

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

February 8, 2023

Location:

R.I. Department of Business Regulation  
560 Jefferson Boulevard., Warwick, R.I.  
DBR Board Room, First Floor

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA  
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Dr. Morgan Grefe  
Ms. Roberta Groch, representing Meredith Brady, Associate Director, Division of  
Statewide Planning  
Ms. Anjali Joshi  
Dr. Rod Mather  
Mr. Clark Schoettle  
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair  
Mr. Anthony Whitfield, representing James Cambio, State Building Code Commissioner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Bill Ash, Interim President, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation  
Mr. Terrence Gray, Director, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management  
Ms. Kaity Ryan  
[Vacant]  
[Vacant]  
[Vacant]

STAFF PRESENT

Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian  
Elizabeth Totten, Senior Project Review Coordinator  
Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator

## II. AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:31am., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding.

### 2. For approval: Minutes of January 11, 2023, Commission meeting

On a motion by Dr. Grefe, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 11, 2023, Commission meeting as they appear in the draft.

### 3. Executive Director's Report

Jeffrey Emidy reported that:

- a. He prepared a letter responding to the designs for Parcel 2 that were shown at the last Commission meeting. A copy was sent to commissioners with the agenda for this meeting. Staff had a meeting with I-195 Redevelopment District staff and Urbanica on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>. They discussed some changes in response to Mr. Emidy's letter. Urbanica is going to send revised drawings and staff will discuss and prepare a response.
- b. He is very close to completing the posting for the Deputy Director position. He expects to post it before the end of the week. The posting will be open for 14 days.

Also, he has been talking with Sarah Zurier about her work at the Commission. She would like to take on new tasks, and we just happen to have some openings. She is in the process of moving to the National Register and Survey program, formerly Liz Warburton's position. That means that we will now have an opening for a communications/public outreach/historian. The way our job descriptions are written, this is just a reassignment of responsibilities for Ms. Zurier, so no state-level human resources work needs to be done.

- c. The effort to remove the instances of "Providence Plantations" from the State House is moving along. There is a committee discussing it, of which RIHPHC's Ginger Hesse is a member. There are a number of occurrences on signs and plaques and state seals that are not original parts of the building, so we will not be concerned about them. There are a few instances that we are concerned with, where the words occur on original fabric, like seals on the walls in the entrance lobbies, the brass seal in the rotunda floor, and in quotes on the exterior of the building, carved into the marble. Those require more analysis and critical thinking, which is ongoing.

Ms. Joshi stated that some interpretive design would be beneficial to let people know the process by which the name change happened.

- d. Cemetery Weeks 2023 are coming up in April and May. We are working with the R.I. Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries again. Sarah Zurier and Charlotte

- Taylor are organizing on our end, as they did last year. We are going to try to get more staff representation at the events this year than we did last year, and we would love to have Commission representation, too. That could be just attending, or even doing a presentation or other type of program. So, if any of the commissioners has an idea, they should let Ms. Zurier or Charlotte Taylor know. The calendar will start showing up on our website in March.
- e. He met with our new Secretary of State, Gregg Amore, and RI250 staffer Nick Edwards a couple of weeks ago to talk about the RI250 Commission. Secretary Amore asked Mr. Emidy for his initial impressions, background, anything to be on the lookout for, his concerns, etc. Secretary Amore explained that he wants to have his office staff be more active in helping the other organizations that are represented at RI250 with their events. As a teacher, he really wants to get curriculum and children's involvement to the forefront. Mr. Emidy made sure to mention to Secretary Amore that the Old State House should be the focus of a significant event on May 4, 2026, if not in size, in the caché of the attendees. Secretary Amore said that he will think about how the State Archives might be able to take part. RI250 Committee meetings have started up again; there is an Education Committee meeting tomorrow and the next full Commission meeting is on March 1.
  - f. Historic New England held its first Summit in Worcester last October. They are bringing the show to Providence on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Vets. Sarah Zurier is meeting with some representatives from HNE to see how we can help and participate.
  - g. March 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> is Historic Preservation Advocacy Week in Washington. Mr. Emidy will take part. Adriana Hazleton, of Providence Preservation Society, is the organizer for the R.I. delegation. This event is organized by Preservation Action with the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) as a partner. Mr. Emidy will attend the NCSHPO Board Meeting, NCSHPO networking events, Preservation Action advocacy events, briefings by national preservation groups and federal agencies, and we will have meetings with our Senators and Representatives – or more likely their staff. While Senators Reed and Whitehouse and Congressman Cicilline are aware of us and the cause, this will be a good chance to make ourselves known to Congressman Magaziner and his staff. Mr. Emidy attended in 2019 and it was an excellent experience.
4. For vote: Easement Review  
     Hamilton Mill (now Hamilton Harbour condominiums)  
     40 Web Avenue, North Kingstown

RIHPHC Senior Project Review Coordinator Elizabeth Totten made a presentation about a proposed HVAC Split system installation at the Hamilton Mill, at 40 Web Avenue in North Kingstown. The Commission holds an exterior easement in perpetuity on the property as the result of an IRS transaction.

The Hamilton Mill includes two former mill buildings – one wood-frame and one brick. Both are contributing structures to the Hamilton Mill Village Historic District. The wood-frame building is sited at the edge of Bissell Cove and was constructed beginning in 1838

and expanded throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The brick building is the former weave shed constructed in 1882. Both buildings were rehabilitated into condominiums. Part of the weave shed roof was removed, resulting in an open-air atrium.

A tenant in the brick building wants to install a heat pump in their condominium. The condenser will be outside the building, so the necessary wires and pipes have to go through the exterior wall. The conduit to bring the lines in is three inches in diameter. It would be located to the left of the brick column between the windows. The condenser would be mounted on the ground between the unit's two windows. The area is already bordered by a stockade fence.

Images of the wood-framed building show existing condensers. Dr. Mather asked if they were approved. Ms. Totten replied that she is not aware that they were.

The condominium board has drafted a policy about heat pumps and would like the Commission to approve the policy so that either the individual installations would not need to be reviewed under the easement or the RIHPHC staff could review them, both ways that would expedite the process. The staff recommend that the Commission: grant the staff the authority to review the outstanding request; authorize the staff to work with the condominium board to develop their guidelines for heat pump installations; and authorize staff to review and make determinations regarding the installation of heat pumps.

Ms. Taylor stated that she does not believe that any systems should be installed until a policy is in place. Susan McMullen, president of the condominium board, stated that the policy has been approved by the board. Among other things, it states that there will be no exterior ducts on the buildings, any condensers on the first floor of the brick building will be installed in the atrium, except at the corners, where they must be camouflaged, and second floor units will have equipment installed on the roof. On the wood-frame building, most of the condominiums are three stories. Ducting may not be possible for those units. The individual project that is up for RIHPHC review now is in the works.

Dr. Grefe stated that the policy should come first, then the condominium board could approve the individual project. Ms. Taylor stated that, because of the easement, the Commission should approve the policy, then the staff can approve the individual installations that conform to the policy. Ms. Joshi asked if there is value in getting a qualified installer to review the entire complex and establish parameters for where everything could be located and how to make the connections.

Mr. Abbott made a motion to approve the draft policy with the understanding that the staff will make small changes as necessary. Dr. Mather seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Abbott made a motion to allow the staff to approve the individual installation that is currently proposed. Dr. Grefe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. For discussion: Easement Review  
Jenks Park amphitheater area plan  
Broad Street, Central Falls

Ms. Totten reported that the City of Central Falls has submitted a plan for improvements to the amphitheater area in Jenks Park. The Commission holds an easement on the park and previously reviewed the conceptual master plan in March 2022 and approved the playground phase in July 2022.

The amphitheater phase utilizes a natural slope rising west to east across the west end of park. The city proposes to relocate a historic summer house, make modifications to the existing circulation pattern, change the materials for the so-called “trapezoidal feature,” and regrade the existing hill. The relocation of the Washington Street entrance and the relocation of the summer house to serve as a stage for the amphitheater necessitate modifications to the pathways. There will be new pathways located close to where the existing are, which will maximize the amount of useable open green space while reflecting the historic circulation patterns. The slope will be regraded to optimize the viewing and listening experience during performances at the amphitheater. In this design, the City is proposing to retain most of the trapezoidal lawn. The concrete will be removed and replaced with pavers or demarcated by a stone wall.

Regarding this portion of the plan, in March 2022, the Commission approved the staff recommendation that the existing circulation pattern and pathway routes should be retained, including the so-called trapezoidal feature. The Commission also approved the relocation of the summer house from the southern boundary of the park to the area between the playground and the amphitheater. The staff recommendation is that the Commission grant approval of the design and permit staff to continue working with the city to determine materials.

Dr. Grefe asked when the trapezoidal feature went in. Ms. Totten replied that it was present by 1895 and may have been a water feature, but by 1906, it is shown on maps as a grass area. Dr. Grefe confirmed that it was water for a time. She added that the new curvilinear paths reflect the front of the park and are good, but the treatment of the trapezoidal pathway is awkward.

Mr. Schoettle asked if the presence of the trapezoidal feature in 1910 automatically gives it historical importance. Dr. Grefe asked if there is a way to memorialize it. Ms. Joshi stated that the treatment feels forced. If it were merged with plants, it could create another room, like a small meadow. Ms. Taylor asked Jim Vandermillen, from the city, if the Commission not requiring the trapezoidal feature’s retention would be good or bad. Mr. Vandermillen stated that it would be good. There could be signage located in the new corner near the stone wall to show what was there.

Ms. Taylor asked if the staff would object to removing the trapezoidal path. Ms. Totten replied that removing it is a permanent treatment. It could be put back, but it would be

gone. Ms. Taylor stated that the concrete is going to be removed in either case. If it needs to be put back, it can be, because the city has plans. She also stated that the path is not original, so it isn't a historic feature.

Dr. Mather asked about the Commission's previous statement that the pathways should be retained. Dr. Grefe stated that that was a response to the concept, stating that there should be paths - they should not all be torn up. Ms. Joshi stated that the removal of impervious surfaces is desirable. Dr. Mather asked if there are original plans of the park showing this layout. Dr. Grefe replied that there are not – it is an iterative development.

Ms. Joshi stated that the Commission could make a case for preserving some of the historic trees. Dr. Grefe stated that that is the plan – there is no culling planned. Mr. Vandermillen confirmed this.

Ms. Taylor suggested a motion to approve the amphitheater plan with the caveat that the Commission is not insisting that the trapezoidal lawn be demarcated and that the Commission staff will continue to work with the city on adjustments. Dr. Grefe made the motion and Mr. Abbott seconded it. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion. Mr. Schoettle had to leave partway through the discussion.

## 6. Announcements

The next Commission meeting will be held on March 8, 2023. Mr. Emidy stated that he will be in Washington, so someone else will have to take notes and prepare the minutes.

Ms. Groch announced that there will be a talk at the First Unitarian Church on February 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm about the church's ties with slavery.

## 8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:42am.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emidy  
Executive Director