

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present & Date their Term is Up: Susanne Walker Abetti (3/21/25), 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, February 15, 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 noted that he would like to add “Coffee with Committees” to the agenda. He asked if there were any other changes. There were none.
- 2. Public Comments:** There were no public comments.
- 3. HHPC Minutes:** Jonathan asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of November 9th and January 18th. Pat Stark noted two corrections with the November 9th minutes. Pat made a motion to approve the minutes of November 9th with the noted corrections. The motion was seconded by Susanne Walker Abetti and approved. Regarding the meeting notes of January 18th, there were no corrections. Jonathan stated that the meeting notes of January 18th are accepted as written.
- 4. 2023 CLG Grant Application:** Matt reported that the CLG grant application for the Taft’s Flat historic district nominations to the National Register was approved. The grant agreement will be sent to the Town in the coming weeks.
- 5. Hartford Performing Arts History Project:** Consultant Neil Silberman was present to provide the HHPC with an update on the project. He noted that the research part of the project is winding down and the oral history interviews have started. Neil stated that it is challenging to limit the focus of the project. He is trying to stick to the following types of performing arts: music, dance, drama and film. The HHPC agreed.

Neil divided the performing arts history into specific time periods:

Historical Periods of Hartford’s Performing Arts Heritage

- Entertainment at Church and Home 1794-1848
- Special Events: Traveling companies, concerts, and dances 1849-1889
- The Gates Opera House and the Vaudeville Circuit (1891-1925)
- Community Productions: The Grange Movement (1903-1945)
- Going to the Movies: From Nickelodeon to Drive-In (1908-1987)
- Keeping Tradition Alive: From Gates to Briggs (1925-present)
- The Rebirth of Regional Theater in Hartford: (1980-present)

Neil reported that he hasn’t found any information under the name White River Junction Village Hall. He asked if the HHPC might know where it came from. The HHPC wasn’t sure and since he has run into a dead end, not to pursue it. He also noted that he hasn’t found any information on the Lyman

Point and Quechee bandstands. The Hartford Parks and Recreation Department didn't have any information on the history. Pat suggested look at the Assessor's Office records.

Neil noted that the Town and White River Junction has had its share of interesting characters. The following are noteworthy historical characters to be profiled in the report:

- Freegrace Leavitt
- Luther and Howard Pease
- Mae Gates
- Leaders of the Quechee, Hartford Village, and West Hartford Granges
- Alfred E. Watson
- Allard Graves
- Fred Briggs
- David Briggs
- Brooke Ciardelli
- Eric Bunge

Neil noted that he has completed site research of specific performance venues in Hartford some of which no longer stand. He stated that this project is unique in that it moves from strict historic preservation and into cultural heritage.

Neil provided a list of the archives/records that he consulted, newspapers that he searched and published sources that he consulted.

Susanne suggested posting the project on the Hartford and Upper Valley List Serves, sending notices to Senior housing complexes and placing an ad in the Vermont Standard. Neil agreed to put together a brief blurb about the project. Susanne also suggested asking Junction Arts & Media to video the March 15th community meeting. Matt agreed to contact JAM.

Neil noted that he's had difficulty hearing back from some folks that he has asked to interview. Matt offered to help Neil reach out to folks.

Jonathan thanked Neil for attending.

- 6. HHPC Opening:** Jonathan noted that there is still an opening on the Commission. Matt noted that Robin Adair's term is up next month.
- 7. Announcements:**
 - a. Coffee with Committees:** Jonathan reported that he received an invitation for the HHPC to have a booth at the March 4th Coffee with Committees portion of Town Meeting. Pat noted that very few people participated in the last Coffee with Committees. The HHPC decided not to participate.
- 8. Next HHPC Meeting:** Jonathan noted that the next HHPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 15th at 5:00 p.m.
- 9. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.