



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

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

Fax 401-222-2968  
[www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

MINUTES  
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
February 10, 2021

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA  
Dr. Morgan Grefe  
Mr. Paul Jordan, representing Janet Coit, Director, DEM  
Mr. John Paul Loether, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon  
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing Meredith Brady, Assoc. Dir., Div. of Statewide Planning  
Ms. Kaity Ryan  
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Warren Ducharme, representing the State Building Code Commissioner  
Dr. Tripp Evans  
Mr. Jesse Saglio, President, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation  
Mr. Clark Schoettle  
[Vacant]  
[Vacant]

STAFF PRESENT

Donna Alqassar, Heritage Aide  
Enerida Ademi, Data Control Clerk  
Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director  
Elizabeth Rochefort, Principal Architectural Historian  
Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 A.M., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding. Ms. Taylor explained the procedures that would be followed by Commissioners and attendees of the meeting.

2. Roll call

Ms. Taylor called the roll of commissioners. See page one of these minutes for the attendance list.

3. For action: Election of Commission Officers

Mr. Loether explained that he put out a call for nominations for Commission officers. He received one nomination for Ruth Taylor as chair, and none for secretary. These elections will hold for a year from today.

Mr. Abbott nominated Morgan Grefe for secretary. Ms. Taylor asked if Mr. Abbott is willing to accept nomination to remain as secretary. Mr. Abbott indicated that he would accept. Ms. Taylor asked Dr. Grefe if she would accept the nomination. Dr. Grefe explained that, unfortunately, she cannot take on that responsibility now. Ms. Taylor stated that, with Mr. Abbott's permission, she would nominate him as secretary.

Mr. Loether asked for a motion to approve the election of Ruth Taylor as chair and Michael Abbott as secretary for the coming year. Ms. Ryan made the motion, and Dr. Morenon seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Loether updated the commissioners on vacancies in the Commission. There are currently three vacancies. Four commissioners: Mr. Abbott, Dr. Evans, Dr. Grefe, and Mr. Schoettle, are serving past the expiration of their terms last June, as allowed by statute. He is recommending to the Governor's Office the reappointment of Mr. Abbott as architect, Dr. Evans as architectural historian, Dr. Grefe as historian, and Mr. Schoettle as a member of the public, a shift from his previous role representing a nonprofit organization, since he is no longer part of one. Each of these would serve through 2023.

The terms of Ms. Ryan and Ms. Taylor are scheduled to end at the end of 2021. We are recommending that they be extended for one year, to the end of 2022 to reestablish the statutory requirement for staggered terms.

We're also proposing Rod Mather, a new appointment in the role of archaeologist, for a one-year term. In addition to that, we're recommending Loren Spears as a museologist, Keith Stokes as a nonprofit preservation organization representative, and Anjali Joshi a landscape historian working out of Cumberland for a full three-year term to run to 2024. If the Governor's Office approves the recommendations, they go to the Senate for approval.

4. For approval: Minutes of January 13, 2021 Commission meeting

Ms. Taylor pointed out that there is a typographical error in the Old Business Section. On

a motion by Dr. Grefe, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2021 Commission meeting with the one typographical change.

## 5. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Loether reported that:

- a) He covered the commissioner appointments earlier, after the election of officers.
- b) He has been working on Section 106 reviews of three new wind farm projects that are slated for installation in Rhode Island Sound, between Block Island and Martha's Vineyard. South Fork Wind Farm will be 18 turbines. Sunrise Wind Farm and Revolution Wind Farm are near South Fork, so the number of turbines has increased to 250. The units are 873 feet tall to the tip of the rotor and about 328 feet wide at the blade tips. They are talking about spacing them a nautical mile apart, so this will potentially be on a significant portion of the horizon from the standpoint of Newport and Block Island. We are looking at it from the cumulative effect angle and there may be some traditional cultural property issues, but none that he is aware of right now. There has been no discussion as of yet with the Narragansett or the Wampanoag Tribes. Biggest concern right now is that the Revolution Wind cable will come up the West Channel, and he's not sure what the archaeological potential is on the bottom.

He's not expecting the visuals of this will be incredibly significant because of the distances involved: roughly 15 miles from Block Island and 15 miles from Rough Point. Visibility is not always that great and can vary widely in the span of a few hours. We are in the review process, but the Massachusetts SHPO is also involved, so he will keep the commissioners apprised of what we know.

Mr. Abbott asked what the height of the proposed turbines is in relation to the ones off Block Island. Mr. Loether stated that he believes the ones off Block Island are 500 to 600 feet.

Ms. Taylor asked where the energy is going. Mr. Loether replied that it is going to Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York.

Ms. Ryan asked what the notification process is for properties that might be impacted by these projects. Mr. Loether replied that he is not sure. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is responsible for that. Ms. Ryan stated that she is concerned for the residents in Newport and on Tuckerman Avenue. Ms. Taylor stated that the [Newport] Historical Society has been getting invitations. Mr. Nelson added that the projects will be reviewed by the Energy Facilities Siting Board and there will be a series of public hearings there as well, so there will be opportunities for public comment.

- c) He met with members of the Department of Administration's Division of Statewide Planning regarding the revision of State Guide Plan Element #40. The

element is fully consistent with the State Historic Preservation Plan, but the target audience is different; while the public certainly has access to it, the target is really state agencies, instrumentalities, and municipalities. He complimented Planning and Kevin Nelson on the work they've done reviewing the element and providing assistance. He hopes to get something to the commissioners for review at the March meeting, then it will go out for public review after the Commission is done with it.

- d) He has completed review of 34 CRMC permit applications. It is the time of year when application numbers increase because spring and summer projects are coming in.
- e) He is continuing to work with the Division of Human Resources on the staff salary and job description project. He expects that we may get a couple of positions out for public hearings in the next three to four weeks. In the meantime, we are continuing work on revising job descriptions for the rest of the staff. If a job opened in Connecticut, say in archaeology, a person from here could almost double their salary by moving across the state line. That is not keeping us competitive.

He reported that he and staff have reviewed the qualifications of over 50 applicants and conducted interviews for the open Project Review Coordinator position. They are now going to go over their notes and decide who to forward to Human Resources for approval.

- f) He prepared and sent recommendations to the Governor's Office for new Commissioner appointments and reappointments. The appointments should be staggered. In 2016-2017, when the last appointments were made, the governor's office did not stagger the dates, so a lot of members' terms expire at the same time. He will attempt to reestablish the staggered terms through this round of appointments. He will recommend Loren Spears to fill the position of museologist and Keith Stokes as representative of a preservation organization. Pierre Morenon has indicated that he intends to step down and he hopes to appoint Rod Mather, Chair of the Department of History for the graduate school at URI. A couple of the current commissioners' terms will expire in June, and that will be a separate component.

Ms. Taylor asked if Mr. Loether would let the serving Commissioners know their status and what he intends to do. Mr. Loether stated that he will do that. His goal is to have all of this submitted by the end of January to establish full statutory compliance.

6. For consideration: approval of proposed RIHPHC Strategic Plan 2021-2027

The commissioners were provided with a copy of the draft RIHPHC Strategic Plan prior to the meeting. It was made available to the public via a link on the posted agenda.

Mr. Loether explained that the Strategic Plan incorporates the Comprehensive State

Historic Preservation Plan. It is not something that is required of the agency, but specifically focuses on administrative, rather than programmatic, goals. He thanked all of the members of the Strategic Planning Committee; whose input was very helpful. The document is not intended for the public, though it is a public document, but rather as a guide for the commissioners and staff as they move forward over the next six to seven years.

Ms. Taylor asked the commissioners if they are comfortable making a motion to approve the Strategic Plan as presented. On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Dr. Grefe, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the draft Strategic Plan without changes.

7. For discussion: Easement action at Faxon Lodge, 28 Gammell Road, Newport

Mr. Taylor explained that there is ongoing work at Faxon Lodge, in Newport, upon which the Commission holds an easement. Mr. Loether stated that John Boxer, the attorney for the property owner, and Glenn Parker, the contractor for the project are supposed to be on the call.

At Ms. Taylor's request, Mr. Loether explained that the staff were notified by a member of the public that there was work going on at the property, upon which we hold an easement in perpetuity. He reminded the commissioners that, not too long ago, there was a request to subdivide the property into separate parcels for the house, itself, and the carriage house. The Commission approved that action with the stipulation that the preservation restriction runs with both properties. After we were notified of the ongoing work, Mr. Loether asked Roberta Randall to drive by the site to confirm what was going on. We understand that a wing of the building had already been demolished, but that the wing was not historic.

The owner and contractor have been working with an original set of plans to restore elements. We still have a lot of background on the project to flesh out, but everything we have seen so far seems to be consistent with the Secretary's Standards. That said, they are in violation of the easement and the work actually needs to be approved by the Commission. We do not have a complete file at this time, to allow us to do that. Mr. Loether has informed the owner and his attorney that, given the potential damage that can be caused at a semi-open building by winter weather, they may proceed with work, however, they still need to get a formal approval from the Commission, potentially in March.

Elizabeth Rochefort informed the participants that John Boxer, John Murphy, and Glenn Parker are on the call. They were promoted to panelists.

A photograph of the house that was distributed to the commissioners prior to the meeting was shared onscreen.

Ms. Taylor asked the project representatives what part of the building has been removed. The project team replied that a flat-roofed addition on the left side in the image has been

removed. Ms. Taylor asked the team to explain how it came to be that work started without the Commission being notified. Mr. Parker explained that the work started approximately last fall with painting, at which time some deteriorated fabric was discovered, primarily on sills and battens. His company was engaged to replace things that could not be repaired or filled as necessary, ahead of the painters. There was also some stucco deterioration and some structure behind it that needed to be replaced. When they got to the junction between the addition and wall, they noticed water infiltration that needed to be addressed. The decision was made to remove the addition. To date they have replaced approximately 10 percent of the stucco and 30 percent of the battens. They are working on window sills right now.

Ms. Taylor asked Mr. Loether where the easements are usually recorded. He replied that they are in land evidence records, this one is in book 401 page 176. Ms. Taylor asked if that would have been transmitted to the owner when the house was bought. Ms. Loether replied that the owner would have done the recording for the restriction originally, and one would assume that under Rhode Island law it would be required in a disclosure statement or that it would show up under a title search. Ms. Taylor hypothesized that it was lost in the shuffle of everything. Mr. Loether replied that he believes it is fair to say that, however, the process used to begin the work was not correct, and we are not particularly happy about that.

Ms. Taylor asked what the next steps are. Presumably, the people managing the project are aware that they need to work with your [RIHPHC's] architects? Mr. Loether replied that, from our perspective, we would like to monitor the work as is it completed. That way we can make it clear that if something is not done in accordance with the standards, we can require it. However, a formal approval by the Commission is going to be necessary, probably in March.

Mr. Parker proposed that the team prepare a set of documents and specifications that includes a description and clear representation of what they have done and anything that they think they may have to do going forward. They would then submit it for RIHPHC review. If, after that review, they see anything additional that they think they need to do, they would get RIHPHC permission for that, at that time. Ms. Taylor replied that the Commission would rely on the staff to recommend approval, and that Mr. Parker's proposal is acceptable.

Ms. Taylor stated that the Commission does not need to take any action on this matter at this time and asked if anyone had questions. Mr. Parker stated that he wants to emphasize that the project team is in full agreement with the intention of the Commission for the preservation of the property. He asked for confirmation of his understanding that the easement does not extend to the interior of the building. Mr. Loether replied that that is his understanding, having read the restriction. Ms. Taylor recommended that everyone review the easement just to be clear. Mr. Loether added that he has made it clear to the project team that, until the Commission issues its final approval, technically they are at risk moving forward, but that we are allowing it because of the season of the year and we will continue to work with them to make sure that any issues can be resolved before the

work is done.

8. For endorsement: State Historic Preservation Review Board action  
Final approval: Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Complex  
49 Westfield Street, Providence

Jeffrey Emidy reported that he presented the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Complex, at 49 Westfield Street, in Providence, for final review at the February 1, 2021, State Review Board meeting. The nomination was prepared by Roysin Younkin, of MacRostie Historic Advisors, as part of a tax credit application.

The property consists of three interconnected brick industrial buildings. The Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Building was constructed in 1885. The red brick factory building rises two stories over a raised basement. It has a shallow gable roof with exposed rafter tails. The building originally had regularly spaced, segmental arched windows with quarry-faced granite sills, but most are now bricked-in, glass-brick filled, or partially bricked-in with small, rectangular, mid-20th century windows inserted. The four-bay façade faces north onto Warren Street. The main entrance was located in the westernmost bay and led to the company offices, which were located on the ground floor. The west elevation originally featured a two-story projecting stair tower with a shallow gable roof centrally located on the elevation. The tower was enclosed within two vulcanizing rooms built ca. 1920 and ca. 1950 and converted to an elevator shaft by 1950. The vulcanizing rooms form a two-story brick block that encompasses six bays of the elevation. They are utilitarian in appearance with minimal fenestration and a flat roof. A brick freight elevator shaft is located one bay south of the vulcanizing rooms addition, and a small, two-story, concrete block stair tower located one bay further south on the elevation is of relatively recent construction.

The interior of the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Building retains open floor plates, wood floors, exposed, brick perimeter walls, and rows of regularly-spaced, round, steel, columns. Ceilings are exposed wood decking with heavy timber wood beams, many of which have been wrapped in fiber cement and painted. Stairs located along the west elevation within the concrete block are metal with metal handrails.

The Bourn Rubber Company Receiving Building was constructed ca. 1920, attached to a now-demolished cluster of frame buildings. The one-story, brick building is five bays by six bays, with a flat roof. A wide garage opening is centered on the north elevation and a pedestrian entrance is located one bay east of the garage entry. Large, rectangular window openings set between brick piers with recessed brick panels beneath them are located on all elevations. The openings are infilled with mid-20th century decorative concrete block with an open, rectangular pattern. Original, 6/6, double-hung, steel sash remain on the interior. The interior of the building has an open floor plan with a concrete floor and regularly-spaced rows of square, steel columns. The ceiling is exposed with heavy timber wood beams and wood decking. A concrete block office is located along the southern wall and an enclosed wood entry vestibule is located on the northern wall.

The Phillips-Baker Rubber Company Main Building was constructed ca.1930. The two-story, brick building has a roughly L-shaped plan. It abuts the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Building on the west, as well as the Bourn Rubber Company Receiving Building on the north. This is a flat-roofed, pier-and-spandrel building. The main block of the building extends 23 bays along Westfield Street and four bays along Fuller Street. A recessed pedestrian entrance is located in the tenth bay moving from west to east. Window openings between the piers are regularly spaced and rectangular, and infilled with glass-brick with window inserts or with mid-20th century decorative concrete block with an open, rectangular pattern. The second floor of the entry bay contains an original, multi-light, steel sash with a hopper. A large, modern, double garage door is on the east elevation. Modern, single-story, concrete block shipping and receiving rooms extend from the north elevation.

The interior of the Phillips-Baker Rubber Company Main Building includes a predominantly open plan with exposed brick perimeter walls, wood floors, and exposed ceiling structure and support columns. The ceiling structure is comprised of steel beams, many wrapped in fiber cement, supported by round, steel columns, with wood decking above. The main stair is located along the south wall slightly west of center. It is comprised of metal risers and treads with metal handrails and newel posts.

The Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company were producers of card clothing, a thick foundation material through which fine, closely spaced wires were pressed. When wrapped around rollers in carding machines, the wires cleaned and straightened cotton or wool fibers so that they could be spun into thread. The company was named for Samuel M. Stedman (1821-1887) and George A. Fuller (1827-1899). Fuller moved to Lawrence, Massachusetts, ca. 1854 to work for the firm of Warren and Bryant, one of the oldest card clothing manufacturing firms in the country, where he met Samuel M. Stedman. In 1856 the two men purchased half an interest in Warren and Bryant and renamed the company Stedman & Fuller. In 1885, the firm was incorporated under the name Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company and relocated to Providence. Stedman retired from actively running the business at the time of the move. He died just a few years later, in 1887.

The Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company moved into a brick factory that had been recently constructed on Westfield Street by an investor, General George Lewis Cooke. A few years after moving to Providence, the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company plant was featured in a compilation of significant manufacturing concerns in the city, where it was deemed “the most prominent concern in Providence” that combined the manufacture of leather belting and card clothing.

The Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company operated in Providence from 1885 until it was absorbed into the American Card Clothing Company combine five years later. George Fuller remained a significant figure in the field until his death in 1899. As part of the liquidation of the American Card Clothing Company combine in 1905, the former Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company building was sold to the Bourn Rubber Company.



The central figures in the Bourn Rubber Company were George O. Bourn (1809-1859), and his son Augustus O. Bourn (1834-1925). George Bourn began his rubber business as early as 1838. His son, Augustus, joined Bourn, Brown & Chaffee in 1855 and became a partner when his father died in 1859. The firm was incorporated as the Providence Rubber Company in 1861. Augustus Bourn founded the National Rubber Company in Bristol, Rhode Island, in 1864, which he merged with the Providence Rubber Company in 1867. The company manufactured shoes and boots, rubber clothing, rubber belting and hoses, and various other rubber goods. Augustus Bourn continued his affiliation with his rubber enterprises and also entered politics as a state representative for Bristol beginning in 1876 and as governor of Rhode Island from 1883 to 1885. He served as Consul-General of the United States in Rome from 1889 to 1893. When he returned to Rhode Island, the Providence branch of the National Rubber Company was reorganized as the Bourn Rubber Company and located on Westfield Street in 1894. The company was incorporated in 1901.

The Bourn Rubber Company consolidated earlier factories on the Westfield Street site in 1895. Within a few years, the company had expanded the complex. None of the buildings associated with this period of expansion survive. The next major expansion of the rubber plant occurred in the early 20th century, when the Bourn Rubber Company purchased the former Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Building and the two buildings were connected. Two adjacent houses were demolished for the construction of the Bourn Rubber Company Receiving Building by 1920. The death of Augustus Bourn in 1925 heralded change for the Bourn Rubber Company.

Victor B. Phillips purchased the Bourn Rubber Company for \$150,000 in 1925. Phillips ran the rubber company as its president while residing in Ohio, and his business partner, Charles H. Baker, resided in Rhode Island and served as vice-president. The company was renamed the Phillips-Baker Rubber Company and continued to produce rubber boots and rubber-soled canvas shoes in the Bourn Plant. During the Phillips-Baker ownership, the frame buildings that comprised the 19th century rubber facilities were demolished and replaced ca 1930 with a large, brick, L-shaped building that extended from the former Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company building to Fuller Street.

In 1936, the Phillips-Baker Rubber Company was liquidated due to unresolved labor disputes. The plant was auctioned in 1937 to the Goodyear Footwear Corporation. Charles H. Baker became the vice president of Goodyear and later served as its board chairman. Goodyear continued to operate as a boot and shoe manufacturing plant until the late 1960s. This marked the end of the plant's association with rubber manufacturing. Klitzner Industries, a local jewelry manufacturer established in 1907 as the Harry Klitzner Company, moved its operations into the plant by 1971 and was the last tenant of the plant.

Constructed between 1885 and ca.1930, the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Complex is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with several locally significant manufacturing concerns: the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company, the Bourn Rubber Company, and its successors the

Phillips-Baker Rubber Company and the Goodyear Footwear Corporation. The period of significance extends from 1885, when the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Building was constructed, until 1969, approximately when rubber production at the complex ceased.

The State Review Board approved the nomination unanimously, with a few minor changes that MacRostie is incorporating now. Though they were not overwhelmed at the condition of the buildings, they noted the importance of the rubber industry to Rhode Island's industrial economy and the ties between this complex and the National Rubber Company through Augustus Borne as a rationale for approving it.

Dr. Grefe stated that, as a historian of this period, she is concerned about why this building and the associated story are more significant than other structures. If everything is important and on the NR, then nothing is important and why do we have an NR? She cautioned to think about what the actual level of significance is in a state that had one of the highest percentages of industrialization and urbanization in this period. Mr. Emidy responded that we have made the case here that the property is eligible on the local level, as opposed to the state or national level. We also wrestle with the same question, though. Ms. Taylor noted that, if we ask ourselves if we would consider this eligible if it were not a tax credit project, we might come to an uncomfortable answer. Mr. Abbott stated that, at the Review Board meeting, the eligibility wasn't talked about so much for its architecture, but for its rubber manufacturing importance.

Dr. Morenon stated that this building is located among other industrial buildings, so what we are looking at in this area is an industrial landscape that has an important economic and social history. He added that he thinks back to his memory of Antoinette Downing's perspective that if we remove it, it will never come back. In the case where we have properties that are not the best, the decision to not support something like this is essentially sealing its doom.

Dr. Grefe stated that the case of the complex's significance is not being stated well enough. We were not special in terms of rubber manufacturing. The case isn't made strongly enough. This is a pretty normal building that tells a normal story of industrialization. This isn't a statement that we should not approve it, but rather that the evidence should be clear and unimpeachable.

Ms. Taylor stated that this Commission has a history of swooning over industrial buildings for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and being cheerful about tearing down pretty fabulous buildings from the 1950s. She thinks there is some examination that may need to happen about why we are doing that. It may be because nobody is redeveloping the gas station to turn it into housing and getting tax credits – this is a development issue as much as anything. She would like to see the Commission and the Review Board apply the same "swooniness" to other kinds of buildings that it does to buildings that have tax credits.

Dr. Morenon stated that first there is the question of what sort of demands we want to

place on preparers of nominations. When you look at an industrial building, it's pretty easy to come up with a fairly convincing document, but when you start looking at a building in terms of its social or economic history, you need to do an in-depth analysis, which is difficult and might take a lot of time and that gets into issues of cost.

Ms. Taylor agreed, and stated that, as more and more marginal buildings are being brought to the table, it is worth having the Commission have a non-reactive conversation about this. Mr. Loether stated that the crux of the issue is the marginal properties. Even at the Park Service, when they look at a tax credit Part 1 application, they say it is possible to nominate this property. Only about one third of the nominations get substantive review at the federal level.

Mr. Abbott made a motion to endorse the State Review Board's approval of the nomination of the Stedman & Fuller Manufacturing Company Complex to the National Register of Historic Places. The motion was seconded by Dr. Morenon and the COMMISSION VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the motion.

6. Old Business

An update on the 2021 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference was postponed.

7. New Business

There was no new business.

12. Announcements

The next Commission meeting will be held March 10, 2021 by video conference.

13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 am.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emidy  
Deputy Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer