



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
May 12, 2021

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Dr. Tripp Evans
Dr. Morgan Grefe
Mr. Paul Jordan, representing Janet Coit, Director, Rhode Island Department of
Environmental Management
Mr. John Paul Loether, State Historic Preservation Officer
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing Meredith Brady, Associate Director, Division of
Statewide Planning
Ms. Kaity Ryan
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

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

STAFF PRESENT

Donna Alqassar, Heritage Aide
Enerida Ademi, Data Control Clerk
Rosemary Carreiro, Fiscal Aide
Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Virginia Hesse, Principal Historical Architect
Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist
Katherine Pomplun, Principal Grants Coordinator
Elizabeth Rochefort, 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 9:31 A.M., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding.

2. Ms. Taylor explained the procedures that would be followed by Commissioners and attendees of the meeting.

3. Roll call

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

4. For approval: Minutes of April 14, 2021 Commission meeting

On a motion by Dr. Grefe, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2021 Commission meeting without changes.

5. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Loether reported that:

- a) He had a telephone call with Craig Dwyer, the Manager of Boards and Commissions in the governor's office, regarding commissioner appointments and reappointments. Mr. Dwyer had not seen the two packages of commissioner recommendations that Mr. Loether previously submitted to that office. Mr. Loether sent another copy. He plans to contact Mr. Dwyer again next week. The desire is to have everyone appointed or reappointed by the set date that their terms start.
- b) He participated in the RIHPHC's first virtual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, which was very successful.
- c) He continued the review of the proposed South Fork Wind and Revolution Wind projects, including a conference call with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and its contractor, SWCA, regarding the Revolution Wind project. He has meetings to attend on the 13th and 20th. The projects are combining their Section 106 and NEPA efforts. He had a call with Reid Nelson, Executive Director of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, to discuss this and other topics.
- d) He participated in the April 26th State House Restoration Society meeting. There is a genuine interest in having the State House designated as a National Historic

Landmark (NHL). It is the only McKim, Mead & White-designed modern state house functioning in the United States. NHL designation may contribute to the ability to raise funds for projects at the State House.

- e) He continued to work on revising the RIHPHC staff job descriptions and compensation packages and expects to have the last group to the Division of Human Resources next week.
- f) He received notification from the Division of Human Resources that the new job description and salary schedule for the RIHPHC Deputy Director position have been approved by the governor. Several other job descriptions are nearing that point. This will bring us closer to the market in terms of compensation and revising job descriptions.
- g) He emailed copies of the State Guide Plan historic preservation element to municipalities and heritage organizations for review and comment and is sending it to local historic district commissions today. Two public information sessions have been scheduled in June; in the afternoon and evening of the same day.

6. For discussion: State Preservation Grants regulations

Katherine Pomplun explained that some changes are being worked on for the regulations of the State Preservation Grants program. In March 2021, voters approved a new bond issue in support of the grant programs. One million dollars of that new bond is to be set aside for a new round of State Preservation Grants, to be administered by the RIHPHC. We have not solicited applications for a new round of grants since 2017. The staff want to review the program regulations, suggest a few changes, and get the commissioners' input on the regulations.

First, an update on the 2015-2017 program. In total, we funded 56 projects and awarded \$4.8 million. We have a leftover unawarded balance of about \$184,000 that we plan to roll over into the next grant round, and there are currently only five open projects, two of which are totally complete and pending final closeout paperwork.

Ms. Pomplun reviewed some recommended changes to the regulations, including:

- An update to the language referencing the bonds and named recipients of bond funding.
- In the definitions, there is a clarification on the definition of general maintenance, and we want to be sure that is defined as “short-term” improvements.
- Looking for ways to modernize the language and the regulations a bit. We have added that application materials can be submitted electronically and that applicants can be notified of outcomes electronically.
- The removal of language that does not need to be in regulation but should be in agency policy, such as the contents of the application and the evaluation rubric. These are things that need to be formalized and definitely approved by the Commission, but they don't need to be in regulation.

- A modification regarding the eligibility of leased properties. We previously said that any applicant with at least a 20-year lease on their property would be eligible for a grant. We are recommending changing this to state that any applicant that leases their property is determined eligible on a case-by-case basis. The reasons behind this are that reviewing pre-existing relationships on shorter leases and assessing risk on longer leases for which there is not much history match what we do in practice.
- Clarification that new construction is allowed if it is related to disabled access.
- A revision to the “small” and “large project” thresholds. This is the most substantial change impacting potential grantees. When we award grants, we separate them into small project and large project categories. In the last few rounds, a small project was a project for which the total cost was up to \$45,000. Projects in the small project category must be matched a 2:1 rate, so for every two grant dollars, the grantee supplies one, while large projects must be matched dollar for dollar. For \$45,000 total cost projects, RIHPHC would have awarded a maximum grant of \$30,000. We’re recommending increasing that small project maximum grant to \$50,000, towards a total project cost of up to \$75,000. The main idea here is that we want to incentivize and encourage smaller organizations to take on bigger projects if they can.
- There are a couple of changes to the easement requirements that reflect changes to the regulations but not changes in practice. These detail how the easement requirements apply if you already have an easement and some updates to the easement durations.

Ms. Taylor asked if Ms. Pomplun could go over those easement changes. Ms. Pomplun explained that, in an instance where the RIHPHC already has an easement on a property, rather than adding the full typical term to the existing easement, the easement will be rounded up to the length of the new easement. For example, if someone has eight years left on an easement and they get a small grant that would have a 10-year easement attached to it, we will amend two years to the existing easement to bring it up to the ten, rather than adding ten years onto the eight.

Ms. Taylor asked if there is language in the regulations that covers how comprehensive the easement will be. Mr. Loether stated that that information is in the easement, itself. Ms. Taylor stated that she understands that it needs to be in the easement language but wonders if it is also in the regulations. Ms. Pomplun stated that it is, and that the regulations state that the entire exterior is covered, and any significant interior features that are being improved by the project, and the land area surrounding the structure may be included in consultation with the RIHPHC.

Mr. Schoettle asked if the State is willing to sign easements with the Commission. Ms. Pomplun replied that we added language about that when we last made updates: the State cannot give an easement to itself, but we already have review of state-owned properties under the state historic preservation act.

Dr. Grefe mentioned that there was discussion a while back about the wording on some old easements and there were meetings with the attorney general’s office about whether those were consistent and legally enforceable, however, she does not recall the result of

those discussions. Ms. Pomplun stated that she does not recall those discussions, but that, when we extend an easement, we should and will look at the language of the existing easement to make sure that is enforceable. Mr. Loether stated that there is almost always a severability clause in the easement which says that if something is not allowed, it does not impact the requirements spelled out in the rest of the terms of the easement. Dr. Grefe acknowledged that, but asked again what the result of the past conversations with the attorney general's office was. Mr. Loether stated that he also does not recall, but that, when time allows, it will be good to revisit the old easements and establish a standardized format because there is some variation now.

Dr. Evans asked if, for this round of applications, there is any preference for first-time applicants. Ms. Pomplun replied that we have not started thinking about changes to the evaluation rubric yet, but are talking with RISCA about their evaluation procedures and will keep that in mind.

Dr. Evans asked when submissions will be due for this grant round. Ms. Pomplun replied that she is hoping for applications to come out in the late summer and be due around October.

Dr. Grefe asked if RIHPHC will be working with RISCA to clarify who can apply for which agency's grants. Ms. Pomplun replied that we plan to, but haven't yet so she doesn't have any set details. There has been some consideration of an umbrella logic where, when you apply, the application is filtered to one or the other, depending on what is more appropriate. We are working on trying to take some of the guesswork out of it for applicants.

Ms. Taylor pointed out that arts organizations can apply to RISCA for the very large pot of money that they have and apply to RIHPHC for our smaller pot of money, but preservation organizations and others can only apply to RIHPHC, so we should direct as many applicants as possible to RISCA. Though that does raise the possibility of an application being pointed to RISCA but being turned down, particularly if they are not "artsy enough."

Ms. Taylor and Dr. Grefe stated that the changes are very helpful and thanked Ms. Pomplun for her work on the regulations.

7. For consideration: Appointment of Jeffrey Emidy as Interim Executive Director effective June 27, 2021

Ms. Taylor proposed the following motion for the record:
"The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission appoints Jeffrey Emidy as Interim Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage office effective June 27, 2021 to serve until such time as an Executive Director is appointed by the Commission. Mr. Emidy to have the full power and authority of the position for this period, statutory and otherwise, and our gratitude."

The motion was made by Dr. Grefe and seconded by Mr. Schoettle. The commissioners voted unanimously to approve the motion.

8. For consideration: Resolution in support of Executive Director Loether's recommendations to the governor that:
 - 1) Jeffrey Emidy be appointed Interim State Historic Preservation Officer effective June 27, 2021 until a new RIHPHC Executive Director is appointed
 - 2) The new Executive Director, once hired, be appointed by the governor as State Historic Preservation Officer

Ms. Taylor proposed the following motion for the record:

“The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission is a legally mandated, essential component of Rhode Island's efforts to protect and preserve its uniquely abundant historic resources, which contribute to the quality of life and economic success of the State. In this spirit, the Commission supports Executive Director Loether's existing recommendations to the governor that:

- 1) Jeffrey Emidy be appointed Interim State Historic Preservation Officer effective upon Mr. Loether's retirement, June 27, 2021, to serve until a new RIHPHC Executive Director is appointed
- 2) The new Executive Director, once hired, be appointed by the governor as State Historic Preservation Officer

The Commission recommends that the path to these actions be taken immediately, to ensure the effective and professional operation of this office, the avoidance of any period of uncertainty, and a smooth transition to new leadership.”

Mr. Loether stated that he sent his formal resignation to the governor effective June 26th and has made it very clear what the duties of the SHPO are and that it has to be a formal appointment by the governor. He also made a strong recommendation for consistency and continuity's sake to appoint Mr. Emidy interim and to keep that position within the framework of the agency. It is done this way in virtually every other state. He made the point that it is actually to the great benefit of the governor to have a professional who knows what is possible and what is not to be able to provide advice to that office. Ms. Taylor added that the understanding is that the governor's office is not very familiar with the operation of this office and she is concerned about other agencies wanting to poach the office in the past and wanted to use the opportunity of writing this motion to educate the governor's office about the legal responsibilities of the office.

The motion was made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Dr. Evans. The commissioners voted unanimously to approve the motion.

9. For consideration: State Historic Review Board action
Review Board final approval: Beaver River Road Historic District

Richmond

Ms. Ryan recused herself from the discussion.

Joanna Doherty made a presentation for final National Register approval for the Beaver River Road Historic District, in Richmond. The Beaver River Road Historic District is located in the southern part of Richmond, about two miles north of the village of Kenyon. It includes three historic farmsteads stretched along 1.5 miles of Beaver River Road, so named because of the proximity of the Beaver River, which defines the district's eastern boundary. From north to south the farmsteads are: Longdenholme, later known as Hoyle Farm; Walnut Hill Farm, later known as Cliffmoore; and Jamesford Farm. Each farmstead includes a farmhouse and outbuildings, with adjacent agricultural fields. There is a total of 21 contributing and 18 non-contributing resources in the district. The district is characterized by mostly flat terrain with open fields edged by woodlands; small hills; and low-lying wetlands in its southern end.

Longdenholme/Hoyle Farm includes a 1½-story, south-facing, ca. 1800 Cape. It is sheathed in wood clapboard and wood shingles. With its symmetrical façade, central entrance, gable roof with shallow eaves, and windows set close to the cornice line, the dwelling reflects its Federal period. It has been expanded with the addition of two 1-story ells. Outbuildings include a simple, shingled shed, which dates to the late 19th or early 20th century. A small burial ground is located to the southwest of the house. It is enclosed by granite posts and pipe railings and contains nine markers, the earliest dating to 1853. The most elaborate marks the graves of William and Sarah Greene, who purchased the property in 1853. Most markers belong to members of the Hoyle family, who owned the farm from 1881 to the mid-1990s. Four residences have been built on lots subdivided from the farm: the Sarah and John Hoyle House (1968), a Cape set on a 5-acre lot with a manmade pond; two non-contributing houses, built in 1986 and 1990 and not visible from a public way; and a house constructed in 2013. The former Hoyle Farm still includes large areas of open space, currently used to grow turf and hay.

A stone wall marks the boundary between the former Hoyle Farm and the former Walnut Hill Farm/Cliffmoore. The largest of the three farms in the district, Cliffmoore includes a farm complex with a dwelling and outbuildings, as well as stone walls, all on the west side of Beaver River Road. The farmhouse was built around 1860, likely by Benjamin Moore. It is a south-facing, 1½-story dwelling that exhibits elements of the Greek Revival style. Most notable is the center entrance, which is flanked by half-sidelights and set beneath a projecting entablature. The building retains its historic fenestration pattern and 6/6 wood windows. Its five-bay-by-three-bay massing, side gable roof and symmetrical façade reflect the lingering influence of the Federal style in rural areas. The house includes a rear wing, built by 1895. Two small, late-19th-century, gabled barns with hayloft doors stand to the northeast of the house and were connected to one another in the late 20th century. An early- to mid-20th-century dairy barn stands to the north of the farmstead; it is built into the hillside and constructed of concrete with corrugated metal siding. Two other outbuildings, an animal pen and a corn crib that date to the early to mid-20th century, are non-contributing due to their condition. Cliffmoore includes

several historic landscape features, most notably an extensive allée of maple and tulip trees that were planted along Beaver River Road around 1900. Other landscape features include stone walls as well as a driftway, a dirt and grass lane edged by stone walls, which may have connected the barns to the fields to the north. The Cliffmoore farmstead is surrounded by open fields that are currently used for turf production. Two houses, both non-contributing due to their integrity, were built in the mid-20th century on small lots carved out of the farmland: the Rosanna Perrault House (ca. 1946) and the Pauline and Michael Testa House (ca. 1950).

The southernmost farm in the historic district is the Jamesford Farm, which is divided from Cliffmoore on the north by a long stretch of stone wall and a hedgerow and ditch. The Jamesford Farmhouse was built ca. 1800. It is a south-facing, wood-shingled, 1½-story, center-entrance Cape that sits close to the road. Although historic window sash have been replaced, the fenestration pattern is intact. The dwelling is a simple expression of the Federal style, with windows set close to the cornice line, slender corner boards, and small gable-end cornice returns. A small, early-20th-century gable-roof barn with a vertical-plank door and a cupola sits just north of the house. Another barn, across the street from the house, has been converted to a residence and is considered non-contributing. The former Jamesford Farm includes large expanses of open space, recently used to grow corn but currently fallow.

Agriculture was the leading economic activity in present-day Richmond in the 18th century, and it is likely that properties in the district were farmed beginning in that period. They were certainly in agricultural use by 1860, when the U.S. Census agricultural schedule showed each of the three farms in the district producing corn, oats, hay and potatoes and with a few livestock. This was a period of subsistence farming, with agricultural products used mostly for family consumption. During this period, Beaver River Road was not a true road but a driftway connecting the farms to one another. Hedgerows and stone walls in the district delineate property boundaries, and indicate probable locations of driftway gates.

By 1895, the farms were owned by the Hoyle, Moore and James families, who oversaw a shift from subsistence to market farming, specifically dairy and potato production. In the mid-20th century, with agriculture on the decline in Rhode Island, some farmers, including those in the Beaver River Road Historic District, turned to turf farming. Much of the land is still cultivated for this purpose today.

The Beaver River Road Historic District was formally determined eligible for listing by the National Park Service in 1995. This nomination largely adheres to the Determination of Eligibility (DOE) documentation. It includes a minor change to the district boundary; it documents 18 resources not described in the DOE, despite being within the DOE boundary, including some significant landscape features; it eliminates community planning and development as an area of significance; and it changes the period of significance.

The Beaver River Road Historic District is being nominated to the National Register at

the local level of significance, under Criterion A in the area of agriculture and Criterion C in the area of architecture. The district's three distinct farmsteads evolved from 19th-century subsistence farming to market farms, eventually specializing in dairy, potato and turf farming and are thus illustrative of agricultural trends in Rhode Island. Together with the surrounding fields, landscape features such as stone walls and the tree allée, and with minimal intrusions, the farms form a compelling cultural landscape. The district includes a collection of modest dwellings representing restrained expressions of the Federal and Greek Revival styles and simple agricultural outbuildings, including small mixed-use barns and sheds as well as specialized buildings, like the dairy barn at Cliffmoore. The period of significance is defined as 1763 (the date of the first major land division within the district) to 1970 (the date of the manmade pond at the Sarah & John Hoyle House, the most recent contributing resource in the district).

Mr. Abbott stated that the tree allée appears to be in the Town of Richmond's right-of-way and that he has seen a lot of cutting in the allée recently. Ms. Doherty agreed and stated that the town has been supportive of the nomination, but she would make sure that it is made aware of the issue.

Dr. Grefe asked if there has been a substantial loss of integrity in some of the structures since the 1995 determination of eligibility, because some of them appear to be in deteriorated shape, and also why it took nearly 30 years for this nomination to move forward. Ms. Doherty stated that she does not know the condition of the buildings when the determination of eligibility was made, but there have been a couple of buildings that have deteriorated to the point that they are now non-contributing. This nomination was also a good opportunity to note some resources that were not included in the boundaries of the district at the time of the determination and also some that were not called out in the inventory or were not described and assessed, including landscape features that were not addressed at all in 1995.

Mr. Schoettle asked what the impetus for this nomination is and who is asking to have the district listed now. Ms. Doherty replied that the Beaver River Valley Community Association, which is a group of property owners in Richmond, is responsible. She believes there is just an interest in promoting the historic and cultural value of the landscape of the Beaver River Valley and getting the formal recognition for that with the understanding that it doesn't provide a lot of protection but it at least gets more formal acknowledgement.

Mr. Schoettle pointed out that there are two houses that are unpainted and asked if Ms. Doherty thinks they were always like that. Ms. Doherty replied that she does not know, but could look at some older photographs that were provided, though they are black and white.

Paul Jordan stated that he is very familiar with this area and it is a beautiful section of road. There has been a proposal for a while, though it may be on hold, to put a large solar farm on one of the properties. It is definitely a unique and beautiful area and he would love to see it protected.

Ms. Taylor stated that the allée is the thing that jumps out at you when you go through the area.

The Commission voted unanimously to endorse the Review Board's approval of the nomination, with Ms. Ryan having recused.

10. Old Business

- a) Sarah Zurier recapped the 2021 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference. She thanked Julie Roper for her hard work with the new platform, new speakers, and getting the staff adjusted. She also thanked the staff for all of their help.

The conference drew over 400 attendees and participants and speakers from 14 states and Washington, DC, and from Paris, France. It was a great result in sharing what we are doing in Rhode Island with a wider audience. We found that a lot of people were tuning in from elsewhere because they were drawn by a particular speaker or theme. The programs are now all up for attendees only on the platform through May 22nd. Then we will put most of them on our YouTube channel.

On Wednesday, more than 100 people tuned in for the historic district commission training workshops, which was a tremendous success. This proved that more than just historic district commissioners and staff are interested in the topic and we think that we will continue to feature historic district commission training in some way going forward.

We are already getting questions about what, where, when, and how for next year, and may have to start making some of those decisions soon. Ms. Taylor stated that it is getting complicated and some kind of hybrid model may be in all of our futures. Ms. Zurier replied that everyone enjoyed the presentations, but that people really want to get out and see Rhode Island at our conference.

Dr. Grefe stated that still having a Saturday in-person might be helpful. It was difficult with all of the sessions during work; she wished that she could have attended more sessions. Mr. Schoettle stated that he liked being able to jump back and forth between sessions.

Ms. Taylor stated that technology has allowed us to make amazing leaps forward. She congratulated Ms. Zurier and the staff on a job well done!

- b) Mr. Loether gave an update on the Old State House exterior restoration project. The project is at the tail end, with about five percent remaining. The windows need to be adjusted and the North Main Street doors need to be replaced. Some brownstone restoration continues. He hopes that by the end of June it will all be complete. Everything that remains is weather-dependent. He is still trying to come

up with the capital for the interior project. ADA and OSHA need to be addressed and he is inviting the disabilities commission for a walk-through.

Virginia Hesse stated that we have been very fortunate to have more brownstone replacement done than we anticipated. Mr. Schoettle asked where we sourced the brownstone. Ms. Hesse replied that Riverside Stone had it.

7. New Business:

There was no new business

12. Announcements

Mr. Loether announced that Elizabeth Rochefort has recently been given a Rhode Island College alumni award.

Mr. Loether announced that Ms. Pomplun was recently promoted from Senior to Principal Grants Manager, which was long overdue.

The next Commission meeting will be held June 9, 2021 by video conference.

13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:37 am.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emdy
Deputy Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer