

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, January 18, 2023

Approved Meeting Notes

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Pat Stark (3/7/25) and Chair Jonathan Schechtman (1/9/26).

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Dennis Brown, consultant Neil Silberman and Selectboard Liaison Rocket.

A hybrid meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, January 18, 2023 in Meeting Room 2 at the Hartford Town Hall. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Jonathan read the hybrid meeting script followed by a roll call.

- 1. Changes to the Agenda:** Jonathan asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Matt Osborn suggested adding public comments. Everyone agreed.
- 2. Hartford Performing Arts History Project:** Consultant Neil Silberman was present to provide the HHPC with an update of the project. He started by noting that this is a fascinating project and he is really enjoying the research and the challenges.

Neil reported that he started a draft of the narrative. It starts with the Freegrace Leavitt Tavern in the 1790s where dances were held upstairs. The project will divide the town into two parts; the villages and the downtown. A big part of the downtown was the Gates Opera House. He stated that he has documentation on all of the venues that still exist today except the West Hartford Store. The Store was built in the mid-1800s but the upstairs hall wasn't built until 1905.

Neil reported that in February, he plans to come to Hartford to visit the Hartford Historical Society to look at their files. He suggested that the first community meeting to present the results of his research be held in March. There was agreement to hold the meeting on Wednesday, March 15th following the regular HHPC meeting. Neil suggested holding the second community meeting in June or July. Neil noted that the project was a little late getting started and that he thought that the end date might be pushed back a month from July 31st to August 31st.

Neil noted that he is having a little difficulty getting information from some groups. The HHPC and Matt offered their assistance. There was discussion about good candidates for Neil to interview for the oral history component of the project. Several people came to mind including David Briggs, David Brown, Kip Miller, John Clerkin and Nelson Fogg, Sr. Neil requested the email addresses of HHPC members. Matt agreed.

Neil concluded by thanking the HHPC for meeting with him and providing guidance. He stated that he will put together a colorful, illustrated publication that will include an interpretive strategy noting that it will be much more than report with interviews. Jonathan thanked Neil for attending.

- 3. 2023 CLG Grant Application:** Matt reported that the CLG grant application was submitted on December 12th to hire an architectural historian to review the Taft's Flat Intensive Level Survey and based on their review prepare historic district nominations to the National Register. Matt noted that the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation is meeting tomorrow to decide on the grant awards. Matt hopes to hear from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation about the grant awards fairly soon.

4. **Railroad Station South Canopy:** Matt Osborn reported that he contacted VTrans Architectural Historian Kyle Obenauer about VTrans response to the HHPC letter requesting that the Railroad Station South Canopy be replaced. Matt stated that he received the following response from Kyle. “I really appreciated the Commission’s comments and concerns regarding removal of the depot canopy. VTrans is taking a closer look at our options, and I plan to investigate additional sources of funding that might allow reconstruction of a canopy in the same location that would be similar in materials and design. I’m planning to do that legwork over the winter/spring. Hope to have some solid updates around May or June and will check back in then, if that works? Matt stated that he was pleased that VTrans is following up on the HHPC request and thought the timeframe was reasonable. Jonathan and Pat agreed.
5. **HHPC Opening:** Jonathan noted that there is still an opening on the Commission.
6. **Announcements:**
 - a. Roy Black: Dennis Brown reported that he was sad to hear that former HHPC member Roy Black passed away last week. Matt noted that Roy was very good-natured and served the HHPC and the Hartford Historical Society for many years. He added that Roy always had interesting tidbits about Hartford’s history.
7. **Public Comments:** There were no public comments.
8. **Next HHPC Meeting:** Jonathan noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15th at 5:00 p.m.
9. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.