



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
July 12, 2017

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Dr. Tripp Evans
Dr. Morgan Grefe
Ms. Tanya Kelley
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing the Associate Director of the Division of Planning
Ms. Lisa Primiano representing Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Ms. Lucie Searle
Mr. John Smith
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist
Mr. Glenn Modica, Senior Project Review Coordinator
Ms. Katy Pomplun, Senior Grants Coordinator
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator
Ms. Elizabeth Warburton, Senior Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Darin Early, COO, Commerce RI
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Vacant

GUESTS

Mr. Edward (Ned) Connors, NR Consultant
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Mr. Joseph Garlick, NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley
Mr. Karst Hooeboom
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Christopher Carcifero, City of Woonsocket, Deputy Director of Housing and

Community Development

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M., Mr. Hoogeboom, Retiring Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of June 14, 2017

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Ms. Taylor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the Minutes of June 14, 2017.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson joined Mr. Hoogeboom in welcoming five new Commissioners: Dr. Tripp Evans, an architectural historian who teaches at Wheaton College. Dr. Morgan Grefe, a historian and the Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical Society. Ms. Tanya Kelley, a landscape historian and designer and member of Newport's Washington Square Advisory Committee. Lucie G. Searle, public member, has managed historic rehabilitation projects and is a past president of the Providence Preservation Society. John Smith, museologist, is the director of the RISD Museum.

Mr. Sanderson thanked retiring Commissioners for their combined 76 years of outstanding service:

Mohamad Farzan, historical architect
Karst Hoogeboom, landscape architect/historian
Dr. Patrick M. Malone, historian
Ronald J. Onorato, architectural historian
Pieter N. Roos, museologist

Each retiring Commissioner was presented a paperweight engraved with the RIHPHC logo.

b) The 2017 schedule of meetings was distributed, and the members agreed that the August 9 meeting would be an orientation workshop to present information about RIHPHC programs and introduce staff members.

c) Mr. Sanderson reviewed his plan to retire at the end of July and the Commission's votes at the May 10th meeting to appoint Deputy Director Jeffrey Emidy to serve as Acting Executive Director. Mr. Sanderson will continue to serve as State Historic Preservation Officer and will assist the Commission's selection and transition to a new permanent executive director.

d) Mr. Sanderson presented information about a proposed Providence Intermodal

Transportation Center that would be built on a portion of the State House lawn and on Station Park. RIHPHC has sent a letter to RIDOT Director Peter Alviti stating that the project is likely to impact significant historical resources. Commission staff will closely monitor concept development, but no action is required by the Commission until an actual proposal is available for review. Ms. Searle noted that she is a member of the Design Review Committee of the Capital Center Commission, and the Capital Center Commission has authority to review and approve development in the areas of the proposed transportation center.

4. Overview and discussion of RIHPHC programs

Mr. Emidy introduced the discussion by summarizing major RIHPHC activities to identify, preserve, and project all types of historic properties and to recognize and honor Rhode Island's diverse cultural heritage. A written summary is attached to these Minutes.

Retiring Commissioners were invited to add their comments. Mr. Hoogeboom emphasized the work of the professional staff to research properties' significance and staff architects' role in solving design problems to assist development to meet historic preservation standards. Dr. Onorato remarked that Rhode Island is home to nationally significant architecture, and he also recalled Antoinette Downing defending the "little buildings" that provide the historical and visual context for historic districts and individual landmarks. Mr. Farzan noted the importance of project review planning to recognize potential harmful impacts to historic resources and to find less harmful alternatives. Dr. Malone stressed that a flow of new research documents historic buildings and sites and contributes to a broader understanding of Rhode Island's past. Dr. Morenon spoke of the collegiality of Commissioners working together in a deliberative process to assess the importance of individual resources and the wisdom of certain development proposals.

5. In accordance with the Commission's enabling legislation, an election was held for Chair and Secretary. For Chair, Dr. Morenon nominated Mr. Abbott, and Dr. Grefe nominated Ms. Taylor. Ms. Taylor was elected with five votes to three votes for Mr. Abbott. Ms. Taylor nominated Mr. Abbot for Secretary, and he was elected by acclamation.

Ms. Taylor assumed the chair.

6. Appointment of State Preservation Grants Review Panel

Sarah Zurier presented information about the State Preservation Grants program. Under program rules adopted by the Commission, grant applications are reviewed by a grants review panel appointed by the Commission. Members of the panel are selected to represent a range of professional preservation backgrounds and different geographic regions of the state. After intensive review of each application and at least two meetings, the panel will report its recommendations to the full Commission at the December 2017 meeting. The Commission will make final decisions on the award of grants to specific projects. Ms. Zurier presented a list of recommended panelists.

On a motion by Dr. Grefe, seconded by Mr. Smith, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to appoint the following members of the 2017 SPG Grants Review Panel

1. Jeff Emidy, Acting Executive Director, RIHPHC
RIHPHC/Woonsocket-Statewide
2. Cecelia Hallahan AIA, Architect, RI-DOA Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance
ARCHITECT/East Greenwich-Statewide
3. Lea Anthony Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner, Town of East Greenwich
PLANNER/East Greenwich
4. Elizabeth Keithline, Grants & Communications Manager, R.I. State Council on the Arts (representing RISCA Executive Director Randall Rosenbaum)
ARTS/East Greenwich-Statewide
5. Keith Lescarbeau, owner, Abcore Restoration
CONTRACTOR/Narragansett
6. Ronald Onorato, Honors Professor of Art History, University of Rhode Island
FORMER COMMISSIONER-ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN/Newport-South Kingstown
7. Lucie Searle, Real Estate Development, AS220
COMMISSIONER-FINANCE/Providence
8. Lori Urso, Executive Director, Slater Mill 67 Roosevelt Ave.
MUSEUM EXECUTIVE/Pawtucket-Smithfield

7. National Register of Historic Places

Preliminary Review: L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amérique (USJB), One Social Street, Woonsocket

Elizabeth Warburton presented information about the property. The L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amérique (USJB) building is a four story, eight-bay Neoclassical commercial building designed by prolific Woonsocket architect Walter F. Fontaine in 1926. Facing Monument Square in Woonsocket's downtown, the façade is composed of ground-level former storefronts and three upper stories. The façade is dominated by three-story-tall Corinthian pilasters set between each bay and further embellished by Neoclassical spandrel panels with urn and swag motifs. The cornice features simple dentil molding, and the frieze uses

Greek key banding and swags to bookend a carved panel that reads “L’Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d’Amerique.” Some alterations were made to the ground level in 1975: the original storefronts were boxed in with plywood clad in pea-stone; this material acts as “skin” over the original materials, covering rather than replacing original cast iron storefronts, which survive. The exterior doors and windows on the ground level have been replaced, but the original openings remain, and original materials – including a second set of vestibule doors – survive on the interior. Windows are original double-hung metal sash throughout the rest of the building.

The secondary elevations of the USJB were originally unornamented brick and contained service bays and a freight elevator tower on the northeast and southeast elevations. As part of the 1975 renovations to the façade, a secondary entrance was created on the northeast elevation, and the ground-level was covered with the same plywood and pea-stone treatment used on the façade. The most striking change to the building is to the upper stories of the northeast and southeast elevations: a metal grate system, probably aluminum, has been applied over the brick walls to create a streamlined, postmodern appearance.

The interior of the USJB is highly intact. The building retains most of its original materials and finishes, including stair halls with marble wainscoting and stair treads and terrazzo floors. The main lobby has its original finishes and fixtures; the ceiling includes molding with a Greek-key pattern, large central rosettes, and quatrefoil ornament. Many spaces retain their original interior doors and windows. Two-tone terrazzo flooring is found throughout the building, as is an interesting treatment where burlap was applied as a wainscoting and then painted to create textured wall surfaces. The most elaborate space is the fourth floor: a large lobby includes a stained-glass skylight with a center medallion of the “Lamb of God” symbol for Saint John the Baptist, as well as intricately carved woodwork and original fixtures. A fourth-floor assembly space retains its coffered ceiling, gilded acanthus leaf molding, fluted columns, and an excellent gilded bronze chandelier. Some changes have been made to secondary interior spaces.

The USJB was founded in 1900 to serve as a national headquarters for the hundreds of French-Canadian fraternal organizations that were already established across the United States, particularly in New England. By 1900, sixty percent of Woonsocket’s population was French-Canadian, with most immigrants working in the city’s textile mills. Delegates from across the country choose Woonsocket as the location for a new organization that would serve as a leader for fraternal groups, and also sell insurance. The USJB was first headquartered in the Unity Building (c. 1886), which still stands in the Woonsocket Main Street Historic District. The organization quickly outgrew this building, blossoming from 770 members in 1900 to over 25,000 in 1910, and hired Woonsocket architect Walter F. Fontaine to design a purpose-built building in 1926. In 1989, the USJB sold the building, and in 1991 merged with Catholic Family Life Insurance; the organization remained in the USJB building until 1994.

The USJB property is currently owned by Innovation Plaza, LLC, and the request for National Register consideration comes jointly from the owner and the City of Woonsocket, due to the owner’s participation in the Commercial Façade Restoration Program through a Community Development Block Grant.

During discussion, Commissioner Evans inquired whether National Register listing would impact the owner/city's plans to remove the 1975 alterations to the soffit and rear elevations. Ms. Warburton responded that it would not, as National Register designation does not place restrictions or requirements on property owners. Pierre Morenon asked whether the interior of the building is being considered for the nomination. Ms. Warburton responded that because the property is being proposed for individual listing, the significance and integrity of both the exterior and interior are considered. During further discussion, several Commissioners remarked on the building's good state of preservation notwithstanding exterior cosmetic remodeling. On a motion by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Dr. Grefe, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

Preliminary Review: Andrews Mill, Great Road, North Smithfield

Mr. Emidy presented information about the property. This property was previously presented for Preliminary Review at the Commission's May 10, 2017 meeting. At that time, the Commissioners declined to give Preliminary Approval but stated a willingness to consider further information and documentation about the property that might demonstrate its historical significance and integrity to support its eligibility for National Register listing.

The Andrews Mill is located on an approximately 32-acre site along the Branch River. The North Smithfield mill produced French worsted for dress goods, men's wear and plushes. The property includes a main mill building/weave shed with attached boiler house, a freestanding machine shop, a concrete headrace gate at the location of a former mill trench, a steel water tower, and a masonry pump house, all built in 1918. The Andrews Mill operated only eight years until 1926. An attempt to reorganize in 1929 had failed by 1935. The Uxbridge Worsted Company purchased the property and operated into the 1950s. The Tupper Corporation, makers of "Tupperware," leased the property for use as a laboratory and administrative office in 1954, and purchased it outright in 1958. Tupper or its successor companies made many alterations to the property, sheathing the principal façade of the mill in aluminum panels and replacing the historic wood windows on the façade with aluminum-frame sash (mid-20th-century); constructing large, one-story additions on the west and north sides of the main mill (by 1962), as well as an enclosed loading dock off the north elevation (by 1972) and two pre-fabricated steel towers at the northwest corner (by 1981); and constructing two freestanding wastewater treatment buildings (late 1970s) and a freestanding office building (1979).

Site inspection since the May meeting found that the original masonry façade remains reasonably intact under the current aluminum panels. The prospective owner/developer has stated his intention to rehabilitate the mill in accordance with historic preservation standards, including restoration of the façade and removal of most of the non-historic additions.

Dr. Malone noted that the surviving sawtooth roof structure is significant, and he explained that worsted production was very important chapter of industrial history in northern Rhode Island in the early 20th century, and the Andrews presents a complete factory complex. Mr. Sanderson suggested that the final nomination should be considered after the façade has

been restored and non-historic additions have been removed. After further discussion, on a motion by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination, based on the additional information provided and the owner's assurances for historic rehabilitation.

8. Other Business: There was no other business.

9. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday August 9, 2017 at 9:30 AM.

10. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer