



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
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MINUTES  
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
February 12, 2020

Conference Room 300  
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
235 Promenade St. Providence, RI 02908

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA  
Dr. Tripp Evans  
Dr. Morgan Grefe  
Mr. Paul Jordan, representing Janet Coit, Director, DEM  
Ms. Tanya Kelley (arrived at 10:00)  
Mr. John Paul Loether, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon  
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing Meredith Brady, Assoc. Dir., Div. of Statewide Planning  
Mr. Clark Schoettle  
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Warren Ducharme, representing the State Building Code Commissioner  
Ms. Kaity Ryan  
Mr. Jesse Saglio, President, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation  
Ms. Lucie Searle  
Mr. John Smith

STAFF PRESENT

Donna Alqassar, Heritage Aide  
Enerida Ademi, Data Control Clerk  
Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian  
Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director  
Virginia Hesse, Principal Historical Architect  
Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist

Katherine Pomplun, Senior Grants Coordinator  
Roberta Randall, Principal Historical Architect  
Elizabeth Rochefort, Principal Architectural Historian  
Charlotte Taylor, Senior Archaeologist  
James Toner, Project Review Coordinator  
Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator

#### GUESTS PRESENT

Richard Ventrone, Preservation Society of Newport County  
Mike Taber, Preservation Society of Newport County  
Martha Werenfels, DBVW Architects  
Megan DiPrete, RIDEM  
Art Zeman, RIDEM

## II. AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:37 A.M., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding.

### 2. Minutes of January 8, 2020

On a motion by Dr. Evans, seconded by Dr. Grefe, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of January 8, 2020 without changes.

### 3. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Loether reported that:

- a) With Sarah Zurier, he attended a meeting with Barnaby Evans and others to discuss planning for events in Rhode Island related to the celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution.

Ms. Taylor stated that the state's historical societies have been celebrating the run-up to the anniversary of the American Revolution for years. Newport Historical Society, for example, has been doing so for approximately five years already.

Dr. Evans asked what year is the focus of the planning? Mr. Loether replied that it is 2026. Dr. Grefe stated that celebrations from the State will likely begin in

2022, with a celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the burning of the *Gaspee*. Sarah Zurier reported that the Secretary of State's Office is organizing a commission and that there is a meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup>. There should be more information to share with our Commissioners after that meeting.

- b) He and Katherine Pomplun had a discussion with representatives of the Town of Hopkinton regarding the CLG grant-funded project to document stone landscape features in the town's Manitou Hassannah Preserve. The project is moving forward well and is focusing strictly on documentation of the features, not interpretation.
- c) He has continued discussion with the state Division of Human Resources regarding comprehensively updating staff job descriptions and pay grades. This has been ongoing for six months. He is looking at both staff compensation and job descriptions. Most of the job descriptions for our office were written in the 1990s and updated in 2003. Based on his and Ted Sanderson's research, Rhode Island's pay scales are near the bottom of comparable states. He expects that the description and compensation changes will help us to attract better candidates for openings and retain them. To date, the response from Human Resources has been encouraging, however, he expects the biggest hurdle to be from the budget office.
- d) He met with attorney Andrew Teitz regarding a proposal to construct a 6-story hotel on vacant parcel 1-A in the I-195 Redevelopment District. The initial review that we have considered is through a Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) permit application. Because the parcel is right on the edge of the river, CRMC has setback requirements that affect the project. We have additional concerns with the proposed height and with the potential loss of gangways that historically existed on the site.
- e) Negotiations continue with the Australian National Maritime Museum regarding the wreck of *Endeavour*. The Museum has confirmed that the wreck is, indeed, *Endeavour*, and wants to raise a cannon and take it back to Australia for conservation on display for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Captain Cook's arrival there. He expects that the details on this may be in place in the next couple of weeks. Governor Raimondo's office is aware of the proceedings and Mr. Loether recently briefed Representative Joseph McNamara, who is very happy that the project is progressing.
- f) He and RIHPHC Heritage Aide Donna Alqassar had a meeting at the Waterfire Arts Center in Providence regarding the sound system and sound engineer for the 2020 Heritage Festival. Ms. Alqassar is working diligently organizing the festival. She has been speaking to the staff at the R.I. State Council on the Arts regarding a partnership of sorts for our festival, to make it a true heritage and arts celebration.

- g) [this agenda item was skipped]
- h) He provided a briefing on current RIHPHC activities and issues to Governor Raimondo's new Chief of Staff, David Ortiz. Mr. Ortiz had been briefed by outgoing Chief of Staff, Brett Smiley, and was aware of many of our programs and concerns. Mr. Ortiz seems like he will be an ally to the preservation cause.
- i) He had a meeting with Shantia Anderheggen, who is coordinating a session on climate change for the 2020 Annual Preservation Conference.

Mr. Loether asked Sarah Zurier for an update on the Conference. She reported that planning is proceeding as expected. There is an added event this year: at the conference, Glenn Gardiner will be in a session with Martha Werenfels to discuss DBVW's work at Portsmouth Abbey. Then, on Sunday, Portsmouth Abbey is having an open house at St. Gregory the Great.

- j) [staff service awards were handed out before the meeting began]
4. For consideration: State Review Board action  
SRB final approval: First Universalist Church  
78 Earle Street, Woonsocket

This agenda item was moved up one spot due to a lack of a quorum.

Elizabeth Rochefort made a presentation for final review for the former First Universalist Church in Woonsocket. The nomination received final approval from the State Review Board on February 3, 2020. The Board considered the nomination at the local level of significance under Criterion A for Religion and Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance of 1924 to 1962 begins with the construction of the church in 1924, includes the construction of a large addition in 1957, and ends with the installation of the final stained-glass windows in the addition in 1962. The owner of the building is the American-French Genealogical Society, and they are pursuing National Register listing as a condition of a State Preservation Grant they received in 2016.

The church is located at 78 Earle Street, in Woonsocket's Social district. It is the only Universalist church in the city and represents the work of two established local architects, Gorham Henshaw and Arland A. Dirlam. It is a masonry building with a raised, buff-colored brick foundation, buff-colored brick walls, and membrane and asphalt shingle roofs. The church consists of three sections: a 2-story parish house with a flat roof and short parapet and a 2-story rear ell, both constructed in 1924; and a 1-story sanctuary addition to the parish house's northwest elevation, constructed in 1957. The northeast-facing façade comprises both the original 1924 main block and the new sanctuary space and central tower added in 1957.

The church is associated with preacher and businessman Hosea Ballou, who is considered the “Father of Universalism” in the United States. Born in Rhode Island, Ballou converted to Universalism in his early 20s and published widely and became one of the most prominent figures in the sect. He visited Woonsocket numerous times in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in 1828 established a water-powered cotton mill at 15 Main Street.

About 1830, a group of Universalists began worshipping in the city. In 1839, the group erected their own building, the First Universalist Church, at the corner of Church and Main Streets in downtown Woonsocket. Hosea Ballou attended the service and preached the inaugural sermon. The church was successful from the time of its organization and grew rapidly. Prominent preachers from major cities frequently visited Woonsocket and participated in services at the church.

About 1919, the congregation purchased a lot at the corner of Earle and Snow Streets and commissioned architect Gorham Henshaw to design a new church. Henshaw designed a church with a school/parish house attached, however, only the parish hall was constructed, with completion in 1924.

By 1950, over thirty years had passed since Gorham Henshaw’s original plans for a Gothic Revival sanctuary. The First Universalist Church remained committed to constructing a new sanctuary and commissioned Arland A. Dirlam to design a modern addition to its 1924 building. The sanctuary was completed in 1957, providing formalized seating, an organ, and a sacristy. Although the design was streamlined, it struck a middle ground between modern and traditional and was published in *The Universalist Leader* magazine.

Between 1958 and 1962, the congregation added nine stained glass windows to the nave of the addition - five on the northeast façade and four on the southwest elevation. The windows were dedicated in memory of parishioners and portray Christian scenes.

The addition to the First Universalist Church achieved a longstanding goal for the parish. In the years following, the church remained an important presence in Woonsocket. By the 1980s, however, the congregation faced challenges of aging parishioners and declining membership. The congregation eventually disbanded in 2007 and the American-French Genealogical Society purchased the property. The building is now used as the AFGS research center and also houses a veterans’ museum in the parish house.

Ms. Kelley entered just after Ms. Rochefort began her presentation.

With a quorum present, a motion to accept the State Review Board recommendation was made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Dr. Evans. The COMMISSION VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the motion.

5. For consideration: Request to increase State Preservation Grant amount and duration RIDEM for project at the Fort Adams Visitors Center Newport

Mr. Jordan, an employee of the RIDEM, recused himself from the discussion and left the room.

Katherine Pomplun reported that the R.I. Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) is the recipient of a \$109,091 State Preservation Grant for comprehensive exterior masonry repointing, carpentry repair, brick replacement, replacement of missing roof shingles, and interior repointing at the Fort Adams Visitors Center, a c. 1878 warehouse in Fort Adams State Park that houses a museum and a ticket booth for selling tour tickets and memorabilia. It is staffed year-round by RIDEM Parks staff. The original project end date of March 1, 2019 was extended to March 1, 2020 last year. Competitive bidding was completed in early 2019 and the contractor began work in late summer 2019. As of today, masonry work has been completed on the north, west, and south exterior elevations, and the east elevation is nearing completion. Progress has been closely monitored and work to-date approved by RIHPHC.

RIDEM has approved two change orders as follows: a change order to authorize an additional 950 bricks necessary to complete the exterior restoration and stabilization work (\$24,500), and a change order to replace 1,000 interior bricks (\$25,000). The contract total including change orders is now \$307,295. RIDEM has requested \$40,909 in additional funding, which will bring their grant amount to the maximum allowed \$150,000. They will be responsible for supplying \$157,295 in matching funds. RIHPHC may consider awarding this amount from the unobligated pool of SPG funds, which currently has a balance of \$68,384.43. RIDEM also requests a small extension of time to June 30, 2020, to complete this additional work.

Dr. Grefe asked if the staff are aware of any other SPG projects that will be making a request for additional funds. Ms. Pomplun replied that there are none that she is aware of.

Mr. Schoettle asked how did the contractor underestimate the amount of brick replacement by 2,000 bricks? Ms. Pomplun replied that interior brick replacement was not included in the original scope of work and when they began removing windows to rehabilitate them, they discovered more damaged exterior bricks. Roberta Randall added that the original scope did include 50 percent exterior brick replacement.

Ms. Kelley made a motion to approve the increase in the grant amount and duration. The motion was seconded by Mr. Abbott and the COMMISSION VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the motion.

Mr. Jordan reentered the meeting.

6. For information: Update on State Preservation Grant project  
Preservation Society of Newport County project at Rosecliff  
Newport

Katherine Pomplun reported that the Preservation Society of Newport County (PSNC) was awarded a 2017 State Preservation Grant (SPG) of \$150,000 for activities related to the restoration of over 300 feet of the roof balustrade at Rosecliff. In July 2019, PSNC proposed to expand the project Scope of Work to include replacement of the roof and full restoration of the balustrade. They also requested an extension through March 31, 2022. The Commission approved this request, with the caveat that 100% of the grant funds are still required to be spent on the balustrade. Construction was anticipated to begin by summer 2020. In December, PSNC received the architects' cost estimate for full roof replacement and balustrade/cornice restoration: \$3.9 million if done in one phase, or \$4.6 million if done in two phases. Construction documents should be complete by late March. PSNC may go out to bid to see if the estimates are accurate, but it will not be possible to begin work this summer. Given that PSNC will need substantially more time to raise the needed funds for this project, they anticipate that the total cost may exceed \$5 million.

Rosecliff is PSNC's prime rental property and exhibit gallery in addition to being a heavily visited museum. PSNC aims to limit the required museum closure time and subsequent financial loss. Fundraising might take years and completion of the entire project by March 2022 might not be possible.

At this time, PSNC's preferred option for moving forward would be to put the grant funds toward fabrication of replacement balusters, which they would then store until they can be installed concurrently with the roof project.

Ms. Taylor asked if RIHPHC staff and the PSNC have discussed a mutual decision to terminate the current grant. Ms. Pomplun replied that we have, but that is not the PSNC's preference.

Virginia Hesse stated that there is a precedent for purchasing materials with SPG funds and having them installed later. The PSNC got a grant for Kingscote that was used to purchase roof slates which were not installed until a few years later.

Ms. Taylor stated that she is uneasy about paying for fabrication of elements for a project when the project hasn't even been bid yet.

Mr. Jordan asked if there is any demand for the \$150,000 that PSNC would give up if the decision were made to terminate the grant. Ms. Pomplun replied that there is none as of right now. Most likely, the \$150,000 would be added to the \$1 million that we hope to get

through a bond issue in the next election.

Dr. Grefe asked if this is a one-to-one match and if the original intent was to just pay for balusters. Ms. Pomplun replied that it is a one-to-one match grant and that the original grant was to pay for a section of the balustrade.

Martha Werenfels of DBVW Architects - PSNC's architect for this project - stated that as the roof systems were more closely examined for the preparation of bid documents, the original project grew to a full balustrade replacement, then to a full roof and balustrade replacement. Also, pre-fabricating the balusters allows Rosecliff, a financially important property for PSNC, to be closed for a shorter period of time. Mr. Loether added that the longer PSNC waits to begin fabrication, the more likely it is that the fabrication cost will increase.

Mr. Abbott opined that the grants program will be looked on in a better light by the state Budget office if all of the money is spent when the potential \$1 million bond comes up. Ms. Taylor stated that if the PSNC can wait until the bond issue is officially on the ballot, we would not have to worry about the perception of having so-called surplus funds.

Mr. Loether suggested that the Commissioners take the next month to think about this question and that waiting for the bond question announcement may be beneficial.

Ms. Taylor asked if the PSNC would be willing to wait until July, when the budget is released, to officially ask the Commission for the extension. Mike Taber, of the PSNC, stated that they would prefer not to wait that long. They would like to get started as soon as possible.

Ms. Taylor stated that she has concerns, and because of the way that the item appears on the agenda, the Commission cannot vote on the issue today. Mr. Schoettle said he does not have any concerns and asked for clarification as to what the concerns are. Ms. Taylor stated that because concerns have been raised, she would like for the Commission to revisit the issue after having more time to consider it.

Mr. Taber reminded the commissioners that the original intent of the grant was for work on the balustrade and that is still what will be done with the money. The only change is the scope of the project around the balustrade.

Mr. Loether thanked the PSNC for bringing the issue forward of their own initiative and for attending the meeting.

7. For discussion: Commission elections in March

Mr Loether stated that we missed an election of officers in September 2019. Elections for

Chair and Secretary will be held at the March 11 meeting. He proposed that the commissioners submit nominations for the two positions to him by email.

Ms. Kelley stated that there may be multiple commissioners whose terms expire in June, so we should be mindful of that when nominating and electing. Mr. Loether said that he will look into that and will let everyone know when their terms expire.

8. For discussion: State Register of Historic Places plaques

Mr. Loether passed around two prototype State Register plaques – one for individually-listed properties and one for properties in districts – for the commissioners to examine. He asked for any comments that they have on the plaques. They are made in Lincoln, which is a nice way to support a local business. The plan is that the Commission staff will verify that the property is listed in the State Register, but the property owner will deal directly with the foundry to make the purchase.

9. Old Business

Dr. Grefe stated that, regarding the potential bond issue on the November ballot, she has heard from other organizations that they would like to know how to go about advocating for this issue. In particular, she has heard from people on the periphery of preservation, like those who operate in historic buildings but are not specifically preservation organizations. What should they do to advocate for the grants or to better understand that process?

Mr. Loether responded that they should speak to their legislators. Dr. Grefe asked what they should say and to whom. Mr. Schoettle stated that Preserve Rhode Island should be the lead organization for this effort.

The commissioners discussed the potential for the preparation of a white paper or talking points to make available to those who wish to advocate for the bond issue. Preserve Rhode Island could be the point of contact.

10. New Business

Ms. Taylor observed that the Commission has been close to coming up short of a quorum on a few occasions recently. She asked if meetings are being held too often or if the location is a problem. Dr. Grefe asked if the time of day is an issue.

Mr. Schoettle state that on other boards that he has served on, they have looked at attendance and touched base with those who are regularly absent to confirm that they are,

indeed, interested in serving. That can be wake up call.

It was agreed that we would continue to monitor on this and discuss it further if necessary.

10. Announcements

The next Commission meeting will be held March 11, 2020 at the same location.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emdy  
Deputy Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer