



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

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION  
June 8, 2011

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack  
Mr. Robert Goff  
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA  
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman  
Dr. Patrick Malone  
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon  
Dr. Ronald Onorato  
Mr. Pieter N. Roos  
Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer & Executive Director

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director  
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide  
Mr. Wm. McKenzie Woodward, Principal Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM  
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board  
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner  
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir  
Dr. Patricia Rubertone  
Mr. Keith Stokes, Executive Director, EDC  
1 Vacant

## II. AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was convened at 9:40 A.M. Mr. Hoozeboom, Chairman, presiding.

### 2. Minutes of May 11, 2011

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

VOTED to approve the Minutes of May 11, 2011.

### 3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported that Commissioners Hoozeboom, Malone, and Onorato have been reappointed. Mr. Pieter Roos has been appointed as a new Commissioner; he serves as the Commission museologist. Mr. Roos is Executive Director of the Newport Restoration Foundation. He holds a graduate degree in museum studies and has extensive experience leading historical organizations and managing historical collections.

Ms. Patricia Hagan has not been reappointed to the Commission. The Commissioners unanimously moved and seconded the following resolution of appreciation for Pat Hagan's service:

VOTED that the Members of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission express their appreciation to Pat Hagan for her service as a Member of the RIHPHC from 2004 to 2011. During that time she has contributed her knowledge of Little Compton and understanding of heritage land-preservation; she was instrumental in planning and carrying out the 2010 statewide historic preservation conference in Little Compton which was an outstanding event; and she has consistently supplied wisdom and energy and good will to the Commission's deliberations. Although we will miss her presence at Commission meetings, we look forward to Pat's continued historic preservation leadership as Board Chair at Preserve Rhode Island.

b) Mr. Sanderson reported that legislation to re-start the Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit has been introduced as H.6098 which received strong testimony at a legislative hearing held on June 7. Mr. Sanderson submitted a letter of support for the bill on behalf of the RIHPHC.

c) House bill H.5375 and Senate bill S.0228 dealing with Historic Cemeteries is moving through the approval process. Mr. Sanderson submitted a letter of support for the bill on behalf of the RIHPHC.

d) House bill H.6199 has been introduced to reinstate the Historic Homeownership Tax Credit, but no hearing has been scheduled. Mr. Sanderson submitted a letter of support for the

bill on behalf of the RIHPHC.

e) Senate bill S.0114 has been introduced to establish a new state commission to develop surplus land associated with the I-195 relocation project. At the request of the Governor's Office, Mr. Sanderson reviewed and commented on possible conflicts between the legislation and the federal Memorandum of Agreement that authorizes RIHPHC to review redevelopment of the surplus I-195 parcels of land.

f) A federal lawsuit against RIHPHC brought by the owners of the Salt Pond archaeological site was dismissed on appeal. The Coastal Resources Management Council hearing panel has made its preliminary recommendation that the Assent for development issued in 1992 remains valid, but that all required archaeological investigation must be completed. A final written recommendation will be drafted and presented to the full CRMC for deliberation and decision.

g) The 2011 Heritage Festival will be held on Saturday September 24 at the Roger Williams National Memorial park.

#### 4. National Register of Historic Places

Final Approval: Shoreby Hill, Jamestown

Dr. Greenwood introduced the nomination, which was recommended in the RIHPHC's 1995 survey report: "Historical and Architectural Resources of Jamestown." RIHPHC funded preparation of the National Register document through a "Preservation Is Local" grant to the Town of Jamestown. A public meeting was held with the Town Council and residents on May 23, 2011 to explain the National Register nomination process. Some residents have suggested local historic district zoning for the Shoreby Hill district, and other property owners have objected to National Register listing as a step toward local regulation. Of the 82 properties included in the historic district, five notarized letters of owner objection have been received; in addition, an undated petition said to represent sixteen property-owners was submitted to RIHPHC. Clearly a majority of owners has not objected to the nomination. However, in accordance with federal regulations, copies of the objections will be submitted together with the National Register nomination to the National Park Service.

Mr. Woodward presented information about the property. The Shoreby Hill Historic District is an exceptional example in Rhode Island of a planned garden suburb, designed during the last decade of the nineteenth century as an exclusive resort neighborhood. Resort communities in Rhode Island each developed their own distinct characters. Newport became a destination of choice for wealthy socialites with Southern and New York connections, while Watch Hill was popular with members of Philadelphia society as well as Ohio and Kentucky. In both communities, social life and leisure activities were highly formalized and based on social standing. By contrast, the island town of Jamestown was a more rural summer destination, with a setting of scenic pastures, stone walls, small lanes, vistas to the ocean and bay, and quiet

coastline and beaches.

Shoreby Hill was developed by a group of St. Louis residents who sought to establish an exclusive enclave of summer residences. The company hired Boston civil engineer and landscape architect Ernest W. Bowditch (1850-1918) and began to plan the design and layout of the subdivision and its lots, streets and infrastructure. Bowditch was trained as an engineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and became interested in landscape design when his practice brought him commissions working on large estates, wealthy suburbs and resort communities. Among the most well-known was Bowditch's site planning and construction supervision of Tuxedo Park, New York for Pierre Lorillard in 1885-6. As Boston was expanding during this period, Bowditch also created the site plans for suburbs such as Chestnut Hill, Waban, Aberdeen and Allston Park, and the curvilinear neighborhood plan for Newton Terraces which is similar to Shoreby Hill. The design for Shoreby Hill incorporated curving streets to allow gentle slopes up the prominent hill that defines the site, and also created picturesque viewsheds.

In the period between 1897 and 1903, eight houses were constructed and two summer residences were moved from other locations on Conanicut Island. Between 1911 and 1917, there was a building boom in which 33 houses were constructed, most of which were summer cottages. The residences were generally vernacular interpretations of the Shingle and Colonial Revival styles. Some are executed in the Bungalow and Four Square styles, and many houses are similar to each other, perhaps based on plans from popular pattern books of the period.

During the 1950s and 1960s, summer cottages in Shoreby Hill were converted to year-round use. Construction of new houses after 1960 was generally Cape Cod or Ranch style homes. A more recent trend has been the demolition of older homes and the construction of new dwellings on the lots.

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

VOTED approval for the nomination.

Preliminary Consideration: Updike-Pearce Farm, 79 Peckham Road, Little Compton

Mr. Woodward presented information about the property. The five-bay, 2 ½ -story, center-chimney house appears to date from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In some rooms, there are exposed "gunstock" corner posts, and there is vertical board paneling on the second floor. Mantels appear to date from an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century updating. There is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century ell and an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century addition. The house has an unusual framing pattern, but previous studies have concluded that it represents a single build.

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

VOTED preliminary approval for the nomination.

5. Discussion of State Preservation Plan updating

Dr. Greenwood presented information about his work to revise and update the State Historic Preservation Plan. In accordance with National Park Service requirements, the State Preservation Plan focuses on internal state historic preservation office operations and on the state's process for identifying and evaluating historic properties. In Rhode Island, the development of individual communities has been the organizing principle for identification and evaluation of above-ground resources, supplemented by statewide thematic studies of property-types such as landscapes, outdoor public sculpture, bridges and engineering structures. Pre-European archaeological resources have been organized within a regional framework that reflects landforms and resources that supported Indian settlement and activity, while historical archaeological resources are generally studied within a town context. These organizing principles have been effective for the RIHPHC to plan and carryout documentation of historic properties and to participate in cultural resource management programs such as preservation planning, project review, and historic rehabilitation and restoration projects. Dr. Greenwood sees the current updating of the state preservation plan as building upon and refining this organizational framework but not replacing it.

Basic program goals of the current plan that will be repeated in the updated plan are:

- Locate, identify, and evaluate the Rhode Island's historical resources
- Provide technical assistance to meets the needs of property owners and managers
- Protect historical resources through project review
- Realize the potential of historic preservation to revitalize communities and ensure that historic preservation is included in city & town comprehensive planning
- Make information about Rhode Island's historical resources available to the public

Policies will be developed for each of these goals. The discussions at "Preservation Is Local" forums provided useful input for developing policies, and RIHPHC Commissioners and staff are good sources of additional information.

Dr. Greenwood suggested several additional areas that might be added to the updated plan, and he invited Commissioners' comments and reactions.

- There is a need for stronger historic preservation networks within communities and greater outreach to the wider community. Mr. Hoogeboom agreed and suggested that the language used to explain historic preservation issues needs to be broadly understood. Mr. Cusack noted there are many popular misconceptions about historic preservation.
- There is a need to strengthen the statewide preservation network. There have been some significant improvements in information sharing recently, such as the Preserve Rhode Island weekly electronic newsletter "Around The Block" and the creation of the

"Common Sense Preservation" website by Preserve Rhode Island, the Newport Restoration Foundation, the Providence Revolving Fund, and Historic New England. Dr. Onorato suggested that historic preservation information needs to be made more available to building contractors, realtors, and other audiences whose work affects preservation decisions. He suggested an "Angie's List" approach.

- There is an ongoing need for financial resources for historic preservation. Over the last ten years, RIHPHC has been extremely successful in administering assistance through \$6 million in state preservation grants that assisted \$75 million in restoration

work

\$3.8 million in state tax credits for historic homeownership projects

\$1.3 billion in state tax credits for historic rehabilitation development projects

However, the bond-funded grants have been exhausted, and the both tax credit programs are in jeopardy. Mr. Hoozeboom suggested that through the tax credits the state has been offering a "20% Off Sale" for historic preservation.

- There is an ongoing need for training Commissioners who serve on local historic district commissions. RIHPHC has sponsored three local commissioner training workshops in the last year and a-half, and this needs to be a continuing effort.
- There is a need to address the relationship between environmental sustainability and historic preservation. "Green" building technology is often perceived as antagonistic to historic structures, and alternate energy generation is sometimes perceived as an intrusion on cultural landscapes. On the positive side, sustainable communities embrace smart-growth principles favoring existing settlement and compact new development, such as in historic cities and towns. Dr. Morenon suggested that comparisons between Rhode Island and other states might provide useful examples of alternate approaches.
- Mr. Grosvenor suggested adding heritage tourism the list of preservation issues that the state plan should address. He noted the effort to nominate Newport as a World Heritage site. Given the importance of heritage tourism to the Rhode Island economy, state government should take a proactive lead in helping to develop heritage tourism "products." For example, state grants could assist historic sites with restoration projects, improving visitor services, and marketing.
- Dr. Malone observed that Rhode Island is the site for nationally significant industrial landmarks, an area of growing popular interest as indicated by the program of the 2011 National Trust conference that will be held in Buffalo, New York. The possible establishment of a new national park in the Blackstone Valley could be linked to economic development through heritage tourism.

Dr. Greenwood thanked the members of the Commission for their input and suggestions. He will distribute a draft of the updated state plan during the summer.

## 6. Other business

Mr. Grosvenor announced that John Millar will be giving a lecture on colonial architect Peter Harrison at the Redwood Library, and that Newport will host a full day of events on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

7. Next meeting date: Wednesday July 13, 2011.
8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:55 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director