



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
October 14, 2015

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Ms. Morgan Devlin
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Ms. Lisa Lee representing Janet Coit, Director DEM
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Clark Schoettle

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Senior Reviewer RIDOT Projects
Ms. Katherine Jurczyk, Senior Grants Coordinator
Mr. Glenn Modica, Senior Project Review Coordinator
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator
Ms. Elizabeth Warburton, Senior Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Darin Early, COO, Commerce RI
Ms. Caitlin Greeley, Statewide Planning, representing Kevin Flynn
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman
Dr. Patrick Malone
Ms. Ruth Taylor

GUESTS

Mr. Edward Connors, National Register Consultant
Ms. Katherine Cavanaugh, National Register Consultant
Mr. Stephen Vadnais, Pawtucket Housing Authority
Lawrence E. Brown, President & CEO Omni Development Corporation

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

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

2. Minutes of September 9, 2015

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Ms. Devlin, the Commission unanimously VOTED to approve the Minutes of September 9, 2015.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported on meeting with Darin Early, Chief Operating Officer at the RI Commerce Corporation, to review proposed regulations for the new Rebuild Rhode Island tax credit program.

b) Ms. Zurier reported on the State Preservation Grants application process. RIHPHC staff have reviewed all applications. On October 7 the SPG Review Panel convened; they elected Ron Onorato to chair the panel, and then they discussed each application in relation to the project evaluation criteria. The SPG Review Panel will meet again on December 2 to review additional information and to adopt grant recommendations for the RIHPHC. RIHPHC Commissioners will meet on December 9 to review and approve the SPG projects.

c) On October 7, RIHPHC and the Newport County Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon-cutting and reception at Eisenhower House to recognize completion of the \$2.1 million renovation project.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Final Presentation: Prospect Heights Housing Project, Pawtucket

Mr. Emidy presented information about the property.

Built by the Pawtucket Housing Authority (PHA) between 1941 and 1942, the Prospect Heights Housing Project comprises 36 brick and concrete block buildings set on a 21-acre lot in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Thirty-five of these buildings are two-story row house apartments set on concrete slabs. At the northwest corner and entrance to the property is a single-story Administration Building that houses offices, a community room, a laundry, and a maintenance facility. All of the original row house apartments survive with no alterations to footprint, height

or window/door openings; modifications include new roof structures, replacement of windows, doors, and interior finishes due to wear and tear, and limited changes to interior floor plans when the number of units was reduced in 1971. Site changes include accommodations for automobile parking and access, and the construction of 16 small utility buildings. Prospect Heights retains integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling and association as an expression of the broad patterns of 20th-century social history and community development.

The Prospect Heights Housing Project, built in 1941-1942 by the Pawtucket Housing Authority (PHA), is significant on the local level under National Register **Criterion A** in the areas of Social History and Community Planning and Development as Pawtucket's first and only New Deal-era, federally-funded public housing project. The city was already in dire economic straits due to its declining textile industry when the Great Depression hit, and by the 1930s Pawtucket suffered from massive unemployment and a long-term, severe shortage of decent, affordable housing for low-income residents. To address this crisis, the City Council established a Housing Authority in 1939, under the auspices of the federal Housing Act of 1937 and corresponding state enabling legislation. The Housing Act had empowered local housing authorities to negotiate directly with the newly-established U.S. Housing Authority (USHA) for long-term loans for site acquisition, design, construction, and management of low-income housing projects. In early 1941, the PHA became the first and only housing authority in Rhode Island to gain approval for a 60-year USHA loan, which the PHA used to develop Prospect Heights on a former industrial site. This large complex of multi-family apartment buildings, with income and other eligibility criteria for residents, introduced a new type of housing in Pawtucket. While five other public housing projects (utilizing other federal funding programs) were constructed in Rhode Island in the early 1940s, Prospect Heights is the state's most intact surviving example of its type, and embodies the expanding role of government in the arenas of public housing and community development during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The period of significance, 1939 to 1965, begins with the conception of Prospect Heights, and ends 50 years ago, at which time Prospect Heights still had income guidelines for residents, and no major interior or exterior alterations had yet occurred to the site or to the individual buildings. Seventy-five years after groundbreaking, this facility—still operated by the Pawtucket Housing Authority—has provided affordable shelter to thousands of the city's poorest citizens. As the PHA recognized its diamond anniversary in 2014, the Agency and current tenants collected information about the history of Prospect Heights, revealing its significant place in Pawtucket's social history. This housing project is a well-preserved local example of national housing initiatives of the New Deal. Current plans call for historic rehabilitation at Prospect Heights, which will extend its service to the Pawtucket community while preserving its newly-recognized historic character.

Mr. Sanderson complimented the nomination authors, Ned Connors and Kathy Cavanaugh, for their thorough research. He noted that public housing is a specialized property type that needed a high level of documentation and evaluation. Mr. Emidy edited the final nomination and coordinated with National Park Service reviewers.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato felt the complex retains very good integrity overall, and Mr. Abbott stressed the importance of Prospect Heights in Pawtucket's social history. Dr. Morenon expressed interest the possibility for oral history of the residents, and Mr. Vadnais replied that an oral history and film was been prepared for the 75th anniversary of Prospect Heights. Many residents shared their memories of living in the Prospect Heights community.

Mr. Schoettle did not participate in the National Register evaluation because the Providence Revolving Fund is involved in efforts to rehabilitate the property. He noted that plans call for preserving the historic features and character of Prospect Heights.

Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Roos, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission VOTED to approve the nomination. Mr. Schoettle was recorded as not voting.

Presentation: Smithfield Town Hall and Fire Station, Georgiaville Historic District

Ms. Warburton presented information about the property. When the Georgiaville Historic District was originally nominated to the National Register in 1985, the Town Hall and the Fire Station were listed as "not contributing" to the significance of the historic district. Both properties were then less than 50 years old, and National Park Service procedures required National Register properties to be at least 50 years old. With the passage of time, the historical and architectural value of these two buildings has become apparent.

The Smithfield Town Hall is located on the west side of Farnum Pike in the village of Georgiaville. Constructed in 1939, the two story, three-part plan, east-facing municipal building has a brick foundation, brick walls, and an asphalt-shingled hipped roof on each of its three blocks. The central block includes a cupola with a rounded, flared cap. Set back slightly from the main road, the Town Hall is sited south of the Smithfield Fire Department Station 2 (1942) and west of the Irving S. Cook School (1925), creating a small concentration of early 20th century municipal buildings.

Designed by Providence architect Linwood A. Gardiner in the Georgian Revival style, the building is symmetrical, orderly, and commanding. The primary, east façade is dominated by a full-height pedimented entry porch with a centered bullseye window. The pediment is supported by Doric columns, with modillions lining the interior and repeating below on the cornice of the central block. The principal entrance is centered within the entry porch and emphasized with a broken scroll pediment, fluted pilasters, and a transom window with five arched lights. The doorway and two flanking 12/12 windows are slightly recessed within shallow brick arches and capped with stone keystones. All nine windows on the central block are 12/12 with splayed brick lintels and stone sills. The wings flanking the central block both utilize 15/15 windows with 9-light arched transoms. Above these windows, set approximately one foot below the roofline, a

molded string course emphasizes the horizontal nature of the building and wraps fully around each wing. A diminutive, arched dormer protrudes from the roofline on each elevation of both wings.

The interior features Colonial Revival details such as transom windows above primary doorways, 1930s terrazzo flooring on staircases, and a variety of light fixtures with stylized classical details. The Tax Collector's Office, the interior space most accessed by the public, is embellished with wainscoting with dentil molding and simple, paneled pilasters surrounding the Palladian-style window arrangement visible on the north elevation. The Town Council Chamber uses a classical balustrade to separate the raised stage from the audience.

The Smithfield Town Hall (1939) was designed by Linwood A. Gardiner and funded by the Works Progress Administration. Gardiner was born in Providence and by 1930 worked as an architectural draftsman in the offices of Howe & Church at 76 Westminster Street. Gardiner based his own practice in Providence until 1962, when he relocated to Warwick; his additional works include the Smithfield Fire Department Station 2 (1942), adjacent to the Smithfield Town Hall and designed in the same Georgian Revival style, the Arlington Memorial Health Lodge at Camp Yawgoog in Hopkinton (1941, with W. Douglas Gardiner), and 1953 renovations to Ranger Hall at the University of Rhode Island (1912) designed by Clarke, Howe & Homer.

The Smithfield Fire Department Station 2 is located on the west side of Farnum Pike in the village of Georgiaville. Constructed in 1942, the two story, three-part plan, east-facing municipal building has a stone foundation, brick walls, and an asphalt-shingled gabled roof on each of its three blocks. The central block includes a pedestal originally designed to support a cupola but now used as a base for a fire alarm. The building is separated from Farnum Pike by a paved driveway spanning the width of the building and is located north of Smithfield Town Hall (1939) and west of the Irving S. Cook School (1925), creating a small cluster of early 20th century municipal buildings. Designed by Providence architect Linwood A. Gardiner in the Georgian Revival style, the building compliments the adjacent Smithfield Town Hall building, designed by Gardiner four years earlier.

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

VOTED approval for including Smithfield Town Hall and Smithfield Fire Station as contributing to the significance of the Georgiaville Historic District.

Preliminary Approval: William J. Braitsch & Company Factory, 472 Potters Avenue, Providence

Mr. Connors presented information about the property. The William J. Braitsch and

Company Plant occupies a 0.7-acre lot in the predominantly residential Elmwood section of Providence. There are two contributing industrial buildings erected in 1892 for the manufacture of silver and gold specialty goods. The main building is a brick, 3-story, pier and spandrel structure. Window openings are segmental arch with quarry-faced granite sills. Frame windows are paired on the front elevation and grouped in threes along the side. Each window opening contains three 6/6/6 sash: the two upper sash are fixed; the bottom sash opens. Most windows are original.

A significant alteration to the original design was the relocation of the front entrance from the easternmost bay of the front elevation to the center bay. This recessed Colonial Revival entrance dates to the occupation of the building by Colonial Laundry (1928-1964) and appears to have been built ca. 1940. The door trim comprises fluted pilasters, a simple entablature and a split pediment. Although no longer in use, the front door opened to a chamber that served as the executive office of Colonial Laundry. This room is notable for the survival of its Colonial Revival woodwork including dentiling, crown molding, fluted pilasters and triglyphs.

Attached to the east elevation of the main building is a single-story, brick boiler house with a brick stack. Nearby is a concrete-block "Dry Cleaning House" dating to the mid-20th-century tenancy of a commercial laundry.

The William J. Braitsch and Company Plant may be significant under **Criterion A** as the physical expression of the evolution in 19th-century Providence of the silversmith trade from small-scale artisanry to large-scale manufacture of finely-crafted silver goods. The Main Building (1892) and attached Boiler/Engine House (1892) may also be significant under **Criterion C** as a fine, intact example of a late 19th-century multi-story, brick industrial plant as adapted for multiple uses over a century of active occupation.

Following discussion, on a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Ms. Devlin, the Commission

VOTED preliminary approval for the William J. Braitsch & Company Factory. Mr. Schoettle did not participate in the National Register evaluation because the Providence Revolving Fund is involved in efforts to rehabilitate the property.

5. Other Business: There was no other business.
6. Next regular meeting date: Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 9:30 AM.
7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:35 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer



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October 8, 2015

Mr. Darin Early, Chief Operating Officer
Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
315 Iron Horse Way
Providence, RI 02908

Dear Darin:

Thank you for meeting with me and Dan Jennings of your staff on October 2 to discuss implementation of the Rebuild Rhode Island Tax Credit Program. I understand that the Commerce Corp. will be releasing application forms in the near future and that details of how the program will be carried out are still being considered. When the application is available please me a copy.

During our discussion, we agreed that it will be useful to identify whether applicant projects include historic properties or are located within historic districts. RIHPHC staff historians are prepared to assist your staff in making these determinations. In general, a street address is all the information we need to search our files for information about specific buildings. Additional information, such as a photograph or site map is always helpful. We can report to you whether the property is a registered historic property; if not registered, whether the property appears to meet historical criteria; and a short summary of the property's significance.

You explained that the term "Recognized Historic Structure" was included in the 2015 legislation and therefore the term must be defined and included in the Rebuild RI regulations. We agreed that Commerce and RIHPHC will consult together if and whenever questions regarding "recognized historic structures" need to be addressed.

We also discussed that when an application for Rebuild RI tax credits includes a historic property that is eligible for Federal historic preservation tax credits it will generally be expected to file an application with RIHPHC. With a street address, RIHPHC staff can advise you of the status of any Federal tax credit application.

Historic properties using Federal historic preservation tax credits must meet the design

requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation. We discussed that historic properties receiving Rebuild RI tax credits also should meet historic preservation standards. Professional architects on the RIHPHC staff will be prepared to consult with Rebuild RI tax credit applicants regarding their architectural plans. Our experience with literally hundreds of projects is that meeting historic preservation standards is readily achievable if consultation comes early in the design process before irreversible commitments are made.

It's my understanding that a Commerce Corp. development advisor will work with each Rebuild RI applicant, and that person will also be our contact for providing information and technical assistance. I am confident that our staffs can establish good working relationships that will be mutually beneficial. I would be happy to follow up with Dan to make sure this happens.

I look forward to working with you and Dan on making good projects happen that will benefit Rhode Island development and include preservation of historic buildings.

Yours very truly,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer

Copy: Daniel Jennings