



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
October 11, 2017

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Dr. Morgan Grefe
Ms. Tanya Kelley
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Lucie Searle
Mr. John Smith
Ms. Ruth Taylor
Vacant

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Rosemary Carreiro, Fiscal Aide
Ms. Alicia Chy, Data Control Clerk
Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Ms. Michaela Jergensen, Senior Reviewer RIDOT Projects
Mr. Glenn Modica, Senior Project Review 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
Dr. Tripp Evans
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing the Associate Director of the Division of Planning

GUESTS

Ms. Leslie Carter, Reed Hilderbrand
Ms. Helen Johnson, City of Newport
Mr. Terry Dickinson, Preservation Society of Newport County
Ms. Rachel Robinson, Providence Preservation Society
Ms. Kaity Ryan, Preservation Society of Newport County

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:33 A.M., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding.

2. Minutes of September 13, 2017

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

VOTED to approve the Minutes of September 13, 2017.

3. Acting Executive Director's Report

- a) Mr. Emidy introduced Ms. Alicia Chy, the RIHPHC's new Data Control Clerk. Ms. Chy was hired to fill the position vacated by the retirement of Estelle Toracinta. Ms. Chy's first day at the RIHPHC was September 18th.
- b) Mr. Emidy reminded the Commissioners that the annual Rhody Awards for Historic Preservation will be held on Sunday, October 22nd, at the WaterFire Arts Center in the ALCO complex on Valley Street, in Providence. The awards are held in partnership with Preserve Rhode Island (PRI). All commissioners are invited to attend, their admission being paid for by the Commission. A fundraiser dinner for PRI will be held after the awards ceremony. Commissioners wishing to attend the dinner will have to contact PRI to make a reservation, as this cost is not covered by the RIHPHC.
- c) Mr. Emidy and RIHPHC CFO Joyce Gervasio attended the annual Capital Budget Meeting on September 29th at the Department of Administration. We included a request for \$6 million in our budget for State Fiscal Year 2018. These funds are intended for the State Preservation Grants program, which will complete awarding of its previous funding in 2017. We have requested that the \$6 million appear as a bond issue on the November 2018 ballot, which would allow us to award the first round of that funding in December 2019. We are willing to have our funding combined with another agency's under a single ballot question, though we do not know which agency might be the best fit as of yet. We are awaiting the R.I. State Council on the Arts' decision about any bond issue funding that they might request in 2018.
- d) Mr. Emidy reported that Ginger Hesse, Roberta Randall, Ted Sanderson, and he visited the South Street Station rehabilitation project site on September 26th. The project rebranded the building as South Street Landing, and will house the Rhode Island Nursing Education center, a collaboration between Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island in 130,000 square feet, and administration offices for Brown University in 136,000 square feet. The Nursing Education center is already in

and Brown's offices were being fitted out with furniture when they visited. The project to rehabilitate South Street Station was a \$128.3 million part of a larger project that includes a new residence hall and a new parking garage on the site. The project received a 20 percent (\$25.6 million) federal historic preservation tax credit and a 25 percent (\$32 million) state historic preservation tax credit.

- e) Mr. Emidy reported that the State Review Board will meet on October 16th to get acquainted and establish procedures and meeting dates and times. No National Register actions will be taken at the meeting. There are already projects waiting for a spot on the State Review Board's first National Register agenda.

4. Report: Executive Director Search Committee

Ms. Taylor reported that the Committee is working with the state's Department of Human Resources and Department of Administration to facilitate the hiring process. The Department of Human Resources is moving toward a public hearing on raising the current salary of the position by two pay grades. Also, the position has not yet been posted, but it should not be long before it is.

7. Approval: Breakers Welcome Center Landscape Plan Alteration

Ms. Doherty presented an alteration to the landscape of the Breakers Welcome Center that has been proposed by the Preservation Society of Newport County. She, Ms. Kelley, and Ms. Taylor attended a meeting on site on September 14th to review the plans. A cluster of five mature yew trees at the site were planned to have been preserved as to screen the new building when viewed from the entrance drive. Retention of the yews and installation of false cypress and daphnes was approved in April 2017. With the removal of other vegetation around the yews, it has been discovered that the yews are not in good health. They will have to be limbed up for the installation of proposed plantings around them, and would likely not respond well to such pruning. Additionally, their dense root systems may be damaged by planting the understory or may prohibit the successful growth of the understory. For these reasons, the PSNC has requested that they be allowed to remove the yews and have proposed a different planting plan at this location.

Leslie Carter, of the PSNC's landscape architecture firm Reed Hilderbrand, presented the new plan, which calls for removal of the yews and their replacement with 14- to 16-foot tall Chinese junipers planted in a staggered fashion to the south of the Welcome Center, with daphne layered in front. A small amount of the roof will show above the junipers at the end of construction, though the trees should grow to screen more of the building. The revised plan also includes a row of low, Japanese holly backed by two rows of 3- to 4-foot tall blue holly along the serpentine path, near where it meets the drive from Ochre Point Avenue. This will achieve the layered appearance that will be carried out at other locations along the path.

Ms. Grefe asked Mss. Doherty, Kelley, and Taylor for their thoughts. Ms. Doherty opined that

the yews look “rough” and limbing them up will only make matters worse. Ms. Kelley opined that the location is a difficult spot to design for, with the Gate House, Welcome Center, serpentine path, and drive allee all requiring consideration, but that the serpentine path takes precedence.

Mr. Sanderson asked if the propose plant materials are consistent with the historic plantings. Ms. Carter responded that yes, an 1896 article from *Gardens and Gardening* mentioned juniper and holly, and while it is not very specific, the plantings proposed throughout the project, including these, take their cues from the writings. Ms. Doherty stated that there is not a historic planting plan or plant list, but that there are photographs from 1896 and 1914 which Reed Hilderbrand has utilized in their design. Ms. Carter added that there are no historic images of this location in particular because it was a back-of-house area.

Ms. Kelley asked if it is possible to include large evergreens in the plan, because we have not spoken of that option. She stated that there might be another iteration of the current plan that would reconcile the serpentine path plants with the whole area. Ms. Carter responded that the front plants put the emphasis on the path, pushing the screen to the background.

Ms. Schoettle asked why the daphne don't run up to the stairs exiting the welcome center. Ms. Carter replied that by ending where they do, it allows a pedestrian to more easily make a turn coming onto the path.

Ms. Taylor asked if the team considered replacing the yews with yews. Ms. Carter replied that they did consider doing so, but that the yews get a moth-eaten look as they age, so they were dismissed. Mr. Schoettle asked if the yews were probably bushes when they were planted, which Ms. Carter confirmed.

Ms. Doherty asked if the plantings on the serpentine path south of the drive will match what is proposed here under the whole-site landscape plan. Ms. Carter replied that the plan is not complete, but that the plan is for them to match.

Ms. Taylor asked if the easement that the RIHPHC holds on the property includes the landscape. Mr. Sanderson answered that it does.

Ms. Taylor asked Ms. Kelley and Ms. Doherty if they are comfortable recommending that the Commission vote on this today. Ms. Kelley responded that she thinks the current plan is somewhat awkward at the front, but that Ms. Carter explained it well, so she is comfortable with it. Ms. Doherty responded that, since we only received the plan after hours yesterday, she would like more time to go over it, however, she believes that she could be comfortable with the decision to vote.

Mr. Abbott asked if the team wants to plant this fall. Ms. Carter responded in the affirmative. Mr. Abbott opined that it is a good reason to vote today. Ms. Kelley noted that there are temporary screening solutions, like a fence, that could be used until the spring.

Mr. Schoettle noted that the ends of the serpentine path at the north and south sides of the drive do not line up and asked if they have always been offset. Ms. Carter replied that the team has tried to figure that out, but has not come across any definitive answer. She stated that maybe the Master Plan can address that issue.

Ms. Taylor asked if some of these plants could come out if the Master Plan is developed in such a way. Ms. Carter replied that they can.

Mr. Sanderson recommended that the Commission consider two motions: 1- that the yews are a secondary feature and in their current condition have lost their ability to contribute to the screening of the Welcome Center; 2- to approve the current plan. Ms. Taylor asked the Commissioners if there are any further comments. None were heard.

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

VOTED that the yews are a secondary feature and in their current condition have lost their ability to contribute to the screening of the Welcome Center.

Ms. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Ms. Searle, that the Commission approve the current plan.

Mr. Abbott commented that the current plan better achieves its goal than the previous design, and Ms. Kelley agreed.

Ms. Grefe expressed her concern that the staff still has concerns about the new plan. Ms. Doherty replied that the revised plan is better than the previously approved plan, and reiterated that she would like to spend more time looking over the revised plan. She suggested that the Commission approval might include allowing ongoing staff review and adjustment of the revised plan if needed.

Ms. Taylor asked if there were any objectors to the change present who would like to address the Commission. There were none.

Mr. Sanderson asked Mr. Emidy to whom notice of this item being on today's agenda was provided. Mr. Emidy replied that the Bellevue Ochre Point Neighborhood Association (BOPNA) was notified. Ms. Kelley asked if the Friends of Newport Preservation (FONP) were notified. Mr. Emidy replied that they were: he contacted Mohamed Farzan, of the BOPNA to request contact information for the FONP because none is listed on either website. Mr. Farzan recommended that notice be sent to Linda Sawyer, who would bridge both groups, and provided her email address. Mr. Emidy stated that he emailed Ms. Sawyer, and she replied, thanking him for the information.

Ms. Taylor revised her motion to include authorizing the staff to review and adjust the revised plan as needed.

The Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the revised plan with authorization for the staff to review and adjust the plan as needed.

8. National Register of Historic Places

Final Review: Kay Street-Catherine Street-Old Beach Road Historic District (Additional Information and Boundary Decrease)
Newport

Ms. Warburton presented background information about the Kay Street-Catherine Street-Old Beach Road Historic District. The District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR) on May 22, 1973. The revised nomination and boundary decrease supersedes the original and is intended to: provide a complete inventory and more detailed descriptions of the resources within the district; to clarify the district's boundaries in order to eliminate non-contributing properties on the district's edges and to minimize overlap between this district and the Newport National Historic Landmark District immediately to the west; to expand the statement of significance to provide a fuller picture of the district's historical development and architecturally-significant resources; to identify the district's period of significance, which was not clearly defined in the original nomination; and to refine the district's areas of significance.

Ms. Searle asked if reducing the boundary changes the protection of buildings being removed. Mr. Emidy replied that, while no buildings are designated as contributing or non-contributing in the 1973 nomination, the buildings are considered non-contributing now, so they are not considered to be historic under the current Section 106 process. Ms. Warburton asked Helen Johnson, Preservation Planner for the City of Newport, for her input. Ms. Johnson replied that she had not looked at these buildings, in particular, but that the City has a local historic district in the area. The city typically uses contributing and non-contributing status from NR nominations to determine the boundaries of local historic districts, but in this case the local district does not have the same boundaries as the current NR district boundary. She presumes, based on past experience, that the Newport City Council would move to adjust the boundary of the local historic district to conform with the new NR boundary.

Mr. Schoettle stated that deaccessioning NR-listed buildings is not frequently undertaken and asked why we are proposing this now. Mr. Sanderson replied that the NR standards of the 1970s were less rigorous, and he thinks that the boundaries for this district were set using the natural feature – Easton's Pond – and streets as boundaries of convenience. He stated that in 2009, the City of Newport received Certified Local Government grant funds to reevaluate this district. The Newport Historic District Commission (HDC) had been looking at ranch houses to determine if they were subject to HDC review. The RIHPHC staff were unable to answer at that time based on the lack of specific information in the 1973 nomination. Ms. Warburton replied to Mr. Schoettle's question by stating that the buildings along Eustis Avenue do not meet the current

criteria for listing in the NR. Mr. Schoettle stated that the buildings along Eustis Avenue and Memorial Boulevard that we are proposing to remove from the district form a buffer along the edge of the district. Mr. Sanderson responded that the NR guidelines specifically prohibit including buffer zones in districts.

The Commissioners discussed their concerns that the removal of properties previously within the boundary would decrease their level of protection. Staff attempted to assure the Commissioners that if the boundary is not decreased, the many properties along the edge will be determined to be non-contributing, which means that they are not treated as historic properties under Section 106 or state reviews, so the boundary change does not have any effect on their protection.

Ms. Taylor asked about the staff's notification process to the City for this nomination. Ms. Warburton stated that she followed the National Park Service guidelines for notification, and additionally, had been in contact with City staff multiple times throughout the nomination process. Citing a statement by Ms. Johnson's that she had not reviewed this proposed change in boundaries, Ms. Taylor suggested that the staff might have made additional efforts to communicate with the city regarding this nomination.

Ms. Warburton continued her presentation about the district. The revised District is comprised of approximately 260 acres in the heart of Newport and contains almost 800 buildings, the vast majority of which are residential. Most were constructed between ca 1835 and ca 1945. Predominant architectural styles include the Queen Anne and Shingle styles, particularly among the district's many summer dwellings, as well as the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second Empire and Colonial Revival styles. Homes range from relatively modest workers' houses to large-scale, high-style summer "cottages" for the wealthy. Commercial, institutional and civic buildings are found principally on the district's northern, southern and western edges, which are defined by Broadway, Memorial Boulevard and the northern end of Bellevue Avenue, respectively; the eastern boundary mostly follows the rear lot lines along Gibbs Avenue. While different parts of the district have their own distinct qualities, the district has a strong sense of cohesion. The district as a whole, and individual properties within it, retain a high level of integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The Kay Street-Catherine Street-Old Beach Road Historic District is eligible for listing in the NR at the national level under Criterion A, in the area of community planning and development, and under Criterion C, in the area of architecture. The district exemplifies two aspects of Newport's historical development: its role as a fashionable summer resort, beginning with hotel construction in the mid-19th century and culminating in ambitious, often architect-designed homes of the Gilded Age, and the gradual shift in year-round residential and commercial development from the harbor, on the western edge of the city, to the east. In addition, the district's resources embrace a broad range of architectural styles from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century, in both high-style and vernacular interpretations. These include a large number of commissions by nationally significant designers and builders, such as Peabody & Stearns, Richard Morris Hunt, and McKim, Mead & White, often dating to early in their careers while they experimented with styles and forms that would later define their work. Regionally and locally significant architects, including Dudley Newton and George Champlin

Mason & Son are also well-represented. Considered as a whole, the district's buildings serve as an important case study in architectural patronage and the evolution of American architectural style in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Mr. Schoettle stated that he would like to see photographs of and have more information about the properties that are proposed to be removed from the district. Ms. Taylor proposed that any action on the nomination be tabled so that the staff can provide more information on the properties proposed for removal and about what City protections will change as a result of the removal.

Mr. Smith stated that he understands that the properties proposed to be removed are not eligible for listing in the NR.

Ms. Johnson reiterated her belief that the Newport City Council will most likely adopt our changes, adjusting the local historic district boundary accordingly, which might remove some protections.

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Schoettle, the Commission unanimously VOTED to continue the matter to the next Commission meeting.

9. Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 9:30 AM.

10. Adjourn: On a motion by Ms. Kelley, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Commission VOTED to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:17 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emidy
Acting Executive Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer