

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION



Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

August 9, 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, Interim State Historic Preservation Officer
Ms. Anjali Joshi
Ms. Roberta Groch, representing Meredith Brady, Associate Director, Division of
Statewide Planning
Dr. Rod Mather
Ms. Kaity Ryan
Mr. Clark Schoettle

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Elizabeth Tanner, Secretary of Commerce, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Mr. James Cambio, State Building Code Commissioner
Mr. Terrence Gray, Director, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Dr. Morgan Grefe
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair
[Vacant]
[Vacant]
[Vacant]

STAFF PRESENT

Virginia Hesse, Restoration Project Manager
Roberta Randall, Restoration Project Manager
Elizabeth Totten, Principal Project Review Coordinator

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:38am., Mr. Abbott, Secretary, presiding.

2. For approval: Minutes of July 12, 2023, Commission meeting

On a motion by Ms. Ryan, seconded by Mr. Schoettle, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2023, Commission meeting as they appear in the draft.

3. Executive Director's Report

Jeffrey Emidy reported that:

- a. Joanna Doherty and he have completed interviews for the Assistant Administrator, Financial Management position opening. They interviewed four people and will make an offer to someone this week. They plan to post the vacant Grants Manager position next.
- b. We were notified on July 17th that the National Park Service has awarded a \$750,000 grant for improvements to the Old State House. The Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) gets the grant because they own the building, but this is a grant that RIHPHC staff advocated for and wrote the application for. The construction scope includes: plaster repair, interior painting, replacement of non-historic flooring, work on the parade including repair of the ashlar retaining wall at the North Main Street sidewalk, the perimeter fence, and cobblestone gutters; and repair of the brownstone stairs on the parade side of the building. Additionally, primary research will be conducted to reveal new information about the construction of the Old State House and how it relates to the economic, labor, and social history of Rhode Island. This information will be used to update the Old State House National Register nomination. The staff did a great job of working together to design this project and write the application. Specifically, Ginger Hesse, Sarah Zurier, Roberta Randall, Joanna Doherty, and Elizabeth Totten should be congratulated and thanked for their efforts. Mr. Emidy also acknowledged that Corrie deBoer and DCAMM's Charles Ladue provided a lot of assistance in plans and pricing. Of course, we also need to thank DCAMM for agreeing to allow us to apply. That may have been made a little easier because there is no match required for this grant.
- c. He distributed a handout (attached) with some pages from our capital budget submission for state fiscal year 2025, which runs from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. This was submitted on July 25th. The first three pages are our transmittal letter, which goes into a little detail about each of the programs. Directing them to the last page, he reviewed our line items, broken out by projected spending per fiscal year.

d. He had a meeting with Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff Kate Pirraglia: He corrected her title on the meeting agenda; she is the Senior Advisor and Special Counsel to the governor. They had their first meeting on July 21st. He told Ms. Pirraglia a bit of the basic information about what we do at RIHPHC, and they spoke about the proposed State Preservation Grants bond issue request that he was going to include in the capital budget. He also mentioned our need to have a State Historic Preservation Officer appointed. He believes that it was a good conversation as a way to keep the lines of communication open with the governor's office. They are scheduled to meet every month to discuss what's going on and any needs that we have.

4. For vote: Easement Review
Wilcox Park Caretaker's Cottage: porch and ramp
Westerly

Elizabeth Totten made a presentation to update information about a proposal by the Town of Westerly to rehabilitate the Caretaker's Cottage in Wilcox Park. The RIHPHC holds a preservation easement on the property that does not reach to the interior of the building.

When the project was reviewed at the April 2023 Commission meeting, the Commission approved a number of actions but asked for further consideration of alternatives to the proposal to replace the bulk of the cottage's front porch. The project team subsequently conducted further investigations into the structure of the porch and found that it is structurally sound. The proposed work for the porch now is to create a ramp by regrading at the end of the porch, from which users will cross the porch to the entrance, where the threshold of the door will be lowered. They are asking to completely replace the existing wood columns with wood columns. Staff recommend approval of the proposed scope of work.

Mr. Schoettle made a motion to approve the proposed work. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ryan and passed unanimously.

5. For vote: Easement Review
Woonsocket House (Block Island Historical Society)
18 Old Town Road, New Shoreham

Virginia Hesse made a presentation about the installation of a screen door at the Woonsocket House, at 18 Old Town Road, in New Shoreham. The Woonsocket House is the home of the Block Island Historical Society. The RIHPHC holds a historic preservation easement on the property.

The Woonsocket House is a three-story, Second Empire, clapboard-sided building with a side gable-roofed ell on the north elevation. The ell contains a gift shop and gallery. The Society typically leaves the door to this space open during operation and proposes to install a wood storm/screen door with removable glass and screens.

A motion to approve the proposal was made by Ms. Ryan and seconded by Mr. Schoettle. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

6. For discussion and consensus: Two potential easements in Coventry
668 Washington Street
Former Summit Library/Grange at 15 Old Summit Road

Elizabeth Totten made a presentation to inform discussion of the potential for the Commission to take historic preservation easements on two properties in Coventry: the former Anthony Athletic Association Clubhouse at 668 Washington Street and the former Summit Library/Grange at 15 Old Summit Road.

The Clubhouse was constructed circa 1918 and is a contributing resource in the Anthony Historic District. It is a 1½ -story, hip-roofed building with wood shingle siding and nine-over-nine, wood sash windows. The interior has been modified with modern paneling and dropped ceilings. Overall, the building has a high degree of integrity.

The Library is a 2½ -story, front gable-roofed, rectangular-plan building constructed in 1885. While the building has never been formally evaluated for National Register of Historic Places individual eligibility, the Summit neighborhood is identified in the RIHPHC's *Historic and Architectural Resources of Coventry, Rhode Island: A Preliminary Report* as being potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. The building became a library in the twentieth century. According to the Coventry Historic District Commission (HDC), this may be the only remaining grange hall in the town.

The Town of Coventry owns both buildings and intends to sell them. Because they are town-owned, we review the disposal under the State Historic Preservation Act, and transfer out of municipal ownership constitutes an adverse effect as, if the property passes into private ownership, review under the State Act is lost. Coventry has local historic district zoning, but these buildings are not within the HDC's purview. The HDC supports preservation of the buildings, but the feeling is that they cannot make these buildings single-building districts because that would constitute spot zoning.

Historic preservation easements are the typical mechanism for preserving historic buildings that are passing out of municipal control. The town is amenable to exterior easements on both the Clubhouse and Library. It is up to the Commission to decide if it should take these easements, and today, we are asking the Commission for concurrence on whether or not it wants to take these easements.

Regarding the Library, Mr. Schoettle asked if it has a basement and opined that the lack of windows on the front of the building could be a hinderance to reuse. Ms. Totten replied that there is no basement but there are a lot of windows on the side elevations and that an architect on the HDC has been studying the building and is working on reuse ideas.

Mr. Schoettle stated his surprise that the town cannot change their rules to put these buildings under HDC control; Providence does this often. He expressed concern that it is a slippery slope if the Commission takes easements on buildings that are not particularly significant. Ms. Groch said that she would speak with the town planner about the situation.

Ms. Ryan stated that this is an opportunity for the Commission to position itself as a resource for local preservation efforts.

Mr. Abbott asked if the consensus is to table the matter until further conversation can be had with the town planner regarding the HDC questions. The commissioners agreed.

7. Announcements

The next Commission meeting will be held on September 13, 2023.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:24 am.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emdy
Executive Director



RI Historical Preservation
& Heritage Commission

FY2025-2029 Capital Budget



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25 July 2023

Joseph Codega, Jr.
State Budget Officer
Rhode Island Office of Management and Budget
Department of Administration
One Capitol Hill, 4th Floor
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Re: Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
FY2025-2029 Capital Budget Submission

Dear Mr. Codega:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) respectfully submits our Capital Budget request for fiscal years 2025 through 2029. We currently have three active capital projects, all of which appeared on our FY2024 request, and we are introducing two new capital projects this year.

Our top ranked capital budget item is the Historic Preservation Grants, which funds what we refer to as the State Preservation Grants (SPG) program. We anticipate closing out our oldest SPG budget item in FY2024. The outstanding balance represents one grant project remaining to be completed from a 2014 bond and 15 projects from a 2021 bond. These grants are extremely important to historic sites, museums, and cultural arts centers throughout the state for repairing and maintaining their facilities.

Second in our ranking of capital projects is the Old State House ADA Compliance Project. We secured a \$500,000 grant from the National Park Service's *Save America's Treasures* program for this project. The grant must be matched 1:1, and we have been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Governor's Commission on Disabilities to do so. This funding is in DCAMM's project budget, as are additional expenses. The project will install an elevator in the Old State House, create new, ADA-compliant restrooms, improve an existing ADA-accessible restroom, and make associated improvements. This work constitutes the first phase of a three-phase project to make improvements to the interior of the Old State House to enhance the visitor experience and make it a better-functioning office building. Phase 2 is a new item in this budget request, but Phase 3 is not included.

Third-ranked among our capital budget projects is the Archaeological Collection Facility. RIHPHC staff are working with the University of Rhode Island to catalog the state's archaeological collections and establish an archivally-stable storage and study facility at the South Kingstown campus. Due to delays in federal appropriation and staff changes at the RIHPHC, this project was not advanced as far as anticipated during fiscal 2023, and no funds have been spent to date. However, we are currently awaiting approval from the National Park Service and URI has committed a space for the archival storage. We anticipate that the majority

of the renovation of the space at URI will occur during FY2024 and we will be able to move artifacts into that location in FY2025.

Our fourth ranked capital project is a new item: the Old State House Interior and Parade Restoration Project. In 2022, the RIHPHC, with the support of DCAMM, applied for a *Semiquincentennial Grant* from the National Park Service for a project to rehabilitate the interior of the Old State House and its parade (west lawn). This is the Old State House Phase 2 project referenced earlier in this letter. On July 17, 2023, we were notified that we have been awarded a \$750,000 grant for the project. A match is not required for the grant.

The Old State House Interior and Parade Restoration project will continue the work of the ADA Compliance project to rehabilitate the Old State House to an appearance befitting its historical significance. The interior project will refresh painted surfaces, replace worn flooring, and install finish carpentry over plumbing and electrical systems that were planned to be enclosed as part of the 2015 HVAC improvement project. The project at the parade will rehabilitate its perimeter fence, rehabilitate the stairs at the North Main Street entrance to the parade, rehabilitate the building's west exterior stairs, and provide much-needed attention to the lawn and trees on the parade. Finally, a research project will seek to bring to light the conditions that led to the construction of the Old State House, the people who were involved in the effort, and other historically significant events that occurred at the site.

Continuing the efforts begun in 2020 to bring the Old State House back to a glorious appearance and accessibility for all is especially fitting as we approach the Semiquincentennial of the United States in 2026. These projects will allow us to support 250th festivities at a building that is crucial to our state's and our country's history.

The fifth-ranked of our capital requests is a request for a general obligation bond-financed project to continue the State Preservation Grants (SPG) program. As in 2014 and 2021, we are proposing to be part of a joint bond request with the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts (RISCA). The RIHPHC requests \$12 million to fund the SPG program and we understand that RISCA will request \$6 million to fund subgrants for arts organizations. The total \$18 million Creative and Cultural Economy Bond (continuing the naming convention from 2014) would allow both agencies to facilitate multiple grant rounds in the years following the 2024 election.

The SPG program funds capital preservation projects at public historic sites, museums, and cultural arts centers located in historic structures throughout the state. SPGs are awarded through a competitive application process. The program is a matching grant program that directly leverages the investment of non-state dollars. It promotes careful planning for the restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation of a variety of historic resources. Through its matching requirements, the program stimulates broader support and participation in historic preservation projects statewide.

Though we have not yet finalized the details, the RIHPHC commissioners have approved in concept a plan to distribute the \$12 million in bond funds over four annual grant cycles beginning in 2024 (the application process will begin in 2024, with grants awarded in 2025). Each cycle will offer have a cap of \$3 million with the first cycle prioritizing projects at properties that are related to the U.S. Semiquincentennial and the three subsequent cycles likely following our typical format. We anticipate holding discussions with our preservation partners in the coming months to consider expanding the eligibility criteria of the program, increasing the

maximum grant award amounts, and other changes to improve the reach and administrative efficiency of the program.

One item on our project summary is zeroed-out: the second phase of Historic Preservation Grants – this was the 2021 funding that, since being awarded, has been added to the existing Historic Preservation Grants line item.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. If you have any questions, please contact me directly at 222-4134 or jeffrey.emidy@preservation.ri.gov.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Emidy
Executive Director
Interim State Historic Preservation Officer

C: Sharon Reynolds Ferland, House Fiscal Advisor
Stephen Whitney, Senate Fiscal Advisor
Luana Dumitrache, Budget and Policy Analyst, Office of Management and Budget
2nd copy to Joseph Codega, Jr.

State of Rhode Island
Project Report
 Project Summary

027 - Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission

Project	Project Name	Rank	Pre2024	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Post 2029	Total Capital
HPGRANTS	Historic Preservation Grants	1	5,033,000	967,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000,000
OSHADA	Old State House - ADA Compliance Project	2	0	500,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	500,000
ARCH	Archaeological Collection Facility	3	0	95,000	40,000	15,000	0	0	0	0	150,000
766181	Old State House Interior and Parade Restoration Project	4	0	0	750,000	0	0	0	0	0	750,000
084707	State Preservation Grants 2024-2027	5	0	0	300,000	2,000,000	2,500,000	3,000,000	2,700,000	1,500,000	12,000,000
HPGRANTS2	Historic Preservation Grants Phase 2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sum:			5,033,000	1,562,000	1,090,000	2,015,000	2,500,000	3,000,000	2,700,000	1,500,000	19,400,000
Total # of Project = 6											