the proposed quarterly meeting schedule for 2020. The SRB chose to change the proposed March meeting date from March 20 to March 27. All other dates were confirmed.

B. SRB Informational Presentation – National Register Boundaries

The SRB heard an informational presentation as part of a regular program of topic-specific training and discussion.

Ms. Scofield gave a PowerPoint presentation about deriving boundaries for resources nominated to the National Register. Boundaries are not arbitrary; they are based on relevant history and intact resources. The presentation included general guidance such as avoiding donut holes and excluding altered areas at edges; discontinuous districts; and technical information about where to delineate a boundary. Examples of districts and individually nominated properties were discussed.

VI. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VII. Staff Report

Ms. Shapiro announced that the office has refilled the Architectural Preservationist position. The new staff member will start work in mid-December.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.