

MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, Connecticut
Plaza Level, Meeting Room E (North Building)
Friday, June 21, 2019, 9:30 a.m.**

Present: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Mr. Wigren

Absent: Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Ms. Saunders, Ms. Sutton

Staff: Jenny Scofield, Todd Levine, Douglas Royalty, Marena Wisniewski

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wigren called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. Mr. Wigren served as chair in Mr. Edwards' absence.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Copies of the public comment procedures were available at the sign-in table and announced by Mr. Wigren.

III. Approval of the March 22, 2019 meeting minutes

Board members requested minor corrections to the minutes, which Ms. Scofield recorded.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Mr. Wigren to approve the minutes of the March 22, 2019 meeting as amended (Y-5, N-0, Abstained-0).

IV. Action Items

A. Completed National Register Nominations

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the SRB and by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff.

Ms. Scofield reported that for the nominations on this agenda, the property owners were notified by mail and other interested parties were notified by email of the pending nomination, 30 days prior to the meeting. The nominations were posted on the SHPO website and available for download during the noticing period.

1. Riverside Avenue Historic District, Westport (Criteria A and C, local)

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Mr. McMillan to hear comments on the National Register of Historic Places nomination (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).

Staff recommended the Riverside Avenue Historic District for listing at the local level under Criteria A and C in the categories of Community Development and Architecture. The district encompasses resources associated with the subdivision of estates and agricultural land into smaller

residential lots following the nineteenth-century construction of Riverside Avenue, which connected the railroad depot to downtown. The period of significance proposed in the nomination is 1851 to 1923.

Ms. Scofield reported that the nomination was initiated by some property owners and a portion of the proposed district was designated as a Local Historic District in late fall. An informational meeting regarding the National Register nomination was held at town hall on May 21, 2019. Property owners were notified of the May 21 informational meeting and June 21 SRB meeting by direct mail; the mailing was sent to the owners of record using addresses provided by the Town from town GIS/assessment data. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent to the Westport first selectman and Historic District Commission, 30 days before the meeting. Ms. Scofield received a positive Certified Local Government (CLG) response. Ms. Scofield received three letters of support from owners of property in the district, representing five people and four properties. One letter of objection from an owner of property in the district is anticipated by mail from the owner's attorney. Tina Bratchell-Torraco, resident/property owner, and Dr. Daryn Reyman-Lock, Westport HDC and CLG Coordinator, attended the meeting in support of the nomination. Tod Bryant of Heritage Resources attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination.

Mr. Wigren invited the public to comment on the nomination. Ms. Bratchell-Torraco of 82 Riverside Avenue stated that she is happy with the work completed to document the history of the neighborhood and is happy to move the nomination forward. Mr. Bryant thanked Ms. Bratchell-Torraco as the driving force behind the nomination and added that property owners really want the National Register listing. He stated that this collection of buildings reads as a district and has a great connection to the founder of Westport.

Mr. Wigren requested comments on the nomination from the SRB. Dr. Bucki stated that there is information missing from the significance. She asked who lived in the houses included in the district and noted that describing the residents, as middle-class does not quite explain who is there [the description is too broad]. Dr. Bucki advised that the meaning of the term middle-class has also changed over time and may not be an accurate portrayal of the original occupants of the area. She commented that as a social historian, this detail is important; middle-class for the time period discussed in the nomination is often correlated to people of Anglo-Saxon or Irish descent.

Dr. Bucki noted that in regards to the church mentioned on p. 26, there is a discussion of Italians; she asked if the Italian population lived in the district. Mr. Bryant answered that this population lived in Saugatuck. Dr. Bucki asked why the church was built here if the Italian community using it lived elsewhere. Mr. Bryant responded that several churches historically stood in this vicinity, but one was demolished. Mr. Wigren asked how the church formerly located here contributed to the district.

Mr. Herzan commented that estates are mentioned at the beginning of the significance statement, but then there is limited information about them. He asked what the land in this location was used for originally – connect the dots in the narrative to make it come across as a story. The full significance story is not given. The nomination serves as a permanent record and it is important to tell the story here. More information about the people here is needed.

Mr. Wigren stated that as he understands, there are no visible remnants of the estates formerly located in the district, except the one that is outside the boundaries. Mr. Bryant responded that the

1837 Erasmus house is in the district; the house outside the proposed boundary was not an estate and is unlike the ones along the river.

SRB members noted that all of the photograph references in the document are one number off; please correct this.

Mr. Herzan suggested that generalizations about the historic significance of the district be made in the significance summary paragraph. The section on the church on p. 26 could be used as a place to discuss the other (former) churches in the district and explain how that related to the population living here.

Mr. Wigren commented that the school adjacent to the district is part of the development of the neighborhood; he does not understand why that is not included in the district. Mr. Bryant responded he left the school out of the boundary for two reasons – its later construction date (1930s) and the presence of alterations (the school has been expanded). Mr. Wigren suggested that if the period of significance ends when the last building in the district was constructed, you could easily extend it to encompass the construction of the school. Dr. Bucki stated that 1923 is a peculiar end date because it is in the middle of an era. Mr. Bryant asked if the proposed boundary should be extended to include the whole school lot. Mr. Wigren and Ms. Scofield clarified that the boundary line can be drawn as a line of convenience through a parcel (but not through a building); the boundary line does not have to follow parcel lines.

Mr. Herzan stated that typically both sides of a street are included in a district boundary. He asked if Mr. Bryant could describe the section of Post Road that was excluded.

Mr. Herzan noted that there is a lot of good work presented in the nomination and that he loves the resources in the district, but wants to make sure the proposed boundary holds up when the nomination is forwarded to the National Park Service for review. Mr. McMillan stated that he had similar concerns about the boundary.

Mr. Wigren compared the Queen Anne-style buildings shown in photos 10, 12, and 40. He suggested that the building in photo 40 is the same as the identical buildings shown in photos 10 and 12, but with additions. Mr. Bryant added that the building in photo 40 is located on Riverside Avenue, as opposed to Lincoln Street. Discussion continued regarding whether the same builder constructed these buildings.

The SRB discussed whether there are properties of similar age as those included in the district outside of the proposed boundary such as the school and houses along Post Road West. Dr. Reyman-Lock noted that Sherwood House is near the Kings Highway North National Register district. SRB members requested that the proximity of this district be mentioned in the nomination. The SRB agreed that this area appears eligible for National Register listing as a district, but that further study of the boundary and clarification of the period of significance is necessary.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Dr. Bucki to table the nomination until a subsequent meeting (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).

2. Short Beach Historic District, Branford (Criterion A, local)

Staff recommended the Short Beach Historic District for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the category of Recreation for its association with the coastal recreational development of Connecticut. The period of significance extends from 1860, the approximate date of the beginning of recreational development to 1940, when the development pattern changed and new cottage construction ended. This community differs from other seasonal communities along the shoreline because its development was gradual and mixed; it was not platted all at the same time and was not created by one developer.

Ms. Scofield reported that SHPO worked with the Short Beach Civic Association (SBCA) to initiate the nomination. Informational meetings regarding the National Register nomination were held at regularly scheduled SBCA meetings in June, 2016 (at the start of the project) and on April 8, 2019. Notice of informational meetings was provided by SBCA using their distributions. Notice of the SRB meeting was completed by direct mailing to owners of record for properties within the district. Notice of the SRB meeting was also sent to the first selectman and town planner 30 days before the meeting. Branford is not a Certified Local Government (CLG). Ms. Scofield received five emails of support representing six people, of which four own private property in the district. A letter of support was also received from State Representative Robin Comey. No letters of objection were received. Three Short Beach residents attended the meeting in support of the nomination, including Jane Bouley (town historian), Robin Comey (state representative), and Chris Collins. Ms. Scofield reported that SHPO excused the nomination consultant from attending the meeting.

Mr. Wigren invited the public to comment on the nomination. Jane Bouley spoke in support of the nomination. She stated that she lives in a house in the proposed district. Her family has been in Short Beach since 1900. She has also collected data on the history of Short Beach and has been involved in all of Branford's architectural surveys and National Register nominations.

State Representative Robin Comey stated that she serves as a representative of the 102nd [Branford] district and has a house in the center of Shore Beach. She has lived in Short Beach for 30 years and her property, known as the Cushman House, is more than 120 years old. The Short Beach Civic Association plays a big role in how development has not been aggressive here. Short Beach is one of the oldest homeowners' special taxing districts in the state. Short Beach was home to Ella Wheeler Wilcox, a famous poet and interesting character who brought visitors from New York. Short Beach was historically a destination; people such as Greta Garbow and Sinclair Lewis visited Short Beach and stayed at the Arrowhead Hotel. The Branford Electric Railway, which ends at the top of Court Street, but used to the top of the shoreline, served vacationing populations and residents. The 73d annual Short Beach Days celebration to be held this summer is a way for people who live in the neighborhood to maintain the integrity of local history. Representative Comey stated that she is proud of Short Beach and thanked the SHPO for the effort to recognize its history.

Chris Collins, of the Short Beach Civic Association Board stated that she is very proud SHPO reached out to the SBCA and is recognizing the community. Short Beach is still a close-knit group of people.

Mr. Wigren invited the SRB to comment on the nomination.

Mr. McMillan commented that the nomination was well written. He asked if architectural significance under Criterion C was considered. Ms. Scofield responded that SHPO requested the consultant focus on Criterion A, which is the primary area of significance. While the district retains enough integrity to meet National Register standards and there are well-preserved key community buildings, SHPO staff thought that Criterion C may be more difficult to argue for because of common alterations found on some of the residences. The SRB discussed Criterion C; members agreed that the district appears to have architectural significance, but that it is not necessary to add this to the nomination in order to move it forward.

In the description of non-contributing properties on page 12 of the nomination, Mr. McMillan asked about whether potentially raising a building to put a garage under it would qualify a building as non-contributing in the future. Since the nomination is used as a planning tool, how does this jive with future protection of the resource? SRB members briefly discussed this issue. Jane Bouley commented that this is a problem residents deal with. Ms. Scofield stated that elevating historic properties is a topic of discussion in historic preservation, but that the National Park Service has not yet published an official guidance document yet.

Mr. Wigren noted the unusual practice in Short Beach of building secondary dwellings on the same property. Jane Bouley responded that residents of Short Beach are used to that as a common local practice and do not think about whether it is unique to the area. Properties with multiple houses on a lot were developed pre-zoning and some were used as rental purposes. Beyond that, residents do not know why this pattern of constructing auxiliary houses is different than in other Connecticut shoreline communities.

Dr. Bucki asked who was living in these houses. She noted that the term middle-class has different meanings when referencing the nineteenth century versus the mid-twentieth century.

Mr. Herzan requested that an aerial overview map showing the district boundary on one page be added to the nomination.

A motion was made by Mr. McMillan, second by Mr. Herzan to list the Short Beach Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).

B. Review of National Register Status of Listed Properties

2. 95 Howe Street and 97-99 Howe Street, Dwight Street Historic District, New Haven

Staff requested that the SRB evaluate whether the properties at 95 Howe Street and 97-99 Howe Street in New Haven continue to contribute to the Dwight Street National Register Historic District.

Todd Levine introduced himself the SHPO staff person who works on Connecticut Environmental Protection Act inquiries. The office received notice of a potential demolition threat to these properties a couple months ago and a demolition permit was filed on May 3. The city has a 90-day demolition delay ordinance. The property owner was invited to the July 10, 2019 Historic Preservation Council meeting to explain their reasoning for the proposed demolition. Mr. Levine noted that the properties are part of a National Register district recognized for its architectural significance and historic association as worker housing for the carriage industry. However, an important historic association is not mentioned in the nomination. Reverend Amos Beman, an African American abolitionist lived in one of these buildings [95-97 Howe St].

Mr. Wigren commented that this streetscape is characterized by a mix of building scales.

Dr. Bucki stated that she is familiar with this neighborhood. The loss of these buildings from the neighborhood would be intense.

Mr. Herzan recognized that there is a residential and historic physical pattern to this block. Loss of these buildings would chip away at the historic character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Wigren noted some changes to the windows at 95 Howe Street. Mr. Levine responded that the form and setback of the building remains, in addition to a rhythm of smaller buildings and slightly larger historic apartment buildings.

A motion was made by Dr. Bucki, second by Mr. McMillan to affirm that 95 Howe Street and 97-99 Howe Street in New Haven continue to contribute to the historic significance of the Dwight Street National Register Historic District (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).

1. Cogshell-Robinson House, 43 Broadway Street, Colchester Village National Register Historic District, Colchester

Staff requested that the SRB evaluate whether the Cogshell-Robinson House at 43 Broadway Street in Colchester continues to contribute to the Colchester Village National Register Historic District.

Mr. Levine summarized that this property was last used as an apartment building. The previous owner planned to relocate the building off this property to another within the historic district. SHPO was contacted about eight months ago regarding the dismantling of the building. The current owner agreed not to do any further dismantling. The original windows remain but the interior has been gutted.

Mr. Herzan noted that because this building is in a historic district, we don't look as closely at the interior.

Mr. McMillan acknowledged the prominent location and public façade of the building within its setting. SRB members discussed the location and physical setting of the building. Mr. Levine agreed to show the location of properties in relation to the district boundaries in future agenda items. He noted that the building adjacent to this one is adaptively reused; the buildings across the

street are intact so some historic context remains in the setting. The form and setback of the building remains.

The SRB discussed that the building still fits into the district.

A motion was made by Dr. Bucki, second by Mr. Herzan to affirm that the Coggshell-Robinson House at 43 Broadway Street continues to contribute to the historic significance of the Colchester Village National Register Historic District (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).

V. Discussion

No discussion occurred under this agenda item.

VI. New Business

Mr. McMillan announced a job posting at the Connecticut Department of Transportation for an Architectural Historian/National Register Specialist to serve as a liaison to FHWA.

Mr. Wigren announced that the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation recently signed a preservation easement on the Eliot Noyes House in New Canaan.

VII. Staff Report

Ms. Scofield announced a job posting at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for an Architectural Preservationist, who will manage SHPO's Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit and Historic Restoration Fund Grant programs. She stated that Elizabeth Shapiro's current title is Director of Arts, Preservation, and Museums.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Dr. Bucki to adjourn the meeting (Y-5, N-0, Abstained= 0).