



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
March 11, 2015

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Ms. Morgan Devlin
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Ms. Caitlin Greeley, Statewide Planning, representing Kevin Flynn
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Mr. Jonathan Stevens, State Historic Preservation Officer
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Principal Project Review Coordinator
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Senior Reviewer for RIDOT Projects
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman
Mr. Marcel Valois, Executive Director EDC

GUESTS

Mr. Edward Connors, National Register Consultant
Mr. Paul Grimaldi, The Providence Journal
Mr. Scott Wheeler, Newport City Engineer

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M., Dr. Onorato presiding in place of Mr. Hoogeboom.

2. Minutes of February 11, 2015

On a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Mr. Roos, the Commission unanimously VOTED to approve the Minutes of February 11, 2015.

3. Reports

Scheduled reports by Commissioners Ruth Taylor and Pieter Roos, the Executive Director's report, and the State Historic Preservation Officer's report were deferred in order to shorten the Agenda. Commissioners Taylor, Roos, Farzan, and Stevens planned to leave the RIHPHC meeting at 10:45 AM to attend a Newport World Heritage Committee meeting.

4. Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grant to Cliff Walk in Newport

Ms. Doherty, RIHPHC Principal Architectural Historian, and Scott Wheeler, Newport City Engineer, presented information about the Cliff Walk repair project and showed photographs of the damage.

The Cliff Walk grant is part of the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief funds that Congress appropriated to the National Park Service for repairs to historic properties. NPS allocated about \$3.2 million to Rhode Island. The RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission advertised for grant applications; reviewed and scored all applications against selection criteria; and voted to approve individual projects. The Commission originally approved project funding of \$254,118 for repairs to three sections of the Cliff Walk.

On March 9, 2015, the City of Newport provided RIHPHC with updated information regarding the budget for the Hurricane Sandy Grant-funded work originally approved for the Cliff Walk, and the City also requested supplemental grant funding for additional work. In its initial grant application, the City of Newport requested \$254,118 to fund work at three locations on the Cliff Walk. The budget in the grant application was based on an estimate developed by the City engineer, The City has since engaged the services of Commonwealth Engineers, and the construction estimates have been revised upward. Based on these revisions, it is anticipated that the grant-approved work will cost \$156,820 more than was anticipated at the time of the grant application. In addition, when the engineers descended the cliffs to inspect the seawalls in the area north of Webster Street (Area 2/Location 34), previously undetected Hurricane Sandy-

related damage was discovered. The damage is similar in nature to damage already approved for grant funding. Repairing this newly-discovered damage is estimated to cost \$190,000, including design fees. In summary, the total amount of the revised grant request is \$600,938, as shown below:

Original Grant Award	\$254,118
Supplemental Grant Award	<u>\$346,820</u>
Total Grant Award	\$600,938

The work in all three areas involves repairs to the historic retaining walls that support the historic Cliff Walk. In some areas, storm damage washed out voids in, behind, or under portions of the retaining walls that must be structurally filled. Mr. Wheeler asked the Commissioners in evaluating the proposed budget increases to consider the severity of the damage and the very high level of significance of the Cliff Walk as a National Historic Landmark property that is one of Rhode Island's top attractions.

Ms. Doherty reported that \$2.5 million has been obligated to Hurricane Sandy grants out of the total amount of \$3.2 million. Newport's requested increase totals \$346,820. No additional Hurricane Sandy grants requests are pending.

During discussion, Commissioners determined that the proposed additional work would meet program eligibility criteria, and several Commissioners remarked on the high level of historical significance of the Cliff Walk. It is an extraordinary historic property, and it provides public visual access to a number of National Historic Landmark properties along its length. Mr. Wheeler noted that the Newport Cliff Walk Commission has approved the proposed construction work, and that the plans would be reviewed by the state Coastal Resources Management Council. Mr. Sanderson noted that if the Commission approves the request, information will be sent to the National Park Service for approval. On a motion by Mr. Schoettle, seconded by Ms. Taylor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to increase the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Grant for repairs to the Newport Cliff Walk from \$254,118 to \$600,938.

5. National Register of Historic Places

Final Consideration: Anstis Greene Historic District, Edgewood, Cranston

Ms. Doherty presented information about the property. She noted that National Park Services public notice procedures were followed; a public meeting was held within the Historic District in January; and no objections to the nomination have been filed.

The Edgewood Historic District–Anstis Green Estate (the District) is an approximately 34-acre residential subdivision in the Edgewood neighborhood of Cranston, Rhode Island.

The earliest residences constructed in the district date to approximately 1880. The majority of the housing stock was built between 1890 and 1930, and the district was completely built out by the mid-1960s. There are two residences built within the district after 1963, which replaced earlier structures. Most of the buildings (118) are detached, single-family, wood-frame structures. There are several brick and stucco examples, but they are less common. The district also contains 12 multi-family dwellings, one apartment building, and one cemetery. All the buildings, including the multi-family residences, are between one and two-and-one-half stories tall. The lots are small, but the houses are typically set back on the property, providing space for front, rear, and side lawns; however, one of the side lawns is usually occupied by a driveway.

The Edgewood Historic District–Anstis Greene Estate Plats (the District) is significant as a residential subdivision representing the suburban development patterns of greater Providence, Rhode Island, specifically Cranston, between the post-Civil War period and World War II. The Edgewood neighborhood of Cranston was originally farm land that was divided between heirs who primarily created large estates fronting on Narragansett Bay. The large estates were later further divided into progressively smaller tracts, until the current grid-pattern of streets was established. The Anstis Greene Estate Plats adopted the electric streetcar suburb grid-plan integrating large and moderate-size lots of a network of perpendicular streets for the construction of primarily single-family residences. The District directly relates to Edgewood's development as a desirable suburb of Providence in the late nineteenth century and its evolution into a coveted middle-and upper-income neighborhood in the early to mid-twentieth century. The district's architecture represents its evolution through different periods with a range of residential types and styles, including a mixture of popular styles catering specifically to a property owner's preferences. The Anstis Greene Estate Plats Historic District retains considerable integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and meets National Register Criteria A and C at the statewide level for its associations with community planning and development and architecture.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Malone, seconded by Mr. Farzan, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the nomination.

Preliminary Presentation: Blackstone Mutual Fire Insurance Building – United Way Building, 229 Waterman Street, Providence

Commissioner Schoettle announced that the Providence Revolving Fund could become involved in a historic rehabilitation project at this property, and therefore he would not participate in the Commission's consideration of the property's National Register eligibility.

Mr. Sanderson introduced the presentation by Mr. Connors. The building dates from 1954 and is one of the newer properties brought to the National Register Review Board. Although twentieth-century resources have been included in RIHPHC survey reports, a context

for evaluating mid-twentieth-century resources has not been established.

Mr. Connors presented historical information about the property and showed views of the exterior and interior. The Blackstone Mutual Fire Insurance Company building was built at the corner of Waterman Street and Wayland Avenue in 1954. Designed by Cram and Ferguson Architects, the two-story, rectangular-plan, flat-roof, steel-frame, brick building projects a restrained Modernism. The main entrance, which opens into a heavily-glazed lobby, is located at the building's northwest corner, beneath a cantilevered hood. A three story, brick- and stone-clad tower is located immediately to the south of the entrance. Fenestration at the building consists primarily of eight-light, hopper, aluminum windows, which appear to be original, set within regularly-spaced, rectangular openings trimmed with limestone. An oversized window on the west elevation of the tower includes a substantial limestone surround embossed with the logo for Factory Mutual Insurance, the umbrella corporation of which Blackstone Mutual was a part. The building interior exhibits notable mid-century Modern design features, including a rose marble-paneled lobby; a walnut-paneled boardroom with inset veneers; and a stairwell with a curved, stainless steel railing and ceramic-tile walls. The Blackstone Mutual Fire Insurance Company building is a relatively rare example of Modern commercial architecture in Providence, which shows little sign of alteration and appears to retain good historical integrity.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato stated that the building is a good example of "understated modernism." The limestone window surrounds echo the stonework of the corner entrance. On a motion by Ms. Devlin, seconded by Mr. Roos, the Commission

VOTED that based on the property's history and state of preservation, it appears to be eligible for National Register listing.

Mr. Schoettle was recorded as not voting.

6. Other Business: There was no other business.
7. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday April 8, 2015 at 9:30 AM.
8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer