



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
June 7, 2021 9:30 am
via video conference

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Dr. Marisa Angell Brown (joined the meeting at 10:42)
Dr. Tripp Evans
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. Ronald Onorato, Chairman
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson
Ms. Martha Werenfels, AIA

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Vacant (archaeologist)
Vacant (landscape architect/historian)

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Enerida Ademi, Data Control Clerk
Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Mr. John Paul Loether, Executive Director/SHPO (joined the meeting at 10:45)
Ms. Elizabeth Rochefort, Principal Architectural Historian
Ms. Elizabeth Totten, Senior Project Review Coordinator
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 A.M. by Chairman Onorato.

2. Meeting procedures overview

Dr. Onorato explained the procedures that would be followed by Board members and attendees of the meeting.

3. Roll call

Dr. Onorato called the roll of Board members. See page one of these minutes for the attendance list.

4. Approval of minutes of April 5, 2021 meeting

On a motion by Ms. Werenfels, seconded by Mr. Abbott, the Review Board unanimously VOTED TO APPROVE the Minutes of April 5, 2021 without changes.

5. Deputy Director's Report

- a) Jeffrey Emidy reported that Pierre Morenon is not in the meeting because he had a family emergency, but today would have been his last State Review Board meeting. Mr. Emidy stated he wants to thank Dr. Morenon, on the record, for his 40 years on the Commission and/or State Review Board. His guidance on and advocacy for archaeological issues has been incredibly helpful, and his below-ground angle on above ground resources has often brought to our attention things that we didn't think about or that we didn't explain well enough. Mr. Emidy thanked Dr. Morenon and expressed his best wishes.
- b) Mr. Emidy reported that Joanna Doherty continues to work on the nomination for St. Columba's Church, in Middletown. We may see that nomination at the August Board meeting. She has also been editing a couple of other nominations that are back to the authors for comments or correction.
- c) Mr. Emidy reported that Elizabeth Rochefort has been working on the presentation for Loop Drive, which the Board will see today. Research facilities finally opened and she was able to get the information that she has needed to make the presentation. She is also wrapping up the statewide preservation plan, which came back from the National Park Service with some comments. She has also been working on the Sate Guide Plan element, which is now open for comment. Mr. Loether emailed it out to municipalities and organizations, the Board and Commission have had it for months.
- d) Mr. Emidy reported that he has been winding down doing project review. He has been working on the Donwell's Diner nomination, which the Board will see today. He has just begun working with Mr. Loether to get things squared away for his retirement. Thankfully, he is only going to Connecticut, so we will be able to get in touch with him if we need to.

No Rhode Island properties have been listed in the National Register since we last met. We have some inquiries that we need to consider. Ms. Doherty and Ms. Rochefort did a site visit to the John Bliss House, in Newport, last week. Mr. Emidy stated that he has received inquiries from the owners of properties in Scituate, Barrington, and North Kingstown about listing. The staff are also working with other RIHPHC staff and Preserve Rhode Island to begin planning for the Rhody Awards, which will take place in October.

With all of these things in the works, the National Register staff need to get together

to do some planning for themselves moving forward. Mr. Emidy expressed hope that this would happen by early July.

Dr. Onorato congratulated Mr. Emidy on being appointed Interim Executive Director beginning June 27, 2021 and stated that it seems like he is already working on some of those duties. He asked Mr. Emidy if there is an update on the development of a Commissioner training module. Mr. Emidy asked Ms. Rochefort to respond. She stated that Mr. Loether had asked her to prepare an onboarding presentation for new Commissioners for their June meeting, but we have found out that they will not be appointed by that time so she will do a general presentation on what the Commission is, statutes, and program areas at the July meeting, so that the new commissioners can have a sense of what the agency does. It should also be a good refresher for commissioners who have been on board for a long time.

Mr. Emidy stated that he forgot one item in his report: Keith Stokes has been appointed by the Commission to the Review Board, however, Mr. Emidy didn't realize until Friday that he needed to notify Mr. Stokes and didn't get his email address in time to do so for today's meeting.

Mr. Sanderson stated that, since Mr. Loether will be retired by the next Board meeting, it would be an appropriate time to offer a motion of appreciation and gratitude for his service. He came on at a critical moment in the Commission's history because Mr. Sanderson was retiring after decades, and he brought great stability and great knowledge of the state historic preservation office, and it appears that he is leaving with the Commission and the staff, which was very strong, stronger than when Mr. Sanderson left. He has done a great job for the last several years and has put the Commission and the Review Board in a good position to hire a new executive director and move forward. Dr. Onorato stated that he would accept Mr. Sanderson's statement as a motion. Ms. Werenfels seconded the motion. Dr. Onorato stated that he thought they could do that by acclamation and asked the Board members to signify their approval by saying "aye". The Board members unanimously responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Werenfels asked if the staff are still all working remotely and if there is a plan for reopening the office. Mr. Emidy replied that we do not have a plan. The Department of Administration (DOA) told us a month or six weeks ago that they were going to analyze all of the facilities and tell us what we need to do as far as plexiglass, windows open or closed, air exchange, and all of the other things that are in consideration. To his knowledge, they never came to our building to do that. We received a blanket email last week telling us that we didn't have to reopen yet, but giving us some criteria for reopening. It said we have to do screening and there is an ID sticker system for vaccinated status and it laid out other steps. It did not, however, say anything about the public. Mr. Emidy stated that he hopes to work on that with Mr. Loether in the next couple of weeks and start in July to try to figure out what we need to do to satisfy DOA to open up. Another element is getting the staff back, which we haven't done either because we are waiting for guidance from DOA. He said he would not expect it to happen in July. Maybe August, but information from

DOA has been piecemeal and all of the questions have not been answered. Dr. Onorato asked then if we are looking at October as the first meeting, in that case. Mr. Emidy responded that, in addition to getting all of us ready to meet in person again, finding a location is going to be something that will need to be worked on. We don't know if the locations that we have used in the past will be open to outside groups or what the regulations will be if they are. The Commission is going to have to deal with those issues, as well.

6. For consideration: National Register of Historic Places final review
Donwell's Diner
560 Mineral Spring Avenue, Pawtucket

Jeffrey Emidy made a presentation for final National Register approval for Donwell's Diner, at 560 Mineral Spring Avenue, in Pawtucket. The nomination was prepared as part of a tax credit application and was written by Ryan Cameron of MacRostie Historic Advisors. Mr. Cameron and Kim Smith Barnett, also of MacRostie, were in attendance.

Donwell's Diner was built in 1941 by the Worcester Lunch Car Company, arguably the standard-bearer for diner manufacturers of the 20th century. The company was established in 1906 by Worcester resident Philip H. Duprey as the Worcester Lunch Car and Carriage Manufacturing Company to specialize in manufacturing pre-assembled lunch cars. Each was built to the customer's specifications – from tile color to plate designs – and the company assured customers that it would never build two dining cars exactly alike.

Worcester lunch car designs were refined in the late 1920s to include the characteristic round-hipped roof with a clerestory monitor for improved light and ventilation, and, as they grew in length, gained a central entrance where previous iterations had only end entrances. Porcelain panels on the exterior were also a hallmark of Worcester designs. On the interior, initial designs wholly of wood gave way to polychrome ceramic tile, then eventually elaborated stainless steel panels accompanied by marble, copper, and nickel. Between 1906 and 1961, the Worcester Lunch Car Company built 651 diners, of which Donwell's, built in 1941, was the 575th.

One could argue that the social history of diners is as interesting as the story of the Worcester Lunch Car Company. In the early days, and really into the 1920s, lunch cars and diners were considered a male domain. This was due in part to holdover Victorian ideas of what was acceptable for women to do, but also to the early days of lunch cars being specifically targeted to crowds of men emerging from their shifts in New England's factories. By the mid-1920s, however, this had begun to change, and diners were considered to be "family friendly". The 1950s saw the emergence of fast-food franchises, which, with their modernity, cleanliness, consistency across locations, and specific targeting of families, began to put diners out of business. The Worcester Lunch Car Company did not adapt to the times, refusing to introduce new designs despite requests from potential buyers, and as an inevitable result, sold its last diner in 1957. In 1961, the company was sold and reorganized as the Worcester Deluxe Diner Manufacturing Company. Today, it is believed that about 90 of the 651 Worcester diners

survive.

Donwell's Diner opened on Asylum Street, in Hartford, Connecticut, in September 1941. It was steps away from Union Station, and across the street from the Hotel Bond and Bushnell Park, essentially the grounds of the Connecticut State Capitol.

The name, Donwell's, comes from a combination of the names of the original owners: J. Edward and Edith Donnellan and Chester L. Wells. The Donnellans, from Cleveland, and Wells, a Connecticut native, ran the diner from 1941 to 1945. By 1949, it was owned by Elliot Drake and John Hibben and had been renamed Drake's Diner. Drake's operated until 1953, after which it ran briefly as Donovan's Diner before the Hotel Diner between 1955 and 56.

On December 6, 1956, the Hotel Diner was auctioned with the caveat that it must be removed from the premises. It was moved to Kensington, Connecticut in 1966 where, soon after, it was stripped of its interior furnishings by creditors. It was purchased at auction in 1969 by Ida and Stanley "Squeak" Zawisa, who relocated it to Middletown, Connecticut and reopened it as Squeak's Diner. Squeak's was a fixture in Middletown for almost 30 years, closing in 1997. In 2003, the diner was purchased and moved into storage by Colin Strayer. It was later located in a Connecticut field by Jonathan Savage, who purchased it in 2011 and moved it to its current site in Pawtucket. The diner has been placed adjacent to the north side of the Lorraine Mills Complex, which has been redeveloped for mixed uses.

An extensive rehabilitation process began in 2013 under the careful oversight of Mr. Savage and based on photographs, published descriptive information, and the original plan for the diner from Worcester's lead designer, Charles P. Gemme. The project started with setting the diner on a brick-faced, concrete foundation so that it could be connected to the Lorraine Mill for additional space, much like other diners that have had dining rooms and/or expanded kitchens added at the rear.

Donwell's Diner is a Worcester Lunch Car Company semi-streamliner model, of which only eight survive of 25 produced. It is 48 feet long and 14½ feet wide with the characteristic Worcester round-hipped, monitor roof. The exterior has porcelain enamel panels and stainless steel trim. Only the corner trim pieces remained at the start of the project. New pieces to match were fabricated by the manufacturer of the originals – Cherokee Porcelain Enamel Corporation – in the same "ivory" color with "tomato red" trim as the originals. Above the enamel panels is a red, enamel sill that runs around the ends and front. Above that are new stainless steel panels with fluted pilasters at the corners and stainless-clad, fixed, mahogany sash. The original window frames were used as models for the new frames. The original door was in poor condition, so it was replicated in-kind; it is stainless-steel clad with an oval glass panel, and it is flanked by red, porcelain-enamel pilasters.

The original metal roof was repaired, and a silver-colored, liquid EPDM coating was put on the main roof and a grey elastomeric coating was put on the monitor roof. The rear elevation of the diner is covered with galvanized metal panels from the foundation to the

cornice, as it was originally.

On the interior, there are four booths to the right of the entrance and three booths plus the cashier's stand to the left. Two of the booths are original, made of mahogany. These were repaired in-kind and reupholstered and used as models for the other five, which are also mahogany. All of the original cream and salmon basketweave floor tiles were retained, as were most of the original wall tiles. In areas where floor tiles were missing, replacements that match as closely as possible were used. Where wall tiles were missing, tiles from the backbar area were salvaged and used. The original back wall was tile, and some tile does remain, however, due to damage and sourcing replacements for the dining room from the back wall, the decision was made to install stainless steel wall panels in a sunburst pattern based that was used in other Worcester cars of the period. Remaining original mahogany trim was stripped, restored in a manner consistent with the original process, and reinstalled. The 19 chrome stools are original. They were repaired, reupholstered, and reinstalled. The countertop is pink Tennessee marble, cut from the same quarry as the original. All original built-ins that remained, including the three-bay refrigeration unit, were made operable and remain.

The doorway at the right end of the back wall and one in the middle of the back wall used to lead to a combined kitchen/restroom addition. The right end doorway leads through one of three connectors to the mill building. The brick connectors are made so that they are reversible, from existing window openings, the sills of which were dropped. The opening in the center of the back wall leads to the kitchen and the right leads to additional dining space and restrooms. The third opening is located on the east wall and goes toward the stair tower, but the opening to the tower has not been made.

The National Park Service (NPS) and MacRostie worked together to determine that the boundary should be the footprint of the diner. It does not include any of the mill.

Donwell's Diner, now the Miss Lorraine Diner, is being nominated to the National Register at the local level under criteria A and C: under A for the role that diners like this one played in the evolution of restaurant design and dining concepts in the early- to mid-20th century and under C as a rare surviving example of a Worcester Lunch Car Company semi-streamliner diner, one of only eight remaining. The period of significance runs from 1941, the date of the diner's construction, through 1971, the 50-year cutoff for National Register listing.

Dr. Onorato stated that he is generally in favor of the nomination. The presentation stated things about the historic context for the diner that are not in the nomination. It would be helpful to have more about the original location of the diner and the context of it in the nomination. Mr. Emidy stated that he pulled that information directly from the nomination. Dr. Malone stated that he recalls that information being in the nomination, as well. Dr. Onorato stated that he may have missed it.

Ms. Werenfels stated that she thinks the restoration is stunning in terms of the diner, itself. Mr. Emidy placed a lot of emphasis on the mobility of diners, but it seems odd that it has a brick foundation, which is not in keeping with the diner design. It also seems that

the vent stacks going up the side of the mill, behind the diner, have an adverse effect on the mill, itself, which may have an impact if there is a future tax credit project for the mill. Mr. Emidy replied that he does not know of an active or planned tax credit for the mill, but that you can see air conditioner units in the windows, so it appears that there are already people living in the mill. The tax credit project is moving forward, so maybe Kim Smith Barnett has more information about that. Regarding the foundation, Mr. Emidy opined that it is up to Ms. Werenfels to decide if she thinks that detracts from the eligibility of the diner. Ms. Werenfels replied that she thinks it is still eligible, but the foundation detracts from its other diner characteristics.

Kim Smith Barnett stated that the tax credit Part II and Part IIIs have been submitted and approved by the National Park Service (NPS). She wondered if the NPS was going to have the stacks painted red, to blend in more with the brick mill, but they did not. Regarding the foundation, the diner has, over the years, been on concrete block and brick foundations so the owner put a brick face on it to make it look a little better.

Dr. Malone stated that the research in the nomination is quite impressive, putting it in the context of roadside architecture. He made the point that diners were frequent subjects of photographers and photorealistic painters. He is rather surprised that John Baeder's books are not in the bibliography, and Chester Liebs' *Main Street to Miracle Mile* is missing. Also, he was shocked that there was basically no photography whatsoever in the nomination. In the presentation, the photographs could have used some prospective distortion correction, although most of them were quite good. Mr. Emidy replied that the absence of photography is his fault. He did not realize until now that he did not attach the photographs to the online version of the nomination. With the exception of two, all of the photographs in the presentation came from the nomination; those are the photographs that will be submitted to the NPS.

Mr. Abbott stated that he is also in favor of the nomination, but also finds the vent stacks disconcerting. He wished their appearance would have been muted by painting them, but if the NPS has signed off on them... He also stated that he doesn't know how the tower entrance can have not been completed because that is the ADA entrance. It's a very clever solution. Mr. Emidy asked Kim Smith Barnett if he misspoke. Ms. Smith Barnett said that the opening is complete and serves as the ADA access way. Mr. Emidy asked Ryan Cameron to look at that wording in the nomination to see if it is as clear as needed.

Dr. Evans asked how the tax credit process works for a project like this. Ms. Smith Barnett replied that the IRS regulations say that having the project mostly completed when the Part III is done is allowed, however, it is risky. In this case, the NPS didn't put any conditions on the approval, so it was fine.

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Dr. Malone, the Board voted unanimously to approve the nomination for Donwell's Diner.

7. For consideration: National Register of Historic Places preliminary review
Loop Drive Historic District
North Kingstown

Ms. Rochefort made a presentation for preliminary review of a potential Loop Drive Historic District, in North Kingstown. She began by acknowledging the patience and flexibility of the property owners of the five households on Loop Drive, as they first met to discuss this at the end of February 2020. The Commission was approached by the property owners of 21 Loop Drive about National Register listing, and Ms. Rochefort subsequently met with the other property owners as a group. There is one house to the east of 13 Loop Drive that has, to date, declined to participate. That house appears to be constructed at a later date than the five houses that follow.

Loop Drive is located southwest of North Kingstown's Wickford Village, south of Phillips Street, across from Wickford Middle School. The street takes the form of a causeway that crosses a narrow area of Wickford Cove. What is today called Loop Drive has been historically called Cedar Point as well as Circle Drive. The houses on Loop Drive first appear on the 1895 Everts & Richards map, where the original configuration of the road began further west, with a loop on the property of Dr. George E. Soule. That configuration of the road survives but is no longer in use.

The newer section of the road is visible on a 1939 aerial map, and further research could provide additional information about how and when the roadway changed. The road crosses Wickford Cove to the area of the five houses on the eastern section of Loop Drive that are the subject of this presentation. They were constructed from approximately the last quarter of the 19th century to the first quarter of the 20th century. They are good examples of vernacular cottages from this period and retain a good degree of integrity.

21 Loop Drive is 2½ stories, with a dominant cross gable on the southwestern façade. It has clapboard and shingle siding, a principal entrance composed of double-leaf, glazed and paneled doors, and 2/2, double hung, wood sash. It has a full-width porch and an enclosed porch at the rear. Historic photographs show that the house has been modified some, however, the majority of the changes appear to date from over 100 years ago.

13 Loop Drive was the first house constructed on the street. The diminutive, two-story Second Empire cottage has a mansard roof with a cross gable that frames two, 2/2, wood sash windows. The principal entrance is accessed via a full-width, bracketed porch. A one-story, enclosed porch is located at the rear.

26 Loop Drive is 2½ stories, with a gable front and clapboard walls. The principal entrance is centered on the northeast façade and flanked by two windows. The first-floor windows are pointed arch form. It appears that there has been an addition to the rear elevation.

31 Loop Drive is the most complex of the set, with an irregular form. It is 2 to 2½ stories, with irregular fenestration. The north elevation has a full width porch, glazed, double-leaf

doors, and 6/6 windows which appear to be replacement units. It is unclear whether the western wing was originally a barn or if it is new construction. There would need to be further research done to understand the evolution of this house.

49 Loop Drive is located on a spur off the western side of the loop. It is 2½ stories, with a gable front, and side entrance accessed via a full width porch. The first floor is clapboard and the second story is shingle with some patterned scalloped shingles in the gable.

By the mid-19th century, this land was the property of John R. Sherman, a farmer. The 1855 Walling map shows that there was no causeway or access across the cove as there is now. By the 1870s, Sherman had passed away and this area began to be developed. In 1874, several men were authorized to construct a bridge that would connect to Cedar Point. What we are calling Loop Drive was historically called Cedar Point, and this area was known as South Wickford.

The 1870s were a period of development and change in Wickford. In 1871, the Newport and Wickford Railroad and Steamship Company created a link between the village and Newport, which was rapidly becoming a summer resort town during that period. The 1895 map shows that the railroad was directly adjacent to Loop Drive. The undeveloped nature of Cedar Point, plus the proximity to the new railroad line, were likely driving forces behind the creation of Loop Drive.

Benjamin F. Davis, of Newport, sold a lot with a building, likely the Second Empire cottage at 13 Loop Drive, to Georgiana S. Pettey, from Fall River. That cottage was the first documented construction of the five we looked at today. Ms. Pettey rented the house out, at least in the summers, from the mid-1880s through the 1890s. The proximity to the rail line and Newport were noted in the listings. In 1897, Ms. Pettey's neighbor, Oscar Steere, also petitioned the town council for permission to lease his home. Steere was a manager at Hope Webbing, in Pawtucket. Other families noted in the first map of Loop Drive include the Halloways and Gardiners. There were some family connections between these property owners. Simeon Brown Gardiner was Oscar Steere's father-in-law.

In summary, we recognize that there is some future research to be done, however, what we already know is worth considering. The five houses on Loop Drive are good examples of vernacular turn of the century cottages. They retain a good level of integrity, with some changes made over time. The development of Loop Drive corresponds with a rise in Wickford's tourism industry in the 1870s, spurred by the Newport and Wickford Railroad and new access to the developing resort city of Newport. The landscape is also significant. Areas to explore in a nomination could include the siting and relationship of the houses to Wickford Cove, as well as the changing access to Phillips Street and Wickford Village.

Ms. Rochefort reported that, when staff considered this nomination in March 2020, there was not a consensus on eligibility either way. We thought that there may be a story here and that the houses retained a good degree of integrity, but we were not able to come to a definitive answer based on the sources available. The staff and the property owners are

seeking guidance from the Board members about whether they feel that there is potential for a nomination here.

Mr. Abbott stated that this nomination appears to have a lot of potential. He mentioned that the house at 31 has an odd-angled addition that needs an explanation. He wondered if it is an addition or a barn that was moved to that location and connected. He also asked if Ms. Rochefort could give more information about the property for which the owners have chosen not to participate. Ms. Rochefort stated that the house was constructed later. It appears to be an amalgamation of additions and may be non-contributing.

Mr. Sanderson stated that this is a charming, but modest, resource. He asked if there are any other properties within the land area that we have not seen. Ms. Rochefort stated that those were all of the ones on the loop and while there may be one or two on the other side of the causeway, her understanding is that the owners would not be interested in listing. Mr. Sanderson stated that the visual character of this small group of houses is very much that they are an intact group and a lot of other buildings could dilute that. When the area was looked at in the early 2000s or thereabouts, more properties were looked at and it began to seem like Wickford Village was going to extend all the way to South Kingstown. That was part of the reluctance of the Review Board. This is a nice, tight, modest, locally significant group but the nomination would have to make note of the lack of intrusions that gives character to this group. Ms. Rochefort agreed with Mr. Sanderson's recollection that the earlier proposed amendment to the Wickford Historic District did include other areas as well, but did not provide a lot of information about this area.

Dr. Onorato stated that the houses at 13 and 21 both suggest an earlier date, like the 1870s, rather than 1900, but the updating may be interesting to look at. The group seems to have been homogenized to some extent to what we believe cottages should look like. Ms. Werenfels expressed a thought that the houses may have had more Gothic Revival characteristics, as shown in the historic photographs, before changes occurred. She also asked if the houses on the other end of the causeway are of similar styles. Ms. Rochefort replied that they are not, they are later. She stated that this is an interesting collection of buildings and she would be in favor of pursuing listing.

Dr. Onorato stated that this is a preliminary review so, if the Board voted in a positive way, they are saying it is worthy of further exploration before it comes up for a final review and the author would take into consideration the Board's comments and do further work on this as well. Ms. Rochefort replied that all of the property owners are not familiar with the National Register, so the neighbors are discussing this process and she is not positive that it will ever go forward.

Mr. Sanderson asked Mr. Emidy if there appear to be any coastal issues here that the owners ought to think about before they proceed with listing. Mr. Emidy replied that it looks like they might, as there does not appear to be a significant grade change from the houses to the water and we know that Wickford is in danger from sea level rise. Mr. Sanderson stated that, if the owners are going to get involved with raising their buildings or building seawalls, the Commission is going to review that work and the property

owners should understand that process as it relates to the National Register. Ms. Werenfels pointed out that the owners would be subject to HPHC review under CRMC whether the properties are listed or just eligible. Mr. Sanderson confirmed that to be true, but, at this moment, there is not a definitive opinion about eligibility. Mr. Loether, having joined the meeting during the presentation, stated that if the determination is not made, we would review the properties and make the determination at that time. He stated his sense that the properties will either be eligible or listed.

Mr. Emidy noted for the record that Paul Loether and Marisa Brown had joined the meeting during the discussion.

Dr. Malone stated that the area of his historic summer cottage is filled with others that have been raised to avoid flooding. The process is very interesting.

Ms. Rochefort asked if she should explain the CRMC issue to the owners before the Board makes a motion on eligibility. Mr. Loether stated that the two are not related. Mr. Emidy stated that what the Review Board determines is not an official determination for the purposes of Section 106, so even if the Board said it's not historic, the staff could still say yes, or vice versa.

Mr. Sanderson made a motion that further research into the possible eligibility or ineligibility of the property would be appropriate. The motion was seconded by Mr. Abbott and the board voted unanimously to approve it.

8. State Historic Preservation Officer's Report
 - a) Paul Loether reported that, upon his retirement, Jeffrey Emidy will be the Interim Executive Director of the Commission.
 - b) He also stated that, as discussed earlier, Ms. Rochefort is working on putting together a kind of reference manual for commissioners.
 - c) He stated that he is trying to finish a comprehensive job classification and pay grade review with the state's Division of Human Resources which Mr. Sanderson started. He is optimistic, but it takes time to get these actions through human resources.
 - d) He stated that he is still trying to get the governor's office to reply about Commission appointments. They've already informed him that reappointments will not get through the state senate in this session, so they are going to try for the new appointments. Two of those new commissioners would sit on the State Review Board.

9. Old business
 - a) 2021 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference update

Sarah Zurier reported that we turned our regular, live Saturday event into a three half-day, virtual event, which we did with flying colors. She thanked conference coordinator Julie Roper for managing a lot of crazy details and logistics very professionally and also thanked the commission staff and all of the speakers and attendees. We had more than 400 people from 14 states, Washington, DC, and

Paris, France. She also thanked Martha Werenfels and Marisa Angell Brown, who were two of the conference speakers.

Historic District Commission (HDC) training was included as the first half-day, organized by Katy Pomplun, Ginger Hesse, Roberta Randall, and Jeff Emidy. We had a lot of different modules for HDC staff and for HDC commissioners. What surprised us was that members of the public also attended to hear about the expertise that was being shared. Then we got underway with the traditional conference matter on Thursday with George Smart, of US Modernist. He was a real treat. After that were six breakout sessions and a collection of video tours, including about the CCRI Warwick campus and the Knight Estate. On Friday, the keynote speaker was Kofi Boone, a landscape architect and professor at North Carolina State. He gave a tremendous talk entitled “Black Landscapes Matter”, weaving in history and design and activism and advocacy. He then stayed on for a session with Keith Stokes and Elena Pasquerella on Rhode Island’s Black landscapes. Most everything was recorded, and attendees had access to it for a month and we are in the process of putting it on our YouTube channel.

Ms. Werenfels stated that the Commission and Ms. Roper did a tremendous job organizing everybody and making sure that the speakers were well prepared, so kudos to the Commission for pulling this together remotely and really doing an incredibly professional job with grace.

Ms. Angell Brown congratulated the team for pulling everything together. She stated that it was an amazing conference and the technology challenges were serious, but the team pulled it off. It was wonderful.

Ms. Zurier thanked Mr. Abbott for being a cheerleader throughout and for attending the conference.

10. New business

a) RI250: the Rhode Island Semiquincentennial Commission

Ms. Zurier explained that she received a call in 2019 from WaterFire creator Barnaby Evans, asking what the state is doing to recognize the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. It is not something that just happened on the Fourth of July, but a rolling sequence of events, each of which has a 250th anniversary. Ms. Zurier replied that she did not know, but she convened the staff and Lane Sparkman of the Secretary of State’s Office. Then Ms. Sparkman and Ms. Zurier hosted conversations with stakeholders from around the state. Secretary of State Gorbea and her office have been very active, getting information to the legislature, who have passed two bills to create Rhode Island’s Semiquincentennial Committee. This is a 30-person committee including the Secretary, the director of our Commission, the Department of Education, State Council on the Arts, and others that will make a commemoration that is inclusive, coordinated, and forward-thinking. We have been in touch with America250,

which is the nationwide umbrella organization for this. Right now, we are awaiting the governor's signature, but soon that committee will be meeting and will establish subcommittees and we will celebrate Rhode Island's role in the American Revolution.

11. Announcements

The next meeting will be held on Monday, August 2nd, 2021. It will be held virtually.

Mr. Loether announced that he has requested that the governor appoint Mr. Emidy as Interim State Historic Preservation Officer effective June 27th.

11. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Abbott and seconded by Dr. Morenon. The meeting adjourned at 11:05 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,



Jeffrey D. Emidy
Deputy Director
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