Newport World Heritage Commission

Technical Committee

Minutes of the January 12, 2015 meeting

Newport County Chamber of Commerce, Middletown, Rhode Island

Attending

Ken Yellis, Chair

Mark Brodeur

Meryle Cawley

Mohamad Farzan, AIA

Garry Fischer, MD

Elizabeth Francis, PhD

Thomas PI Goddard

Morgan Grefe. PhD

John Hattendorf, PhD

Eric Hertfelder

Karen Jessup, PhD

Edward Kane

William Leeman, PhD

Paul McGreevy

Ronald Onorato, PhD

Mary Mills Riggs

Pieter Roos

Bailey Siletchnik

Jonathan Stevens

Joyce Stevos, PhD

Jody Sullivan

Ruth Taylor

Jeremy Wells, PhD

Rich Youngken

Jo Yellis

Not attending

Lynn Fisher, PhD

Hasan Khan

Ted Sanderson

Timothy Sandiford

Meeting called to order by Chairman Yellis at 9:14 am.

1. Introduction- Chairman Yellis

2. Election of Farzan as co-chair, Technical Committee.

On a motion by Ron Onorato, seconded by Pieter Roos, Mohamad Farzan was nominated to be Technical Committee Co-Chair. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Chairman Yellis' comments about San Antonio Mission World Heritage nomination.

Chairman Yellis related points from a conversation from Dr. William

Dupont, a leader of the San Antonio Mission nomination, which was placed on the US Tentative List in 2008 and is now before the World Heritage Committee in Paris for final consideration:

a. The 2007 Newport proposal was good, but had weak comparative analysis, as several reviewers noted.

b. National Park Service and World Heritage priorities and criteria have evolved since 2007. The process is more difficult. There is increasing priority placed on sustainable management plans. It is important that submissions be reviewed in advance by professionals from different fields and having multiple skill sets.

c. San Antonio's proposal from 2008 to the present has benefitted from substantial cash and in-kind investment, for such things as architectural photography, designing and layout of the proposal, and expertise in a range of fields. The affiliates held fundraisers at various points to keep the nomination process funded.

d. Jeremy Wells: NPS was a partner, so in-kind support was contributed by the Federal government. Also, many successful nominations around the world have been successful without substantial funding.

e. Ken related that a number of factors helped the San Antonio

nomination: Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced his support; 18,000 letters of support were sent supporting the nomination; they had a strategic plan; the 2011 US-ICOMOS conference was hosted by San Antonio; and they convened a blue ribbon panel of experts and a facilitator to advise on the submission.

f. Ruth Taylor asked what resources (individual properties) should be included in a Newport nomination, and what issues come with any individual property, such as ownership authorization to be included in nomination, and levels of protection of the properties?

f. Eric Hertfelder stated that the Commission is entering a very technical field, dealing with the need to make a convincing case that the nomination as a whole meets absolute levels of virtue. He said the San Antonio proposal was not unlike a political campaign, with the virtues of the selected sites extolled, while calling into question the virtues of the remaining missions of the period in North and South America. Newport's 2007 proposal was challenged on its premise of its uniqueness as being first to be based on religious freedom and separation of church and state. It might be safer to recast Newport's proposal as being based on town development patterns rather than focusing on religious freedom.

g. Garry Fischer pointed out that religious freedom in Newport brought wealth, tolerance brought prosperity, because it enabled free collaboration between people of different faiths.

h. Ken Yellis observed that the period between the Renaissance/Reformation and the Enlightenment is a gap in the World Heritage story. The 1663 Charter process gives significance to Newport as represented how we got from there to here (R/R) to there (The Enlightenment), and perhaps the most singular building that is a manifestation of this would be the Redwood Library.

i. Morgan Grefe said the Newport proposal needs intellectual power. We need to address that, in the eyes of NPS, Philadelphia is the birthplace of religious freedom, and in Rhode Island, NPS has centered its attention on Providence as the best representative of the Colonial period.

j. Pieter Roos: we need a committee of scholars.

k. Jeremy Wells: Perhaps we should have symposium to develop these thoughts.

l. Karen Jessup. The political challenge comes first. NPS has pre-conceived ideas, but they are changing. We need to get a handle on the latest thinking and engagement opportunities.

4. Interview with William Dupont, responding to questions from the Commissioners.

a. What has been San Antonio's biggest hurdle? Getting off the Tentative List. Many have been working hard, including the NPS staff.

Dupont recommended interviewing Susan Snow, a NPS staffer who wrote the nomination once it was accepted by Interior and taken off the Tentative List. While NPS staff cannot lobby for nominations, they have been critical in developing the proposal.

b. Who have you been promoting to?

***Everyone has to be on the same page.**

***should have good synergy and communication-municipalities, county, state, San**

Antonio Advisory Committee

***Pool skills and capacity to promote nomination**

***They could have been more strategic, and planned ahead.**

***Current Secretary of Interior, Ambassador to the UN, members of Congress,**

friends of the administration, and at the right time.

c. What is the difference between NPS process (Tentative List) and World Heritage Committee process?

***tentative list easier, because it is a NPS project. Most US sites are National Park**

Service properties

***it would appear that Newport's proposal is more like the Frank Lloyd**

Wright
proposal, which is a scattered site serial nomination. Newport should look
at Falling Water, and reach out to Linda Wagner who is working on that
proposal.

d. 4d. Since 2008, especially at the international level, there is more emphasis on “intangible heritage”, meaning a focus on the process and continuity of cultural traditions that have been transmitted to the present and which are represented in ideas, meanings, and behavior rather than as an inherent characteristic of physical objects. Newport should consider enhancing its original proposal with stories of these cultural traditions. It would play well with the latest World Heritage conservation theory.

Pieter Roos stated that the 2007 Newport team was told just the opposite by NPS.

e. NPS has a different frame of reference and institutional bias from that of ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee. How do you satisfy both? For example, while Newport’s narrative of separation of church and state is a beautiful story and appears compelling to ICOMOS, it is scary to NPS.

f. Comparative analysis charts in the San Antonio nomination, which

document how different criteria are addressed with the sites nominated, as compared to the other Mission sites, is a valuable tool for refining and defending the narrative statement.

Newport should prepare such a matrix, which compares itself with Philadelphia and other settlements of the period which are noted for their freedom or tolerance of religious differences.

g. The San Antonio narrative, the focus of the nomination is on "spirit and feeling of place", seen through a highly defined lens. The ensemble of buildings is one thing, but through the narrow lens, looking at the totality of the place, the nomination narrative is most compelling.

h. NPS hierarchy: Secretary Jewell and her staff should be approached with support of RI Senators and Congressmen.

i. "Sites of Conscience", meaning accounting for such components as slavery and the Triangle of Trade, is an important and should be a compelling part of the narrative. The story is complex: while Newport played a large role in perpetuating the slave trade, Quakers and others at the same time established a tradition of anti-slavery advocacy in North America.

j. How did you identify, clarify and refine the "big idea" for San Antonio?

After the nomination proposal was accepted by the NPS to go on the Tentative List in 2008, the NPS staff in San Antonio took over. Susan Snow was, and continues to be, the lead staff on this. As the proposal was vetted with different audiences, it was refined. They executed a communications plan. Newport should contact Susan Snow about addressing specific criteria. Newport should also call the NPS Office of International Affairs.

Newport should get a copy of San Antonio's original proposal submitted to the National Park Service in 2007 which enabled it to secure a place on the Tentative List, and compare it to the present submission.

k. Resources for the nomination. The San Antonio Conservation Society (SACS) raised funds for experts, writers, and convening meetings. Additional support came from Lobos Compadres De San Antonio Missions National Historic Park. The University of Texas-San Antonio faculty, students and volunteers made in-kind contributions of technical support. UTSA students created a matrix comparing the individual missions. The local church official, a dynamic priest named Father Garcia, raised millions to restore and preserve the buildings.

l. How much funding is required for a nomination to be successful? Over the 6 years since the nomination was included on the Tentative List, $150,000 cash, and a total of $1M in in-kind support. SACS and Los Compadres funded such things as: travel and professional

support not provided by the NPS. NPS contributed staff salaries dedicated to writing and producing the nomination. Snow has been working full time on this for the past 18 months, and NPS placed a substitute staffer to cover her traditional archeologist duties in the meantime.

The US ICOMOS Symposium was a watershed moment. Secretary Salazar participated and announcing support for the nomination to go forward. ACHP Chair John Nau (chair of the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2001-2010, and Houston-based HP advocate and close associate of President George W Bush, threw a party that raised $75K.

m. Bill Dupont requested the names of the commissioners attending this meeting.

n. Newport would benefit from hiring a consultant from the outside to quantify and analyze the benefits of a World Heritage nomination, including economic activity, tourism marketing potential, and pride of place. Karen Jessup noted that the San Antonio mission website has a link to such an economic impact study for their nomination.

o. Where did the 18,000 letters of support come from (claim on the SA website)? Dupont didn't know, said Snow would know. Could be emails.

p. One message that would resonate with potential contributors: this is a one-time effort. While a multi-year project, it has a finite mission, a specific objective.

q. Dupont was pleased that the Newport Commission included an US ICOMOS representative, especially Ronald Lee Fleming.

r. Dupont, a Brown graduate and native of New London, will likely be in the area this summer and offered to come to Newport. Mary Riggs offered to host a fundraising party at her house.

5. Post- interview discussion.

a. Ron Onorato: what is the role of the Technical Committee? What is the role of each of the three committees? Jonathan Stevens stated that a number of Steering Committee members (which includes chairs of each of the committees) were in attendance and the committee would shortly address this issue.

b. Mark Brodeur asked if we could make this a New England based proposal, and expand the stakeholder base? As the RI tourism director, he said the individual states place a high priority on marketing the entire New England region to the international market, and as such, a World Heritage site in RI would benefit the entire market.

c. Eric Hertfelder noted the designation of the Blackstone Valley as a new National Park. Should other such sites be involved?

d. Pieter Roos stated that the Tentative List is our immediate objective. Some things have changed since 2007 and we need to figure that out.

e. Ruth Taylor recommended representatives of the Commission meet with NPS at both the staff and highest levels, more sooner than later, in order to determine how receptive they are to a new Newport submission. However, we first need to vet our narrative options.

f. Rich Youngken said he still didn't fully understand NPS's criticism of the 2007 Newport proposal. Shouldn't we analyze and answer this first?

g. Ruth Taylor stated NPS may have changed their feelings since then.

h. Morgan Grefe stated NPS has been biased against urban nominations, in part because most of its resources are based on supporting large, natural parks and wilderness areas.

6. Chairman Yellis called for the formation of two subcommittees of the Technical Committee:

a. the Narrative Committee, focusing on the narrative and ensemble of sites, and

b. the Process Committee, focusing on process.

c. on a motion of Ron Onorato, seconded by Mary Riggs, the Commission voted unanimously in favor of creating the two committees, the Narrative Committee to be chaired by Ken Yellis, and the Process Committee to be chaired by Mohamad Farzan.

d. Volunteering for the Narrative Committee: John Hattendorf, Garry Fischer, Ron Onorato, Jeremy Wells, Mary Riggs, Morgan Grefe, Rich Youngken, William Leeman.

7. Next Meeting

Next meeting was set for February 23, 9-11 am, at the Newport County Chamber of Commerce.

8. On a motion by Morgan Grefe, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jonathan Stevens 1/16/15