



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

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
September 14, 2011

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, 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

Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Sr. Project Review Coordinator
Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide
Mr. Wm. McKenzie Woodward, Principal Architectural Historian

GUESTS

Mr. Raymond Choiniere, House Policy Analyst
Mr. Richard Youngkin, National Register consultant

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
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 9:35 A.M. Mr. Hoogeboom, Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of July 13, 2011

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

VOTED to approve the Minutes of July 13, 2011.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported that the National Park Service has released a Special Resources Study that recommends establishment of a Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. The Park would carry on the work started with the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor established in 1986. Mr. Sanderson and Dr. Greenwood have participated in the SRS during the past two years. Public meetings were held over the summer to explain and discuss the Park proposal, and Senator Jack Reed is working on park legislation.

b) Mr. Sanderson reported that CRMC has concluded hearings regarding development on the Salt Pond archaeological site and the parties are awaiting the hearing committee's written findings. A federal lawsuit brought by owner Richard Baccari against RIHPHC and CRMC was decided in the State's favor in federal District Court and at the Boston federal Circuit Court; the owner has filed an appeal at the U.S. Supreme Court, alleging the State has taken his property without compensation. The State Attorney General continues to represent RIHPHC.

c) Mr. Sanderson reported that RIHPHC regulations for the treatment of historic cemeteries were drafted over the summer and the draft has been submitted to the Attorney General for review.

d) An updated and revised draft State Historic Preservation Plan has been posted on the RIHPHC website for public review and comment. The draft has also been sent to the National Park Service for review.

e) The City of East Providence has been approved by the National Park Service as a Certified Local Government as recommended by RIHPHC. The 2012 CLG grants will be advertised with the same funding priorities as 2011.

f) The State has approved posting the vacant Principal Archaeologist position.

g) The annual State Heritage Festival will be held on Saturday September 24 at the Roger Williams National Memorial site on North Main Street, Providence.

h) The Rhody Awards Celebration for historic preservation projects will be held at the State House on Friday, October 14.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Final Approval: Esten-Bowen House, 299 Iron Mine Road, Burrillville

Dr. Greenwood introduced the nomination. The Esten-Bowen House is a late 18th – or early 19th-century wood frame, center chimney, double-pile, 1½ story Cape Cod-type farmhouse with a flank kitchen ell in a formerly agrarian setting in northeast Burrillville. It was restored and updated in a free interpretation of the Colonial style in the 1940s by an amateur historian with American Colonial antiquarian and genealogical interests. The farmhouse presently occupies a 32-acre parcel that was the heart of the original farm. The house sits within the former farmyard, which contains two surviving outbuildings and the ruins of several others. Drylaid stone walls divide the rest of the land into a pattern of lanes, fields (now grown over) and woodlots.

The Esten-Bowen House is significant under National Register Criterion A for its ability to exemplify the character of Burrillville's rural development from a period of agricultural growth and expansion in the early 19th century through a gradual decline and subsequent transition to exurban residential uses in the 20th century. Built by John Esten c. 1790, the farmhouse was the center of one of the many farmsteads that Esten established for his children on his extensive holdings in the Mount Pleasant District. With its agricultural productivity limited by meager soils, the farm, like many in town, was effectively abandoned in the early 20th century, after which it was acquired by Esther Bowen of Providence, who refurbished the farmhouse to serve as her residence. The house is eligible under Criterion C for its distinctive amalgamation of surviving original Early Republican fabric and the enhancements executed in the 1940s in the picturesque mid-century Early American mode.

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

VOTED to approve the Esten-Bowen House National Register nomination.

Preliminary Review: Whipple House, Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. It is a 2 ½ -story, Federal period house located in the village of Diamond Hill, Cumberland. The house has a Greek Revival doorway and unusual two-over-two window sash that appear to date to the early 19th century. A later front porch appears to date to the 20th century, and vinyl siding has been applied. On the interior, the stairway is characteristic of the late 18th century and the north parlor fireplace has a Federal period mantel and trim. The south parlor suffered a fire and the current details appear to date to the early 20th century. A five-room plan is mostly intact. Dr. Greenwood noted that the Esten-Bowen House may be a contributing property in a potential Diamond Hill Village historic district.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato noted the negative impact of the vinyl siding and general loss of architectural integrity. Dr. Morenon noted he has conducted research into early industrial activities in this part of Cumberland, including blacksmithing. On a motion by Mr. Hoozeboom, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission unanimously

VOTED that the Esten-Bowen House may be eligible for listing on the National Register subject to further evaluation of the property's historical and architectural integrity. The Commission also expresses its interest in the possibility of a Diamond Hill Village historic district that would include the Esten-Bowen house.

Preliminary Review: Wax House, 130 Edgewood Boulevard, Providence

Mr. Woodward presented information about the property. The modern house was built in 1951. It was designed by Providence architect Ira Rakatansky, who trained at Harvard University Graduate School of Design in the 1940s when Walter Gropius was teaching there; a recent monograph details Rakatansky's career designing modernist residences from 1946 into the 1980s. The house is a one-story brick and glass structure. A large picture window on the west elevation has been removed. On the interior, well-preserved living and dining areas flow together around a two-sided brick fireplace. A new owner plans to restore the missing window and rehabilitate the building.

During discussion, Dr. Onorato expressed interest in the Wax House as an example of modern design. Mr. Roos urged that the owner identify and preserve character-defining historic elements during the renovation process. On a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Dr. Malone, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for nominating the Wax House.

5. Discussion of U.S. Navy Aquidneck Island Wind Turbine Project

Mr. Emidy provided information about planning for installation of multiple wind turbines on U.S. Navy property on Aquidneck Island. Over the past year, environmental consultants to the Navy have consulted with RIHPHC staff to identify historic properties that might be affected by the undertaking and to create visual simulations of the potential visual effects. So far, no direct effects to any historic property have been identified, although archaeological evaluation has not yet been conducted.

The proposed turbines would be a maximum of 459 feet in height, with lower heights near the Middletown airport. The tentative Area of Potential Affect is four miles. View sites in Newport included Fort Adams, The Breakers, Bellevue Avenue, Bowen's Wharf, Battery Park, Island Cemetery; and additional view sites in Jamestown included Windmill Hill, Town Dock, and East Shore Road; and Prudence Island. RIHPHC staff have made a preliminary finding that the turbines could be seen from historic properties at many of these locations; however, RIHPHC staff not made a determination whether these visual affects would be "adverse" or "not adverse."

Dr. Onorato asked how tree foliage screened the photographic views, and Mr. Emidy described how each photo simulation included a red circle superimposed on top of trees or buildings that depicted the turbine blades' radius even if the view were obscured. Mr. Roos questioned whether the turbine's heights were accurately shown in the photo simulations. Mr. Hoogeboom noted that the motion of turbine blades could not be shown in still photographs. Dr. Onorato suggested that the view from the Newport Bridge looking east toward the Naval War College should be added to the photo simulations. Other suggested views that might be considered are: Trinity Church, Touro Park, Shoreby Hill. Several Commissioners expressed concern that the turbines would be highly visible from Battery Park. Dr. Onorato and Mr. Roos both noted that the proposed northern-most sites posed little visual impact, but the proposed southern sites might have a significant impact. Mr. Hoogeboom suggested the turbines could be painted a color that minimized their visibility.

Mr. Sanderson concluded that the information presented by Mr. Emidy has been sent to various potential interested parties such as the Newport Historic District Commission, Point Association, Fort Adams Trust, Preservation Society of Newport County, Newport Restoration Foundation, Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, and Jamestown Historical Society with a request for comments and an invitation to attend a presentation by U.S. Navy representatives. Mr. Sanderson emphasized that under federal environmental review regulations, simply being able to see a new construction such as the proposed wind turbines from a historic property does not constitute an "adverse effect." Rather, an "adverse effect" finding must be based on evaluation that the visual impact of the turbines would damage or seriously diminish the historical qualities of a National Register property. It is also relevant that a visual impact is indirect (not physically destructive) and theoretically temporary. RIHPHC is interested in any additional comments Commissioners may have, and the comments and concerns of interested parties will be carefully considered before final RIHPHC comments are issued.

6. Other business

There was no other business.

7. Next meeting date: Wednesday October 12, 2011.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:59 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director