



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, R.I. 02903

Telephone 401-222-2678
TTY 401-222-3700

Fax 401-222-2968
www.preservation.ri.gov

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES (Draft)
September 9, 2020

Members Present

Ms. Donna Alqassar
Mr. J. Paul Loether
Ms. Elizabeth Rochefort
Dr. Timothy Ives
Ms. Sarah Zurier
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Dr. Marisa Brown

Members Absent

None

Staff Present

Ms. Joanna Doherty

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 11:02 a.m. by RIHPHC Executive Director J. Paul Loether.

2. Approval of Minutes of the August 12, 2020, Committee meeting.

Ms. Zurier noted that she was erroneously included in the Minutes under Members Present, and asked that this be corrected to indicate that she was absent from the meeting. Upon a motion by Ms. Alquassar, seconded by Ms. Rochefort, and by a roll-call vote of each of the Members Present, the Minutes of the August 9, 2020, meeting were approved as corrected.

3. Review and discussion Presentation by RIHPHC Principal Architectural Historian Joanna Doherty.

Mr. Loether noted that in response to a request by the Committee at its August 12, 2020, meeting, he had requested that Ms. Doherty, as the RIHPHC's historic cultural landscapes expert, attend the meeting and provide the Committee with her perspective on: what the agency has accomplished in terms of identifying and preserving those landscapes to date; and her perspective as to what the agency's future

efforts could/should be in that regard. A brief review and discussion among the committee members and MS. Doherty followed Ms. Doherty's presentation.

4. Review and discussion of initial draft RIHPHC Strategic Plan.

Mr. Loether opened this agenda item with a request for comments from Committee members on the initial draft of the Strategic Plan as sent to the Committee members the week prior to this meeting.

Mr. Schoettle commented that he thought the plan as presented was generally good and relatively easy to understand.

Ms. Rochefort questioned how the Commissioners fit into the plan with respect to the goals identified therein—i.e., is it possible to better differentiate between staff work-plan implementation goals and bigger-picture “strategic” goals of the Commissioners? She agreed to provide a concrete example of the language she believes might address this issue concretely.

Mr. Schoettle noted that, beyond specific legal mandates the Commission must fulfill, the Commission relies heavily on staff to set the agency's strategic goals and the implementation objectives necessary to achieve those mandates. He noted he thought that is what the current draft of the Plan is seeking to do: represent the legal requirements of the agency within the context of Rhode Island preservation given the current limitations imposed by agency staffing and budget levels.

Ms. Rochefort referred to Goal Four in the draft Plan—to promote equity and representation in preservation as not necessarily being a sweeping change, but as an example of a new strategy/goal that can be accomplished within the limitations of current agency resources. She wondered if there are other goals that don't necessarily change the direction of the agency, but ones that staff would like to see more specific Commission support for.

Dr. Brown noted her feeling that the Plan needs to include a new commitment to preserving resources related to historically underrepresented communities. She also suggested that the document should include provisions for an annual audit of annual achievements tied to the goals and objectives highlighted in the Plan, particularly with respect to achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion; doing so could chart a new course for the field.

Ms. Zuried indicated that she liked the idea of including an audit provision. She also commented that she felt the plan as presented reflected an ongoing tendency to promote programmatic “silos.” And that this Plan presents an opportunity to more strongly encourage new collaborations that can break down these silos. As an example, she suggested, “Wouldn't it be great if [economic development] wasn't just talked about on its own... if that talked about who is benefitting from economic assistance?”

Mr. Loether asked Dr. Ives if he had any comments, especially with respect to how archeology is dealt with in the draft Plan, that he found the draft so far is “reasonably solid” with respect to balancing work activities versus the strategic objectives of the Plan as a whole.

Ms Alquassar indicated that she is still “digesting” the draft, and that she remains very interested in continuing to hear other Committee members comments, especially as she is still new to preservation at this point. She indicated she doesn’t see the agency’s heritage program as being “siloeed,” thinks that the agency has overcome that kind of approach, and certainly hopes that will not happen down the line. She noted she liked the layout of the draft Plan and thought the re-envisioning of the heritage program was clearly laid out.

Mr. Loether askthe Committee’s guest presenter, RIHPHC Principal Architectural Historian Joanna Doherty for any thoughts or reactions on her part. She indicated that while she had only have a chance to skim through the draft, her initial reaction was that the language needed to be more inclusive than it’s current focus on buildings—perhaps bradening the language to include historic “resources,” which could include landscapes and other resources and not be so “building” centric. She also opined that, “in some ways, some of these goals feel like they’re more supporting goals for something that should be broader” and that “maybe that’s something that can be achieved” in one or more cross-cutting objectives.

As the number of Commission members of the Committee has diminished since July, if it would be possible to get another Commissioner (orther than Mr. Schoettle) to join the Committee for the balance or the Committee’s remaining work.

Ms. Doherty wondered if some of the issue raised by Ms. Zurier brought about the Plan might be addressed through more “beefed up” and exciting mission and vision statements that were better placed in the Plan than as currently drafted.

Mr. Schoettle essentially concurred with Ms. Doherty’s comment.

Mr. Loether indicated that he would send each member a copy of the draft Plan in MS Word, and requested that each member provide hime with written comments and suggestions in track changes via return email. He requested that written examples of proposed changes should be as specific as possible, and ideally include new or revised language. He also indicated that each member’s changes should be provided to him and shared with other members no later than COB on September 18, 2020.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:52 a.m.