

Town of Smithfield

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

April 11, 2018 MEETING MINUTES

PRESENT: Robert Leach, Katie Law, Ben Caisse and Jennifer Blanchette

ABSENT: Travis Worthley (excused)

OTHERS:

The April 11, 2018 meeting of the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission opened at 6:14 p.m.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND HEALTH NOTIFICATION

Chairman, Robert Leach gave the Emergency Evacuation and Health Notification.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – March 14, 2018

Katie made a motion, seconded by Ben, to approve the March 14, 2018 meeting minutes as written. The vote on the motion was unanimous and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS – Consider, Discuss and Act upon the following matters:

- Any needs SHPC member Ben Caisse may have for school programs involving mill history.

Nothing new.

- Central Falls City Vault – determination of damage to Smithfield documents, evaluation of remedy performed by Vermont Restoration Company, uncatalogued items.

Katie advised that, Smithfield Town Clerk, Carol Aquilante offered to contact Vermont Restoration Company in regards to the status of the restoration. Robert stated that he had an opportunity to go through many documents before they were damaged. He advised that many documents were from the 1800's and included early road surveys, vaccinations and the records regarding the small pox outbreak. Robert noted that there was documentation that there was an inoculation center at Captain Andrew Waterman's farm. Robert advised that he would like a report regarding the extent of the damage. Katie stated that it would be beneficial that once the records were restored that they are cataloged and made available through a database. She advised that there may be a Grant available to help with costs.

- RI House Bill banning Privy's from Rhode Island residences.

Katie stated that the Bill was withdrawn.

- Update on Bill H7425 to disband the Smithfield Land Trust, the 3/6/2018 Town Council Meeting with public hearing on the above mentioned Bill, State House Hearing on bill 4/5/2018.

Katie and Robert gave testimony at the March 06, 2018 Town Council Meeting speaking against disbanding the Smithfield Land Trust. Robert stated that unfortunately Katie was not able to attend the public hearing noting that the SHPC was not contacted in advance to advise us of the meeting and because of the short notice Katie attended the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center Meeting.

Robert stated that he attended the public hearing at the State House on April 5, 2018. Robert advised that many people who had previously spoken in support of the Land Trust at the Town Council Meeting attended the public hearing and spoke in opposition of Bill H7425 to disband the Smithfield Land Trust. He stated that there were two speakers, Al Costantino and Jackson Despres who spoke in favor of the Bill.

Robert stated that Senator Thomas Winfield advised at the public hearing that there is an amendment to Bill H7425 or a Sub-A, which was not available at the time of the public hearing, but will be distributed at a later date. Robert stated that one component may be an appointment of an Oversight Committee of the Smithfield Land Trust.

Robert advised that he spoke in opposition to Bill H7425 stating that “the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission shares the concern of Representatives Winfield and Costantino regarding the effective use of funds for acquisition of Land Trust properties, but disagrees with the approach in this bill. Through the Asset Management Commission, Zoning, Conservation and other Boards and Commissions, we already have some oversight of the Land Trust’s activities”.

Robert advised that it’s a preservation issue and stated that he read from the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission Ordinance, Chapter §46-1 “The Town Council finds that the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of the Town should be preserved to enrich the experience of present and future generations” etc.

* See attached document

- *106 Reviews, RIDOT Tolling Stations, Adverse Impacts on Historic Properties.*

This agenda item was tabled and can be removed from the next agenda.

- Update on Cedar Forest archeological evaluation.

Robert discussed the Phase I Intensive Archaeological Survey of the Cedar Forest Subdivision which was emailed to the Commission members for their review. Robert stated that the report is excellent and very detailed.

Robert advised that the report is 102 pages, but read a few sections of the report (pages 45, 57, 58 and 61) which corroborates SHPC comments that the piles were a result of field clearing and not an American Indian Ceremonial or Burial Site. There was no evidence of Native American Artifacts and no archeological value to the site.

*See attached documents

Robert advised that the property owners volunteered to have the Archaeological Survey done because the property site was controversial. Robert stated that the owners agreed to put a buffer of fifteen feet around the piles even though it was determined to have no significance to them.

Robert stated there is a foundation on the property that we should consider adding protections to and should be added to the Historic Inventory List. This will be added to the agenda for the next meeting after everyone has been able to review the report. Katie stated that she would like to do a site visit.

- Nominations, Considerations, Designations, Notifications, and Maintenance Concerning the Smithfield Historical Inventory.

Robert presented the Tax Assessor's Master List to Jenn for her consideration, explaining that it may be beneficial because it is mapped and regionalized by zoning, but the list does not include artifacts, churches, schools, barns and the list could expand to commercial sites. Robert stated that each property should be researched and compared from all sources, the Green Book, HI List and Tax Assessor's Master's List. Jenn and Ben will work on composing a list adding additional columns and subtitles as needed. Jenn stated that she would contact the Town's Assessor, Drew Manlove, for a list of any commercial properties over 100 years.

Jenn and Ben will research and compare the properties listed in the Green book, Tax Assessor's Master List of Historic Properties and the HI List to cross reference and verify the accuracy of the properties. It's a synopsis of properties and the check list will help to locate the properties. The goal is to compose a complete list of Historic Inventory with accurate documentation. Everything on the Assessor's Master List should also be on the HI List. Once everything is documented and verified because some things are inaccurate and need to be collaborated, it should be sent to the Assessor's office and updated on the Town's website.

Robert stated that the project is a big undertaking and added that many historic properties have been destroyed or are not listed, providing an example of this as the April 2018 Smithfield Times article by Jim Ignasher featuring Smithfield's Woonasquatucket Railroad. Robert stated there were two train stations in Esmond, a smaller one which was replaced by a larger station.

*See attached document.

Robert stated that a field report is a different document from the inventory form. The filed report is not as detailed, but may be helpful. Robert will send Jenn and Ben copies of a field report.

Kate stated the online services tab on the Town's website and GIS mapping system would be helpful with their research because it has real property records and includes the plat and lot of the property. Ben stated that he would like to link the HI list with Vision Appraisal so that if you click on a location on the map the picture of the property would pop up.

- *H.I. Designation Added to Town Properties*

Robert stated that once the Historic Inventory List is completed, it should be presented to the Tax Assessor, Drew Manlove, at a future meeting for discussion.

- Properties: (Consider, Discuss and Act upon the following).

East Smithfield Neighborhood Center – Items for discussion include: RGB Report, ESNC funding in upcoming proposed Town Budget, Roof leak, Code violation solutions and repairs necessary to open ESNC and efforts made regarding the above. RFP for repairs to center. Sub-committee meeting 4/5/2018. Smithfield Fire Department site training.

Robert advised that according to the Town Manager, Randy Rossi, the RGB Report should not be considered as germane for future work and should be removed from the next agenda.

Robert stated that people don't understand the importance of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center because it is mundane looking, but it has great value and historic significance. Robert showed a few photos of restored historic buildings for comparison and showed a picture of how the ESNC would look once it was restored.

Robert stated he volunteered to do the architectural drawings and his Structural Engineer volunteered his time and for a flat fee of \$2,000 would construct the structural ridge for the ESNC. Robert advised that he has given the Structural Engineer's proposal to the Town Manager for his review and will make a presentation showing the maps, photos and restorations that he presented tonight to the ESNC Committee at their next meeting. He advised that there is a lot of potential to restore the ESNC. Robert stated that he located the 1858 survey of the 1851 Union Church which is the same dimensions within the ESNC. The building was moved and the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center was built.

Katie stated Phase I code violations such as electrical and plumbing are needed to get building open and a better understanding is needed to know what is absolutely necessary to open it. There is a 50% rule of the value of the building which applies, but it may be a misrepresentation. Robert stated that the Town's Building Official, Jim Cambio, would make a judgement call as to if he would use the depreciated value of \$177,400 versus the undepreciated value is \$442,960. Katie advised that the building is going to be appraised and Town Manager, Randy Rossi, is checking with the insurance company to see if the roof repair or any damage to the building would be handled through them.

Katie stated that DPW will remove ceiling tiles and tracks in the main hall and the left wing. Katie advised that the roof was repaired though different colored shingles were used, but Katie believes that the roof may still have a leak. Katie stated that DPW did the repair, but the interior was not inspected for damage. The concern is that the moisture could cause mold, mildew, rot and water damage to the inside.

Katie advised that Randy Rossi gave permission to the Fire Department to hold another training session. Katie stated that the SHPC should be contacted prior to any future trainings. Katie stated that though the SHPC supports the fire department and the training, she also did not want to have any further damage to the building or floors. Katie advised that the public should be notified because many citizens were upset by the Fire Department's presence.

Robert stated that he contacted Town Councilwoman, Suzy Alba, to discuss a phased opening of the ESNC and subsequent renovations in which she was agreeable. Katie showed the Commission the ESNC plans indicating a multifunction area for the food bank and Recreation Center. Robert read from the January 2018 Smithfield Times article, *The Town Manager's Office* where Town Manager, Randy Rossi, is quoted "The balance of long-term planning and seizing on immediate opportunities is illustrated in the planned renovation of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center on Esmond Street."

Katie made a motion, seconded by Jenn, that necessary funding to repair, upgrade and open the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center be included in the 2018 – 2019 Town's budget with funds to complete Phase 1 of the repairs with a reasonable amount of money in which to open it. The vote on the motion was unanimous and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS – Consider and act upon the following matters:

- Draft letter for homes and buildings listed on Historic Inventory regarding plaque applications.

Robert stated that once the HI list is collaborated, a couple dozen homes should be selected and the property owners contacted regarding the plaque program. Researching the property Deeds, Chain of Title to determine what name should be used based on who contributed the most, date the home was built, researching maps and accurate home owners should be confirmed prior to contacting the home owner regarding the plaque application. All lists should be cross referenced to be accurate. The Commission discussed a few houses that would qualify for the plaque program such as the Mowry House, Smith Applebee, the Ephraim, Sweet house, Austin Avenue house, Paul Oulette's house and Robyn Kelly's house. Robyn has completed the application and was previously approved for the plaque. Jenn and Ben will contact other home owners once the research is completed. Plaques will be ordered once they have a dozen homes which qualify for the program.

- Johnston Boy Scout Troop looking to assist with SHPC projects

Robert advised that a Johnston Boy Scout Troop contacted him looking for an outdoor field project. Katie stated that the Friends of Smithfield Cemetery are always looking for volunteers. Robert will contact the Boy Scout Troop to refer them.

- Presentation at Interpreting Slavery and Freedom in New England

Katie attended the Interpreting Slavery and Freedom in New England by the Episcopal Diocese and Center for Reconciliation and made a presentation. She advised that she presented Smithfield Quaker documents and a ship manifest signed by Paul Puffy. She stated that the New Bedford Whaling Museum contacted her because they were putting together a Paul Puffy exhibit in the fall and would like to include the ship manifest.

Katie advised that she has begun cataloging the documents that she has accumulated. She stated that there are slaves that are buried in Smithfield and she met a man who states that he has documentation and may know where a slave in Smithfield is buried. She advised that she would contact the man for additional information.

COMMUNICATIONS

Robert stated that the ESNC Ad-Hoc Building Committee would like to include Benny's on the Certified Local Government List. Robert advised that Benny's should be contacted separately to discuss this and explain what it would entail. Robert advised that being included as a local district property would insure that the building is protected and would never be harmed. Robert stated that he would like to have a walk through.

Katie made a motion, seconded by Jenn, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. The vote on the motion was unanimous and the motion carried.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 09, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon M. Gilmore
Recording Secretary

~~HPC~~ SHPC
ORDINANCE

Town of Smithfield, RI
Friday, January 19, 2018

Chapter 46. ~~Historic Preservation Commission~~

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Smithfield 8-11-2009 by Ord. No. 2009-17. Amendments noted where applicable.]

GENERAL REFERENCES

Historic District Commission — See Ch. 45.
Building construction — See Ch. 154.

§ 46-1. Purpose.

The Town Council finds that the historical, architectural and cultural heritage of the Town should be preserved to enrich the experience of present and future generations and that the continued expansion of urban and suburban development threatens the existence of historical sites and structures.

§ 46-2. Creation.

There is hereby established an Historic Preservation Commission to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

§ 46-3. Membership; appointment.

The Commission shall consist of seven members, residents of the Town, to be appointed by the Town Council. Members shall be appointed for a term of three years, except that the initial appointment of two members shall be for one year, two members for two years and three members for three years. Members shall be eligible for reappointment.

§ 46-4. Vacancies.

In the event of a vacancy on the Commission, the Town Council shall make an interim appointment for the remainder of the unexpired term. In the event that a Commission member shall have missed three consecutive meetings without consent of said Commission, then his or her membership shall expire forthwith, and the Town Council shall make an interim appointment to fill the unexpired term of the vacancy.

§ 46-5. Consultation for candidates.

In making appointments to the Commission, the Town Council may consult with any duly organized historic or preservation society which may submit a list of qualified citizens for the Town Council's consideration.

§ 46-6. Organization.

The Commission shall organize annually and, by election, shall select from its membership a Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary and may adopt any rules of procedure deemed necessary in discharging its duties.

§ 46-7. Quorum.

Four members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, and no vacancy in the membership shall impair the right of a quorum to exercise all the rights and perform all of the duties of the Commission.

§ 46-8. Powers and duties.

[Amended 4-18-2017 by Ord. No. 2017-03]

The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

- A. Establish criteria for evaluating historical, architectural or cultural sites, buildings, places, landmarks or areas so as to determine

**Phase I Intensive Archaeological Survey
of the
Cedar Forest Estates Subdivision
in the
Town of Smithfield, Rhode Island**

March, 2018

ACS

◆ *Archaeological Consulting Services* ◆
10 Stonewall Lane & 118 Whitfield Street
Guilford, Connecticut 06437-2949
(203) 458-0550
www.acsarchaeology.com
acsinfo@yahoo.com

formidable view and vantage point over a substantial hollow to the east, thus this part of the project area could contain evidence of a short-term hunting camp that may be represented by lithic debitage, stone tool maintenance artifacts, and/or cooking / hearth features.

Historic

Assessment of historic sensitivity during the Phase I intensive survey was based on a compilation of documents such as historic maps, land records, and local histories. The historic sensitivity of the project area appears to be minimal given the lack of development on historic maps other than possibly a house foundation located in the southwest section of the property well outside the project area. If mapped correctly, there should be traces of the occupation today in the form of a foundation / depression and possibly associated historic structural and domestic artifact debris at the surface. Historic maps suggest this was a remote, possibly secondary residence that could have been related to logging or agriculture. Photographs of stone piles had been submitted to ACS, and they initially appear to be typical as those determined to be most likely related to historic Euroamerican field clearing activities, although statistical analyses regarding location and/or morphological characteristics had not been conducted prior to the survey.

stone exposures within its interior, and a possible stone pile at its southwest end (Feature 8). And in Lot 2, there are five possible stone piles that appear more to be a linear alignment of contiguous stone without definable boundaries (Features 21-25). The rest of the stone features were low lying individual piles with clear separation.

In looking at long axis directions in order to test for the hypothesis that a significant portion may be oriented to the southwest and therefore indicative of Native American acknowledgment of spiritual origins (excluding the trench and the north-south alignment of five features), seven features do not bear any long axis orientation as they are virtually round, six have strikes within the northeast to southwest quadrants, and seven have long axes through the northwest to southeast quadrants, thus there is no apparent orientation of long axes.

With respect to quartz inclusions as proposed elements of ceremonial significance, there were eight features that did not appear to contain substantial quartz rocks. Some of the remaining piles featured more than one quartz element with a total of 21 recorded: five appearing at northwest, three at north, four at northeast, one at west, two at center, one at east, three at southwest, one at south, and one at southeast. Comparing the distribution with a theoretical distribution of 2.33 per cell (totaling 21), a chi square test indicates no apparent difference between the two patterns, although this lack of statistical distinction could be attributed to small sample size, and it should be noted that there is an apparent (although statistically indistinguishable) bias of quartz inclusions in the northern parts of the features (12 out of 21 (57%) in a third (33%) of the cells). With respect to the inclusion of quartz as a potentially significant element as distinguished from the natural abundance of the material at the site, however, a walking survey of the double coursed well on the western side of the project property from the project datum north approximately 150 meters resulted in a count of 71 quartz elements, or roughly one per two meters which would be comparable to the roughly one quartz element per stone pile that averaged between one and two meters long.

With respect to comparing stone feature and random point locations to test for the hypothesis that the stone features were specially placed, significant patterns of distinction were revealed by statistical T-tests for elevation ($p=95.5\%$) and slope ($p=96.5\%$), but not to a degree of scientific probability ($>95\%$) with respect to distance to water ($p=83.5\%$), distance to nearest stone wall ($p=83.3\%$), or distance to either nearest water source or nearest stone wall ($p=69.8\%$). The average elevation of stone feature was 381 feet, while the average control point was at 377 feet - the four foot difference being attributable to the lack of placement of stone piles on the lower steep slope in the eastern part of the project area. Similarly, the average slope percent was 6.5 for stone features, and 13.4 for control points, again with no piles placed on the steep eastern slope. The average distance to water was 37.5 meters for stone features and 30.3 meters for control points, thus a slight but insignificant greater distance away from water for the piles. The average distance to stone wall was 43.6 meters for piles and 53.5 meters for random points, again not a significant statistical difference but an average closer proximity to stone walls for the stone features.

For direction of dip or orientation of hillslope descent, a chi square test indicated a 99.7 percent chance that the stone piles are in fact different from a random set of points when grouped by level, east, or other. When reviewing the distribution of each, it is clear that stone pile formation was not conducted on the steepest of slopes, which were prominently present in the

eastern part of the project area. There was also a better than 99 percent chance of distinction on dip when grouping the points and features by level, northern directions, and other, with a clear concentration of piles on the northern descending slope of the ridge in the northern part of the project area. Alternatively, the portions of the hill occupied by random points and stone features could not be statistically differentiated ($p=70.9\%$) with a chi square test when grouped by ridge, slope, foot, bench, or hollow, and even less distinction when grouped by ridge, slope, or other. Both sets had a clear focus on ridges and slopes, with some representation at the foot of slopes, and only control points occupying hollows or bench landforms.

In summary, there was no statistical indication that the stone pile features of the project area bear an indication of pre-Contact period or Native American construction or significance. Neither the dip, long axis, or placement of quartz elements within the features suggest a bias to the southwest or acknowledged direction of spiritual importance, with orientation and setting instead simply avoiding the steepest sections of the property. There may have been a bias towards setting quartz inclusions towards any of the northern (NW, N, NE) directions, although small sample size precludes making this determination; they are lacking in about a third of features; and their placement within historically constructed stone walls appears to be about as frequent. And the placement of the stone piles across the landscape appears to have been driven only by the avoidance of the steepest slopes.

When comparing the distribution of stone piles to the two prominent alignments of cart paths through the property (see Figures 8, 11, and 18), it appears highly likely that many have been cleared from the prominent paths through the property for logging and hauling purposes. The overlap between stone pile construction and intensive use by cattle or oxen was very prominently evident at Nipsachuck Hill where McBride (2012) shows a striking overlap between the distribution of metal artifacts including oxen shoes, quarrying tools, and nails - and stone piles within a succinct 4.5-acre stone wall enclosed lot, to the exclusion of any stone walls or significant concentration of metal artifacts outside the lot. Other studies in the region have demonstrated 19th Century agrarian materials within the stone pile features (Walwer and Walwer 2007) and the concentration of stone piles in areas containing cattle runs and pen features (Walwer and Walwer 2005). The lack of any direct association with Native American activity according to archaeological excavations is apparent in these studies and others (e.g. Leveillee and Waller 2001).

Further, there are many recorded examples of Euroamerican and European construction of stone piles to mark property boundaries, clear fields for cultivation, and even clear fields for logging and pasturing in order to prevent injury to cattle which may be particularly relevant in the current case (see www.stonestructures.org), as recorded in cases from Scotland, "...It is of the utmost importance to have land effectually cleared of stones, before undertaking any agricultural operations upon it; for by means of them there is frequently more expense incurred in one season, by the breaking of ploughs and the injury suffered by the cattle [oxen] and harness, than would remove the evil. ...When land is laid down for hay, such stones are often improperly thrown in heaps... (quoted from 1823, Encyclopedia Britannica: Or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature, 6th Edition, Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Company, volume 1 p. 357); and from New Hampshire, "...And by the way, you remember how one Sunday this very summer, one of my Deven cows, educated in my smooth pasture at Exeter, was caught between two stones here in the pasture [Chester farm], ignorant as the poor thing was of such traps, and how she nearly tore her foot off... (quoted from 1855, "Letter from the Homestead" The New England Farmer volume 7 number 10, pp. 462-463.

4) Prior and Potential Information

As cultural resources, the stone features are not likely to add substantial new information to the archaeological record of the region. Professional cultural resource management studies, which have included the excavation of similar stone piles, invariably reveal no burial features or directly associated Native American artifact concentrations, and occasionally reveal 19th Century artifacts when dissected. Traditional cultural knowledge proponents indicate they are ceremonial in nature, possibly relating to the commemoration of significant battles, persons, or the departed. Without a historic or ethnographic record of such constructions other than isolated memorial heaps located along well travelled routes, the more probable scenario is that the piles were constructed by Euroamerican farmers clearing fields to facilitate pasturing, lumbering, or other land use efforts. The accumulated collection of data regarding stone features as conducted in this study and potentially others, however, may collectively prove fruitful in determining more confidently the chronological origin and function of stone piles in southern New England.

5) Summary

The 26 stone features assessed during the survey have been mapped and analyzed for possible associations with Native American culture and origins. The identified features do appear to be cultural in origin, as they are statistically discernable in location on the landscape compared to a random set of control points. The features are to be avoided during development with 25-foot protective buffers according to current site plans, although they could be impacted by future use of the house residents. The integrity of the features is good. They tend to be loaded towards the northern end of the main hill ridge, most notably in the vicinity of two converging historic cart paths. Their function remains unknown, although they appear more likely to represent historic Euroamerican farm field clearing rather than Native American ceremonial use. They are not likely to reveal further substantial information through further excavation, and thus are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The features were set within protective buffers and were therefore not evaluated through direct excavation, and are to be avoided during development, although stone pile #26 appears to have been mis-mapped and should be relocated on site plans. Any change in site plans that would result in the impact of these features or the unexcavated stone foundation in the southwest part of the project property may require further evaluation in consultation with the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission. And while future impact to the stone pile features could result from the occupation and use of the newly constructed house sites, the lack of independently verifiable ceremonial import and a preponderance of evidence indicating they are more likely historic Euroamerican field clearing constructions, warrants no further archaeological conservation efforts for the proposed project.

Smithfield's Woonasquatucket Railroad

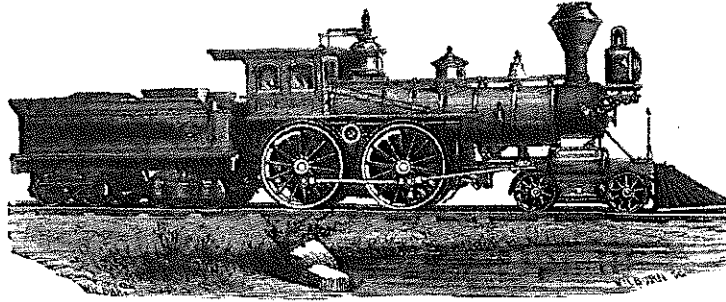
By Jim Ignasher

In the February issue I wrote about Smithfield's Air-Line R.R. This month's article is about another rail line that has long since disappeared.

If someone today were to propose the construction of a railroad through Smithfield, they would likely face strong opposition. The town hall would be inundated with residents demanding the tracks be laid elsewhere, and not through their "back yard". Yet one might be surprised to learn that there was a time when just the opposite was true, and the citizens of Smithfield eagerly awaited the construction of a new railroad.

After the division of the town in 1871, Smithfield, as we know it today, was left without a railroad. However, there were those who hoped to remedy the situation by reviving the charter for the Woonasquatucket Railroad Company. The

charter had originally been granted in 1857, with a plan to lay tracks that more or less followed the Woonasquatucket River from Providence to Massachusetts. Unfortunately, financial setbacks, followed by the onset of the American Civil War delayed the project for nearly fifteen years.



In 1871 the idea was revisited and planning of the route was begun. Although everyone agreed that a rail line would be good for the town, there was much debate as to exactly where the rails should be laid, for every mill owner and farmer wanted the trains to pass as close as to

their property as possible. It was finally announced that the proposed route would run through the villages of Esmond, Georgiaville, and Stillwater, and then continue on into North Smithfield, and Burrillville, which was good news to some, but not for Greenville.

On November 20, 1871, a meeting was held at Tobey's Store in Greenville to discuss the possibility of constructing a branch line that would run from Stillwater to Greenville. If it proved successful, the branch line would later be extended to North Scituate and Chepachet. The meeting was well attended, and efforts to have the branch-line constructed continued for several years, but history has shown that it was never built.

By the spring of 1872 construction on the main line was begun, but sometime between March and June the name of the railroad was changed to the Providence and Springfield Railroad. The project moved quickly, and on August 11, 1873, the line was open for business.

Smithfield had four railroad stations: the Esmond Station located behind the Esmond Mills; the Georgiaville Station, located on Station Street; the Stillwater Station, located on Capron Road; and the Smithfield Station, located on Brayton Road just to the east from Farnum Pike. The stations became social centers where people could catch up on the latest news, mail a letter, or ride to Providence in less time than it took to ride a horse from one side of Smithfield to the other.

By 1878, the Providence & Springfield R.R. was running three locomotives, three passenger cars, and seventy-seven freight cars along the Smithfield route.

During the 1890s the rail line changed hands three times; to the New York & New England Railroad in 1890, to The New England Railroad in 1895, to the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad in 1898.

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The railroad had a great economic influence on the town as it allowed business owners and farmers to transport more goods to other markets than ever before, and at a lower price. It even played a part in World War I by transporting Esmond Mill army blankets destined for troops overseas.

Unfortunately, just as rail lines eclipsed the horse-drawn stage coaches, improvements in roadways and automobile technology eventually eclipsed the "iron horses" of the rails. Passenger service along the Smithfield route was discontinued in 1931, and in 1962 the tracks that ran from Olneyville to Pascoag were abandoned and eventually removed. The only surviving rails known to exist were found under the asphalt of Esmond Street during road construction several years ago. Today they can be viewed at the Smith-Appleby House Museum next to the restored Smithfield Station.

As with all rail lines of the time, the Smithfield portion experienced its share of accidents. At a town meeting held on January 29, 1876, local citizens cited several instances of narrow escapes at rail crossings in town, and urged the Town Council to force the railroad to use flagmen. The council, however, didn't have the legal authority to do so.

The first known accident to occur along the Smithfield portion happened on Christmas Eve in 1878 when a wagon was struck broadside by a speeding train at the Brayton Road crossing. The driver survived, but his horse did not.

According to town records, the first railroad fatality in town occurred in 1888 when a man was struck by a passing train. The exact location isn't given.

One of the more notable accidents involved a head-on collision between two trains on June 12, 1894 in the area of what is today the Stillwater Scenic Walking Trail. Ten people were seriously injured. The crash was blamed on human error.

The Brayton Crossing was reputed to be one of the most dangerous for it was frequently traveled by those heading to or from Woonsocket. On April 15, 1925, it was the scene of what might be the worst accident to occur on the rail line. At about 7 p.m., a car carrying seven adults was struck by a south-bound train. One man and three women were killed, and the others were severely injured.

Three years later on November 30, 1928, yet another accident occurred at the Brayton Crossing in which a husband and wife were injured when a train collided with their car.

Other accidents are documented, but space does not permit their inclusion here.

Until recently, it was thought that Smithfield's only surviving train station was the Smithfield Station presently located at the Smith-Appleby House. However, recent information has come to light that Esmond may have had two railroad stations; a smaller one that was replaced by a larger one. The smaller one is indicated on early maps, and may possibly have been sold to a private party and relocated to Farnum Pike in Georgiaville. Research to confirm this continues.

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The Town Manager also serves as a liaison between the Town Council and the public. While the public has direct access to the Council during their twice-a-month meetings, the Town Manager's office is open to the public five days a week.

"We're the front line for them," Rossi says. "The residents come in off the street; they're coming into my office they're calling; they're e-mailing..." In turn, Rossi keeps in close contact with the Town Council, offering them feedback from the residents.

When the residents and the Council do decide on a course of action, it's Rossi's responsibility to work with the town's department managers and find a way to make it happen.

"Our biggest annual challenge," he says, "is always trying to figure out our available resources for revenue, and to plan for the future year's budget and the needs of the town."

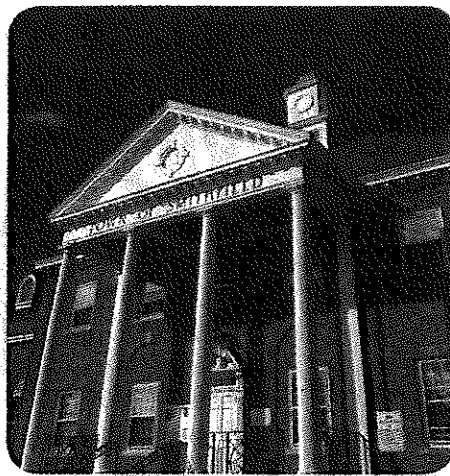
Rossi says the first step in this is asking, "What things do we want to continue to provide to the residents, and to what level do we want to provide them?" He says the standard is always to at least maintain the current level of services, and to look at new, innovative ways to enhance them.

The job requires a careful balance of long-term planning, and immediate action.

"You have to be ready on the short term and then you also want to make sure that you don't downgrade the level of services that people are providing." Rossi says.

The balance of long-term planning and seizing on immediate opportunities is illustrated in the planned renovation of the East Smithfield Neighborhood Center on Esmond Street.

The town is currently waiting for



architects to complete a plan outlining what's needed to bring the historic building up to current code. When the report comes in, the subcommittee planning the renovation will get back together to weigh their options.

In the meantime, however, Rossi and interim Department of Public Works Director Gary Tikoian saw an opportunity to get a head start on the project using internal resources instead of outsourcing.

"As a precursor to that [renovation], we had the DPW guys out there to remove the fence that added nothing to the front of the building but making it an eyesore. Just that little bit of work has aesthetically improved that site," Rossi says. DPW also got a jump on the planned renovation of the Anna McCabe School basketball courts, doing similar cleanup work there.

"Those projects really didn't cost us anything," he notes. "There was no overtime involved. It's our normal guys doing operations, so that's cutting back on project costs right there."

The Town Manager is also the town's liaison with state agencies that can be of service, whether it's reaching out to the state's Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission for grant money

to help with the Neighborhood Center, or to the Lieutenant Governor's office to explore retraining opportunities for workers displaced by the Benny's closing.

In the midst of this day-to-day juggling of resources, there are constant budgeting concerns, as well as plans for the town's long-term economic growth. These include an infrastructure program to prepare for development along the Rte. 7 and Rte. 116 corridor, and looking to alleviate traffic issues both there and on Putnam Pike. There are also the ongoing goals of adding a new fire station, and improving the town's elementary school system. And, having recently completed two bridge renovation projects, the town will be turning its attention to the bridge on Esmond Mill Drive, which provides a vital link to the wastewater treatment plant.

Looking even further down the road, Rossi is working to develop the town's Strategic Plan.

"We're hoping to really lay out the blueprint to move forward, and continue to make the town better," he says. "It's a great town now - with the group of directors we have, we can definitely make it even better."

Despite the activity, the Town Manager's Office remains a front door to Town Government that is available to the public every work day.

"We try to give everybody their time," Rossi says. "The door's always open, and we try to accommodate as much as we can."

Located on the third floor of Smithfield Town Hall, the Town Manager's Office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. Phone: 233-1010. E-mail: rrossi@smithfieldri.com

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