

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Susanne Walker Abetti, Roy Black, Robin Adair Logan and chair Jonathan Schechtman.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown. VTrans Historic Preservation Specialist Oberauer via conference call.

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held in Room 2, Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, WRJ on Wednesday, May 16, 2018. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

1. Additions/Changes to the Agenda: There were none.
2. Minutes of the April 18th HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of April 18th. There were none. Roy Black made a motion to approve the Minutes of April 18th as written. The motion was seconded by Susanne Walker Abetti and approved.
3. Quechee Gorge Bridge Safety Fencing: Matt Osborn reported that yesterday he received plans from VTrans Historic Preservation Specialist Kyle Obenauer about the proposed safety fence to be installed on the Quechee Gorge Bridge this summer. Since the timeframe is condensed, Matt suggested a conference call with Kyle. The HHPC proceeded to hold a conference call with Kyle. Kyle explained that the HHPC is being asked for comments as part of the Section 106 review of the temporary fencing since the Bridge is on the National Register of Historic Places. Kyle noted that the fencing is needed to prevent suicides. He stated that the State Legislature completed a study last year, but did not come up with a preferred alternative. He agreed to send the HHPC the report. Kyle stated that the temporary design of the proposed fencing is a chain link variety that will be 9' tall and be curved to prevent climbing. It is intended to be used for two or three years until a permanent design is selected and funded. Kyle noted that the fence will be easily reversible and will not damage the historic bridge.

Jonathan Schechtman asked if there will be port holes within the fence for visitors to take photos. Kyle Obenauer responded that he wasn't sure. He suggested contacting the VTrans project manager. Jonathan requested more visual information on the temporary fence.

Susanne Walker Abetti expressed concerns about the aesthetics of the fence and the impact on tourism and local businesses. She noted that thousands of visitors visit Quechee Gorge each year.

Selectboard member Dennis Brown reported that the Selectboard has discussed the fence in detail and that several family members of suicide victims met with the Selectboard and urged the installation of a fence. Dennis also noted the danger to emergency services personnel who have to retrieve the victims. He suggested that the business community should be consulted about the fence.

Kyle Obenauer noted that since the fencing is scheduled to be installed this summer, he was hoping to have comments from the HHPC in the next few weeks. Matt Osborn suggested that the HHPC review the report and schedule a meeting before the end of May. The HHPC agreed.

4. Public Outreach and Education CLG Project: Matt Osborn reported that “Shining a Light” ended last week and he was pleased with the results. He presented photos of the buildings with the lights on. He suggested that next time, it would be better to do the project in the fall (October & November) when the length of day is shorter to maximize viewing exposure.

Matt Osborn reported that the Wilder Walk & Talk event is planned for Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Roy Black will be doing a powerpoint presentation which Matt is working on while Architectural Historian Brian Knight leads the tour.

Matt Osborn also noted that LandWorks has developed several Geocaches around town which will be released.

5. Town Plan Update: Matt Osborn reported that he met with Pat Stark and Robin Adair Logan about the Historic Resources Chapter of the Town Plan. He noted that there is agreement to reduce the amount of information in the chapter and use an appendix. There also was agreement to create a more visually inviting layout. He provided the Middlebury Historic Resources Chapter as a good example. The HHPC agreed. Robin Adair Logan stated that she would like to see website links to the appendix in the text and in a different color so that it stands out.
6. VA Hospital Nomination: Matt Osborn distributed a copy of the individual nomination of the administration building at the VA Hospital. He noted that the HHPC reviewed an assessment of the 40 building facility last fall. The conclusion of the report was the hospital complex has experienced many alterations and intrusions due to recent construction and is not eligible as a National Register Historic District. Matt stated that he will distribute the individual nomination to the HHPC. The deadline for comments is June 10th. Jonathan Schechtman asked about the status of the remaining Quonset Hut. Matt Osborn stated that he will investigate.
7. Cemetery Research/Oral History Project: Matt Osborn reported that the grant agreement for the project has been signed and executed. He hopes to begin work developing a Request for Proposals in the coming weeks. Dennis Brown, who serves on the Town Cemetery Committee, reported that the Committee toured the Quechee and Hartford cemeteries. Both cemeteries are working on developing an inventory of lots and a needs list. Dennis reported that currently only 20% of the deceased are being buried, 80% are being cremated. This is leading to a reduction in funds for cemetery associations and upkeep. Susanne Walker Abetti reported that she was contacted about a tour of cemeteries in Hartford. Arthur Peale was recommended.
8. Annual Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference: Jonathan Schechtman noted that the annual downtown/historic preservation conference is scheduled for Friday, June 8th in Bristol. Matt Osborn noted that Jonathan, Pat Stark and Roy Black and he will be attending. Carpooling arrangements will be made.
9. Next HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman noted that the next HHPC Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 20th.
10. Adjournment: Roy Black made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Susanne Walker Abetti and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.