



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

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
June 9, 2010

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Ms. Patrice O'Malley Hagan
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson representing Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman & SHPO

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Mr. Keith Stokes, Executive Director, EDC
Dr. Michael Sullivan, Director DEM
Mr. Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman & SHPO
1 Vacant

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was convened at 9:35 A.M. In the absence of Mr. Williamson, Mr. Hoogeboom assumed the Chair.

2. Minutes of May 12, 2010

On a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Hoogeboom, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the Minutes of May 12, 2010.

3. Director's Report

The General Assembly has approved a bond issue to be placed on the referendum ballot in November to fund acquisition of the former Rocky Point Amusement Park waterfront property in Warwick, acquisition of waterfront property in Providence adjacent to India Point Park, and funding for capital improvements at Fort Adams in Newport to increase public access to the historic fort. Each of these properties includes Narragansett Bay waterfront access. At Fort Adams, a master plan has just been completed (funded 50% by a federal Preserve America Grant administered by RIHPHC) that outlines the work that could be funded through the bond issue.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Preliminary Consideration: Lyman Mill, North Providence

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the 1880s mill. "Lymansville" was the site of an 1809 cotton mill. Today, the late 19th-century mill complex includes the brick mill, a weave shed, dye house, boiler house, and office building.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for Lyman Mill.

Preliminary Consideration: City of Providence Public Schools

Dr. Greenwood presented information about public school buildings in Providence. The City of Providence and the RI Department of Elementary & Secondary Education are developing plans for physical improvements for many of the Providence schools and possibly for replacement of some schools. RIHPHC will be asked to review and comment on individual projects; however, RIHPHC staff and educational facilities planners need guidance regarding which schools are considered to have historical value.

Recently, the Nathan Bishop School (1929, located in Freeman Plat Historic District) completed a total rehabilitation project that preserved the historic character of the exterior and key interior features such as the auditorium and entrance vestibule, while improving corridors, classrooms, gyms, the lunch room area, and all mechanical and structural systems. RIHPHC voted to give the Nathan Bishop project a 2009 "Rhody Award" for historic preservation, and the project has also been recognized as a "high performance" school for environmental and energy conservation. Combining preservation and reuse of a historic school building with significant interior improvements, Nathan Bishop seems to be a successful model for school renovation.

Dr. Greenwood presented slides and historical information all Providence schools. A few school buildings have already been listed on the National Register of Historic Places individually, and others have been included in National Register historic districts. RIHPHC staff believe Providence schools need to be evaluated as a system in a citywide context. Dr. Greenwood noted that construction of school buildings reflects the historical development of Providence neighborhoods and that schools are civic landmarks that may contribute to the heritage of the community. Many pre-1960 school buildings retain their historic and architectural character on the exterior, with the exception of almost universally replaced windows. Most of the pre-1950 schools are brick and stone masonry structures and exhibit a variety of revival historical architectural styles, notably Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, and Gothic Revival. It is believed that some schools retain key historic features on the interior, such as entrance areas, auditorium, school office area, and general floor plan, etc., and that corridors, classrooms, and other interior areas may lack historical character or may have been altered in the past.

Schools built after 1960 exhibit architectural treatment that differs from earlier schools and served well established neighborhoods or a citywide student enrollment. RIHPHC staff believe that post-1960 schools need additional evaluation in order to define their historical and architectural significance.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato observed that the pre-1960 schools have architectural value as a group of buildings dating from the later 19th century to the mid-twentieth century. Preservation of Providence schools as a whole may have greater significance than each school considered individually.

Mr. Grosvenor agreed, and he stated that the Nathan Bishop model of school renovation seemed to preserve historically valuable characteristics while allowing for needed improvements to the building.

Mr. Hoogeboom noted that demolition is an alternative to renovation of an old school in poor condition. He urged RIHPHC to apply a review standard that enables preservation of historical character while accommodating needed changes.

Ms. Hagen suggested that it would be important to establish a citywide historical context in which the value of preserving individual schools was appreciated.

Dr. Morenon stated that members of the community feel an attachment to schools they attended and where members of their family or friends attended. Personal connections to old school buildings are an important of the community perception.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for considering the pre-1960 Providence Schools to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places; and ongoing evaluation for post-1960 school buildings.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Next meeting date: Wednesday September 8, 2010.

7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director