



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION October 11, 2006

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert Goff
Ms. Patrice O'Malley Hagan
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hooeboom
Mr. George Johnson, Statewide Planning
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Jean Rondeau
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson representing Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman & SHPO

STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, National Register Assistant
Ms. Virginia Hesse, Principal Historical Architect
Ms. Pamela Kennedy, Deputy Director
Dr. Paul Robinson, Principal Archaeologist

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Joseph Dias, representing Dr. Michael Sullivan, Director DEM
Dr. James Garman, NR Review Board
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Mr. Saul Kaplan, Executive Director, EDC
Dr. Ronald Onorato
State Building Commissioner

GUESTS

Ms. Lori Capaldi, RI EDC
Robert, Sydney, Desa, & James Buffum
Zachary Miller

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 A.M., Mr. Hoogeboom, presiding in the absence of Mr. Williamson.

2. Minutes of September 13, 2006, meeting

On a motion by Dr. Morenon, seconded by Mr. Goff, the Commission

VOTED unanimously to approve the Minutes of September 13, 2006.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported that Congress has re-authorized the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission for another five years. Senator Lincoln Chafee led united delegations from Rhode Island and Massachusetts in achieving reauthorization.

4. National Register Review Board

Final National Register Approvals

Weekapaug Inn, Westerly

Ms. Kennedy presented information about the property, a 1939 seaside resort that replaced an earlier inn that was destroyed in the 1938 Hurricane. Several generations of the Buffum Family have owned and operated the Weekapaug Inn. The Inn is significant in the history of recreational use of the Rhode Island shore, and its steel and concrete structure, cloaked in wood Colonial Revival facades, is noteworthy in the development of coastal zone engineering. Several modest outbuildings are included in the nomination. Following discussion, on a motion by Ms. Hagen, seconded by Mr. Hebert, the Commission unanimously

VOTED final approval of the nomination.

Greenwich Mill, Warwick

Mr. Emidy presented information about the property, a 1918 worsted mill with an office (1920), finishing mill and guard house (1923-1939), dye house (1925-1947), and boiler house (1947). Greenwich Mill operated until 1951 when it was sold and used for a variety of industrial activities. The property is significant as a very intact factory complex engaged in Rhode Island's nationally important worsted industry. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Malone,

seconded by Ms. Hagen, the Commission unanimously

VOTED final approval of the nomination.

Jules Desurmont Worsted Mill, 84 Fairmont Street, Woonsocket

Mr. Emidy presented information about the property, a worsted mill built in 1909 by French manufacturers. The mill was renamed Riverside Worsted in 1935. The mill, mill office, and boiler house are significant for their industrial architecture. In addition, evidence remains of the mill's original power system that consisted of a large steam-powered flywheel and multiple drive belts that were housed in an internal tower (marked by blind windows) and that conveyed power to all three floors of the mill. In 1931 the workers at the Desurmont Mill organized as the International Textile Union and struck for higher wages. The 1931 strike was an important event in the history of textile labor organizing. The ITU (later known as the Industrial Trades' Union) drew on the traditions of French and Belgian syndicalism and became part of the nationwide labor organizing movement. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Malone, seconded by Dr. Rubertone, the Commission unanimously

VOTED final approval of the nomination.

5. Report of the Loan Committee

Mr. Goff reported that he and Ms. Allison met with a prospective borrower in Pawtucket's Quality Hill neighborhood to review financial aspects of the proposed loan. Unfortunately the borrower does not have sufficient equity to meet loan requirements. Mr. Goff offered some suggestions to the borrower about ways to proceed.

6. Other business:

a) Ms. Hesse presented information about reconstruction of the Ocean House Hotel in Watch Hill. The historic structure needed extensive rehabilitation and repair. A developer who purchased the property proposed to replace it with half a dozen large new houses. A second developer intervened to purchase the hotel and either rehabilitate the historic building, or alternatively reconstruct it. RIHPHC did not have regulatory control of the project, but RIHPHC have offered technical assistance at the request of the Westerly Town Council. The owner decided on reconstruction after thoroughly studying preservation options. The reconstructed Ocean House will generally duplicate the original in public view sheds, and new additions away from public views will provide additional space for condominiums. While many features of the historic building facades and first-floor public rooms have been salvaged, most of the exterior materials will be synthetic imitations of the original wood clapboards and trim. RIHPHC staff will report updates on the progress of the reconstruction, and it will be interesting to see whether the new materials replicate the character of the historic Ocean House.

b) Dr. Robinson presented information about the Salt Ponds Development in Narragansett. In 1988, Dr. Morenon performed preliminary archaeology on the site of the proposed residential development and reported on significant archaeological findings. A subsequent Phase II archaeological investigation by the PAL examined 11 percent of the project area and identified 426 features, including human burials, evidence of structures, a possible ceremonial site, and several corn kernels. Given the significance, extent, and cultural sensitivity of the findings, the development was suspended until recently. Now archaeological investigations are resuming and the developer hopes to be able to proceed. Located at the top of Point Judith Pond, the site potentially is a major Narragansett Indian settlement. Representatives of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and RIHPHC staff are working with the developer and PAL. The project is subject to RIHPHC review in accordance with RI Coastal Resources Management Council regulations and the provisions of the RI Historic Cemeteries Act.

7. Next meeting date: The next meeting of the Commission will be Wednesday, November 8, 2006.
8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer