



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

December 8, 2021

Location:

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

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Warren Ducharme, representing James Cambio, State Building Code Commissioner
Ms. Roberta Groch, representing Meredith Brady, Associate Director, Division of
Statewide Planning
Ms. Kaity Ryan
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Ruth Taylor, Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Interim State Historic Preservation Officer
Dr. Morgan Grefe
Mr. Paul Jordan, representing Terrence Gray, Acting Director, Rhode Island Department
of Environmental Management
Mr. Jesse Saglio, President, Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
[Vacant]
[Vacant]
[Vacant]
[Vacant]
[Vacant]

STAFF PRESENT

Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Katherine Pomplun, Principal Grants Coordinator
Charlotte Taylor, Principal Archaeologist
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 9:34 A.M., Ms. Taylor, Chair, presiding.

2. For approval: Minutes of September 8, 2021 Commission meeting

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Ms. Ryan, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2021 Commission meeting as they appear in the draft.

3. For consideration: Review Panel recommendations for 2021 State Preservation Grants

Katherine Pomplun reported that the State Preservation Grants Review Panel, which was appointed by the Commission in September, held a public meeting on December 1, 2021, to evaluate the 32 eligible applications received for State Preservation Grants and to make funding recommendations. Ms. Pomplun explained that the total amount requested in 2021 exceeds \$2.8 million, but that there is less than \$1.2 million available for grants.

Ms. Pomplun reminded the Commissioners that they must identify Conflicts of Interest with any application on the list that was provided to them by email prior to the meeting and refrain from discussing any application with which they have a conflict. Mr. Abbott indicated that he has conflicts of interest with the Fort Adams Trust and Providence Performing Arts center applications and will not participate in conversation on those applications.

Ms. Taylor asked Ms. Pomplun to explain voting, specifically the vote by consent agenda. Ms. Taylor explained that commissioners can remove projects from the consent agenda for future discussion or remove their funding. Ms. Pomplun reiterated that the panel's recommendations are not binding, and that the Commission's final funding decisions may deviate from the panel's suggestions.

Ms. Pomplun described the applications that have been recommended for funding by the Review Panel:

- Burnside Building Restoration - Phase 3 at the Herreshoff Museum in Bristol. The proposed project includes repairs to the foundation, siding, windows, and trim. Requested \$150,000 towards an overall \$748,674 project. A partial grant is recommended by the review panel, not because of any issues with the scope, but because the project has already received past support and more funding was needed for other applicants.
- Linden Place Gothic Conservatory Restoration, in Bristol: Proposed project is to fully restore the conservatory's bathroom addition. The gothic conservatory bathroom

- addition was not erected on a proper foundation and is now falling away from the original structure. Grant funds will be used to raise the addition, install a proper foundation and make the bathroom usable and accessible. The review panel recommends full funding for this project.
- Rehabilitation of Cogswell Tower, in Central Falls: The City of Central Falls is requesting funding for repairs to the Tower, including timber framing repairs, masonry repairs, roof repairs/replacement, clock repairs, window repair/replacement, door repair/replacement, repairs to ironwork canopy structure and railings, repairs to iron fence, and eagle sculpture. Cogswell Tower is famously the symbol of Central Falls. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Interior rehabilitation of the historic 1857 Franklin Farm Farmhouse, in Cumberland: the Metcalf-Franklin Farm Preservation Association has submitted a proposal for the full interior rehabilitation of the farmhouse. The review panel recommends a partial grant of \$75,000, both because of the level of past support and with the thought that we should really only fund the items in the scope that relate to the programmable space on the first floor.
 - Preservation and Rehabilitation of the John Hunt House Museum and Education Center, in East Providence: East Providence Historical Society proposes to upgrade 28 storm windows and restore storm doors at the Hunt House Museum; to make exterior improvements to the adjacent Education Center; and to reconstruct shelving and remove heavy items from the Garden Center. The Garden Center tasks, while relevant to the operation of the organization, are not relevant to the preservation of the building. Therefore, the review panel recommends a partial grant of \$26,865, which removes the Garden Center elements from the grant-funded scope.
 - Winsor Blacksmith Shop, in Foster: The property was confirmed eligible for the National Register by the Commission at its November meeting. The proposal is to replace the cedar roof in kind, improve drainage around the building, and repair damaged skirt boards. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Watson Farm Barn Roof and Gutter Preservation Project, in Jamestown: Historic New England proposes to replace the more than 40-year-old cedar wood shingle roof in-kind and replace the failing wooden gutter system wholesale. The review panel recommended a slightly smaller grant than their request based on analysis of the contractors' estimates provided; it seemed they had reserved a little more than necessary for contingency.
 - La Farge Restoration Fund - Murals Completion Phase I, in Newport: The proposed project is a ceiling stabilization and mural restoration. The application states that problems that emerged last winter (falling ceiling and structural concerns) amount to a legitimate emergency, and the building is currently unusable in any capacity due to the danger of falling plaster. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Fort Adams – Southwest Barracks Waterproofing and Stabilization Project, in Newport: Fort Adams Trust proposes the stabilization of the Southwest Barracks addition by repairing the roof structure, applying a roof membrane, and enclosing 49 window openings with shutters. These actions are to stabilize and weatherize and essentially mothball the building, not to open this section to public. The review panel felt that support of this project was crucial to prevent loss of this structure. The panel had questions about enclosing the window openings with shutters, and as a result

- recommends a partial grant of \$122,500 for the roof and architectural and engineering services to determine a solution for the window openings.
- Window Restoration at The Elms, in Newport: The Preservation Society of Newport County proposes to restore 17 windows and five doors at the Elms. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - William Vernon House Structural Repairs, in Newport: The Newport Restoration Foundation proposes structural repairs to reinforce the first floor of Vernon House, including column repairs and lifting, and repairs to damaged first floor framing, sill repairs, basement pier repairs, and reinforcing the floor. The review panel recommends a partial grant of \$30,000 to fund the sill repairs and basement pier repairs only.
 - Deborah Cook Sayles Building Envelope Rehabilitation Project, in Pawtucket: The Pawtucket Public Library requests funding to complete repairs to the roof windows, skylights and facade of the library's Deborah Cook Sayles building to stop water infiltration. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Museum Access - Historic Restoration and Repair at the Museum of Natural History at Roger Williams Park, in Providence: The proposed project includes the restoration of exterior doors, including the main entrance's stained glass. Also included in the scope is the replacement of the handicap entrance overhang and some security upgrades. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Crowning Achievement: Repairing and Painting the Upper Wooden Trim of the John Brown House Museum, in Providence: The R.I. Historical Society is requesting to paint the historic roof-level wooden trim of the John Brown House Museum, following a project this fall to repair the rotted trim and balustrade. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Restoring the Community Art Building at the Steel Yard, in Providence: The Steel Yard requests funding for steel window repair, installation of window awnings, and other exterior repairs. The review panel recommends partial funding to remove window awnings from the scope.
 - Continued Restoration of Historic North Scituate Grange Hall #39 – Scituate Historical Society: The Scituate Historical Society has proposed a very small project that includes exterior painting, replacement of a chimney and adding a chimney liner, and interior plaster work to repair old water damage. The building is not yet NR listed but was determined eligible in 2019. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Roof Replacement and Masonry Repairs at South County History Center – South County History Center, in South Kingstown: The Center is requesting a grant to replace the Old Jail's 22-year-old roof and repair mortar to help ensure the protection of the Center's collections. The Old Jail's three chimneys will also be reflashed. The review panel recommends full funding.
 - Clouds Hill Museum 3rd Floor Windows and Basement Door Restoration – Clouds Hill Museum, in Warwick: The Museum has proposed a small project to restore third floor windows, install storm windows, and restore basement and bulkhead doors. The review panel recommends full funding.

Ms. Taylor asked for clarification about how some grants are rounded up and some grants are not. Ms. Pomplun said that panelists felt that rounding up was easier and the grant

requests are estimates so they will not be exact. Some projects did not get rounded up, for example, if they were exact. Ms. Pomplun said that the rounding process is up to the Commission.

Ms. Taylor asked if there is a threshold for a grantee to come back to the commission to ask for more money. Ms. Pomplun explained the threshold is 10 percent. The Commission agreed with the rounding process.

Ms. Taylor noted there are a lot of repeats, not just for agencies but also for projects. She noted there are a couple of new applicants. She asked if this is part of the discussion/process. Ms. Pomplun explained that yes, this was a discussion with the review panel and there was a concern about applicants who seem to rely only on the grants.

Ms. Taylor asked about the relationship between R.I. State Council on the Arts (RISCA) grants and our grants. Specifically, how many applicants are also getting the RISCA grants. Ms. Pomplun replied that there were five overlapping projects, but only two are recommended for funding, however, she cannot say which ones. Ms. Taylor discussed the issues with RISCA and our grants.

Mr. Schoettle asked about the La Farge project. He has concerns about the project in that they have just discovered the structural problems, after working on the building for years. Ms. Pomplun explained that we funded the corner murals not the ceiling yet. Canning Company did the analysis of the damage to the ceiling. Ms. Pomplun said that the review panel did have some questions about the organization's plans for programming. Ms. Taylor asked about the governance structure for the organization and what will this money buy. Ms. Pomplun explained the scope is large, and this will only fund a part of it. She detailed the history of the project and that the applicant plans to compete the repairs and restore the entire mural in the nave at one time.

Ms. Ryan asked about the Vernon House funding. The review panel recommends reducing the funding due to a lack of programming. Why has funding for the Vernon House been reduced and not at LaFarge? Ms. Pomplun explained that LaFarge has more programming and had a stronger application. Additionally, the review panel had questions with the Vernon House structural scope of work. Ms. Taylor pointed out that LaFarge is also an emergency. These projects were left on the consent agenda.

Ms. Pomplun then described the applications that the Review Panel has not recommended for funding:

- Southeast Lighthouse Exterior Restoration, in New Shoreham: The proposed list of exterior restoration tasks includes porch restoration, exterior door restoration, sealing masonry, replacing damaged or missing roof shingles, window restoration and storm windows. Panel expressed concern about frequency of past support and with the fact that a lot of interior work was recently completed while exterior envelope work perhaps should have been prioritized.

- Roof Replacement: Rogers Free Library, in Bristol: The proposal is to replace the slate roof in-kind. The review panel had no issues with the project, but noted that the organization has considerable assets and does not appear to need grant assistance.
- Restoration of Cove Cabin Deck – Mt Hope Farm, in Bristol: Mt. Hope Farm has proposed a project to restore the deck at Cove Cabin, its 1930s Adirondack camp style cabin. It's more complicated than a simple restoration however, because the organization replaced the deck in 2020 without consulting the Bristol Historic District Commission (HDC) as required, using Azek materials for the stairs and deck floor and replacing the rails and handrails. The HDC has since prohibited them from using the deck for events until corrective action is taken to restore its historic appearance. The review panel does not want to fund this project, citing low enthusiasm for correcting a project that never should have happened in the first place.
- First Congregational Church in Bristol Sanctuary and Gothic Windows Restoration: The proposed project is the restoration of gothic windows in the sanctuary and ceiling repair and painting in the sanctuary. The application tried to make the case that the church functions as a public historic site, but as confirmed by the applicant, none of the activities take place in the sanctuary space, while the proposed project addresses needs exclusively in the sanctuary. The review panel noted that as a result, it seems the project would mainly benefit the congregants, in the context of attending worship services – not the members of the public who attend other, non-religious public programs.
- Improved Energy Efficiency; replacement of 3 air condition units, over 40+ years old: The project proposed for Sprague Mansion in Cranston is HVAC only, and although those costs are eligible, there is no real preservation element to this application.
- Operational Wooden Shutters – Friends of Pomham Rocks, in East Providence: Friends of Pomham Rocks have proposed a project for the installation of shutters. The application notes that the shutters would be operational and could be closed for an extra layer of protection – but the panel noted that there are already storm windows on the building and questioned whether it was a fiscally sound decision to install essentially decorative mahogany shutters, and take on the cost of maintaining them, in an area that is so exposed and vulnerable to the elements.
- Borders Farm Restoration and Preservation Project – Borders Farm, in Foster: The proposed scope includes restoring exterior elements of the main house, including doors/thresholds; sill, trim, and corner boards; restoring windows; and clapboard repair. They've also requested funding for restoration of a wooden beam over the summer kitchen fireplace. The review panel noted that the proposed work is primarily maintenance, not a capital project, and that the application itself did not say the work was in response to any immediate threat.
- Newport Casino - Restoration of Porch Floor / Vestibule Roof at Main Entrance: The International Tennis Hall of Fame is proposing to replace the flat-seam metal flooring in kind on the second story porch on the Bellevue Avenue façade, directly above the main entrance to the Newport Casino. Some structural repairs will also be required. The review panel noted the lack of visibility of the project, low impact to visitor experience, and amount of recent past support.

- NPAC - Welcome Phase – NPAC, in Newport: The Newport Performing Arts Center, which has been operating in a restoration phase for many years, as proposed a "Welcome Phase" of construction that they've described as including HVAC, plumbing, power supply, securing the ceiling, and adding seating. The SPG project they have proposed is the restoration of decorative plaster on the proscenium arch, as well as reimbursement of costs related to the installation of a steel beam installed to reinforce the arch, which was completed in Nov. 2021. They are requesting \$38,000, but the entire "Welcome Phase" will cost \$1.3 million. The review panel noted strong concerns about the amount of work left to be done before people will actually get to use the space.
- Elevator for handicap access to all three floors of building- PMCA, in Providence: The Providence Marine Corps of Artillery's Museum of R.I. Military History would like to make its spaces to the public accessible at all levels. The main floor is at ground level and includes a large drill hall, and the remaining levels house military artifacts of all kinds. The organization has no history of fundraising and has not opened the building to the public beyond hosting the occasional event for other organizations, and the panel noted that this project was in the "would be nice" category.
- Replacement of PPAC's North Roof, in Providence: The project is for an EPDM roof replacement at the Providence Performing Arts Center. The proposed project is not visible, and Panelists questioned the need, both for the project and of the applicant organization for assistance to complete it.
- Providence Athenaeum HVAC replacement: The Athenaeum proposes to replace its single-zone gravity hot-water heating system with a multi-zone heating system. The current system was installed more than a century ago and it is failing. The review panel noted concerns about another HVAC-only project, and also noted that per the application, the project is nearly fully funded already, including with an NEH grant that gives RIHPHC review of the plans through the Section 106 process.
- Restoration Helme House – SCAA, in South Kingstown: The South County Arts Association has proposed to remediate failing paint on the west elevation of Helme House. The building was just painted to state expense and should not need painting again so soon. The review panel noted that there is clearly some other underlying issue that is causing the problem, and that should be investigated first, perhaps with a CLG grant. The panel also suggests working with RISE to insulate the building using inappropriate methods.
- Restoring the Crown – Westerly Armory: Westerly Armory has proposed to repair failing and fracturing crenelations. These were previously restored fewer than 20 years at great expense to both this program and the federal Save America's Treasures program. The review panel noted that they need to figure out what went wrong first – and perhaps consider capping the crenelations.

Mr. Schoettle commented that it is difficult to turn down applicants because they are all good projects and he is concerned that project visibility is so critical when a roof needs to be replaced. He suggested that we could give less to larger projects with multiple sources and then spread out our funding more, especially for projects that need to be done. Ms. Taylor concurred and raised questions about the difference between maintenance and

emergency repairs. Ms. Pomplun explained that visibility was a secondary factor, for example, the PPAC roof. Ms. Taylor also had concerns about capacity, specifically with LaFarge. Mr. Schoettle brought up HVAC as an example of a not visible project that does contribute to programming and operability. He asked how we define visibility. Ms. Pomplun replied that another component is our consistency in reviewing.

Ms. Groch asked if the organizations need to have a match for these. Ms. Pomplun explained that large projects – those over \$75,000 - require a one-to-one match and small projects a two-to-one match.

Sarah Zurier said that it would be nice for the Commission to thank the review panel. Ms. Pomplun said that review panel was very holistic and thorough. Ms. Zurier mentioned the great relationship with RISCA. RISCA and RIHPHC will announce the grant awards on January 6th. On behalf of the Commission, Ms. Taylor joined the staff in thanking the review panel for their efforts.

Ms. Taylor stated that going forward, the Commission should discuss some sort of strategy for equalizing funding that goes to arts and non-arts organization.

A motion to accept the grants awards as recommended by the review panel was made by Ms. Ryan and seconded by Mr. Abbott. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion.

4. For information: Applications received for R.I. Historic Preservation Conference Evaluation/Recommendations Project

Ms. Zurier explained that the request for proposals for a consultant to perform the R.I. Historical Preservation Conference Evaluation/Recommendations Project was posted to multiple outlets. Three responses – from three states – were received. One was from a preservation professional, one from an event planner, and one from an organizational consultant. The responses are being reviewed by a committee consisting of Ms. Taylor, Ms. Pomplun, Joanna Doherty, Jeff Emidy, Valerie Talmage, and Ms. Zurier. The decision will be announced in January and the project will get underway. It is slated to be completed by the end of July.

5. For discussion: Collaboration with the R.I. Advisory Committee on Historical Cemeteries on cemetery preservation programs in April-May 2022

Ms. Zurier explained that, with the decision not to hold a preservation conference in 2022, we have pivoted to a new plan with our new situation. This will entail: focusing on the analysis project, developing a potential budget depending on the cost of the analysis project, and the desire for outdoor, in-person programs. She stated that she has invited Charlotte Taylor today to explain more about the Rhode Island Advisory Committee on

Historical Cemeteries, because in them, we have found a great partner for preservation programs this spring.

Charlotte Taylor gave an introduction on the history of the Cemeteries Committee. It is a recognized state committee but has no regulatory authority. As such, it is only advisory. She explained the breakdown of representatives/committee members, what the committee does, and cemetery awareness day/month.

Ms. Zurier explained that she learned that the Rhode Island Advisory Committee on Historical Cemeteries not only has established a cemetery awareness day in April, but that they plan two months of programs in April and May. She attended the Committee's November meeting with Charlotte Taylor, met many of the representatives, and pitched the idea of a collaboration. It was well received. Last week, she and Charlotte Taylor met with Christine MacWilliams, who organizes the events, to start mapping out a schedule and collaboration. In brief, their programs consist largely of historic cemetery clean-ups as well as some gravestone restoration demonstrations and tours. Working with our network of archaeologists, historians, historic site stewards, and landscape architects, the RIHPHC will coordinate additional free tours and programs. We will also raise the profile of this event through communications to a wider public.

All events will be outdoors, free, and open to the public without the expenses (transportation, catering, rentals, online registration, etc.) of a typical RIHPHC conference. It is possible that we will also compile videos and self-guided tours, and a R.I. historic cemetery bibliography.

The event will be truly statewide. It could be called "Rhode Island Historic Cemetery Preservation Weeks." Ms. Zurier asked the commissioners to think about where they would want to tour, who would they want to take them there?

Ruth Taylor stated that this is a good idea. She mentioned that some of the groups that maintain the historic cemeteries in their areas can be territorial and private. She asked if they think that that will be an issue. Charlotte Taylor replied that most of the groups work well with the Committee. Christine McWilliams will be coordinating and has these partnerships in place. Charlotte Taylor mentioned that the programming does not have to be hands-on or tours, it can also be an event or webinar.

There was conversation about building projects in cemeteries; Ruth Taylor mentioned some in Newport. Ms. Ryan stated that there are four cemeteries at her site and little information is known about them. Mr. Abbott said that would make an interesting tour. He said that he would like to identify and acknowledge cemeteries that have been abused. He mentioned an example at East Greenwich with a building all the way around it as well as cemeteries that are in highway medians or have been bisected by roads. Ruth Taylor mentioned one in Portsmouth near the highway that has been vandalized. Cemeteries can be a signifier for Rhode Island of the preservation of historic fabric.

Ms. Ryan brought up how the state has acknowledged and inventoried cemeteries and asked if they fall under the purview of the Commission. Charlotte said that the

Committee is only advisory, and that the Department of Transportation makes the sign. There was concern that staff or the Commission will get blow back for the state of disrepair of some cemeteries.

Mr. Abbott asked if most cemeteries are privately owned. Charlotte Taylor replied that yes, many are, and they do not have public rights-of-way for access.

Ms. Groch mentioned that in that sense, it would be good to have an online component as a primer. Charlotte Taylor briefly explained some state and town regulations and history pertaining to cemeteries. We wrote a guide about 15 years ago.

Ruth Taylor mentioned that the conference would possibly draw in municipalities that do not participate in the Cemetery Commission. Warren Ducharme asked if those regulations come with funding to implement them. Charlotte Taylor replied that they do not. Ms. Pomplun told the commissioners that she receives many requests for funding for cemeteries. She expressed that funding opportunities are very limited for this type of work. Ruth Taylor asked if part of this spring event includes a working group to think of future programming, grants, or needs for historic cemeteries. Such a group could possibly convince someone to create a small grant. Ms. Zurier mentioned that even a survey for participants about their needs would be a good starting point.

6. For information: Update on RIHPHC executive director hiring process

Ms. Taylor reported that there hasn't been any movement on the executive director hiring process. Ms. Groch asked Ms. Taylor whom she spoke to at the State House. Ms. Taylor replied that it has been Craig Dwyer and one of his chiefs of staff. Ms. Groch stated that it took her agency a year and a half to get two jobs posted.

7. For information: Update on Commission appointments

Ms. Taylor stated that she has no official report on Commission appointments. She mentioned that Craig Dwyer said that we can invite proposed commissioners to meetings and Ruth plans to do that at the next meeting.

Ms. Schoettle asked if we assume that the governor is supportive of the proposed commissioners. Ms. Taylor replied yes. There was initially some concern with Keith Stokes's employment as a Providence city employee, but they are working through that and the governor appoints the slate. Likely, the appointments will be reviewed in March.

10. Announcements

The next Commission meeting will be held January 12, 2022.

13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 am.

Minutes recorded by,



Elizabeth Totten
Senior Project Review Coordinator

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