

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 19, 2025
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

ATTENDANCE: Dana Laird; Chair, Mark Jackson, Jim Frayer, Richard Stein, Eric Chanler (7:09 p.m.), Liz Golden (7:23 p.m.)

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHER: Susan Gilgore, David Westmoreland, Diane Jellerette, Apostoli Matikas
Kat Rosenfield-Anderson,

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Laird called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Laird called the roll as reflected above

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: January 22nd, 2025

Ms. Laird noted on page four, paragraph three, that her name is misspelled. On page four paragraph five *preview* should be *perview*.

The minutes were tabled until the next meeting. Only three members from the current meeting were present at the previous meeting.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Cece

No Address was provided by the speaker.

Ms. Cece stated she was there on behalf of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association.

Ms. Cecec complained that the last three Zoom meetings didn't start on time for the public. She noted tonight's meeting came on during the correction of the minutes.

Ms. Cece stated she was there to observe the discussion and vote on the Cottage Street demolition permit and the proposed changes to the demolition delay ordinance.

V. REPORTS FROM BOARDS;

A. Norwalk Historical Society; Diane Jellerette

Ms. Jellerette presented her report on the Norwalk Historical Society. She discussed programming for the upcoming year. She noted that Michael Murphy has been working on putting the information on their pottery collection online. She stated that they were working on the jail as a place to house the collection.

Ms. Jellerete discusses her work on the America 250 project. She noted that the historical society was on the America 250 Connecticut Commission. She mentioned the entities the society was working closely with. She stated they were in the process of an America 250 for Norwalk committee for the city.

Ms. Jellerette proceeded to discuss the Earth Day event being held on April, 26th. She stated it would be from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the Norwalk Green. She listed the various entities the Historical Society is working with for the event. She described the route for the Norwalk River Valley Trail Walk which is part of the Earth Day festivities. She said they would have a table on the green for the event and they would be giving out flower seeds. Ms. Jellerette discussed additions that are being made to the program this year which includes a speaker who will talk about climate change.

Ms. Jellereate proceeded to describe other events they were planning. She mentioned the plans for Memorial Day, Connecticut open house day, a collaboration with the Daughters and Children of the American Revolution, a talk about Algonquin's living history, and the Mill Hill Garden Party.

B. Lockwood-Mathews Museum; Susie Gilgore

Ms. Gilgore expressed her excitement saying the Museum would be reopening to the public very soon. In June prior to the reopening there will be a couple of special tours and a ribbon cutting event.

Ms. Gilgore mentioned the collaboration with the Historical society for the America 250 Norwalk Committee. She described the project as a citywide celebration of American independence.

Ms. Gilgore continued noting the following: the April 10th kick off of their lecture series. Once open the mansion will act as the location. Until then the series will be held at HMTX. On May there will be a talk on classic car culture, and a collaboration with Silvermine for an exhibition titled Re-imagine Reflection.

In response to Ms. Laird's inquiry, Ms. Gilgore answered HMTX was a local towel company on Route 7. She explained they would be sending out flyers and tickets would be available on their website. The exact location and directions will be available there.

VI. REPORTS:

A. Buildings*

Mr Westmoreland announced that the Historical Commission, Committee, and Heritage Landscapes are receiving an award from Preservation Connecticut. He said it was for the work done around the jail and the barn's accessibility. Mr. Westmoreland stated after attending several budget reviews it appears their budget is okay..

Mr. Westmoreland described an incident at Pine Island noting it was rectified by Recreation and Parks. He noted he was working with the Boy Scouts on a Pine Island cleaning and headstone re-setting. Project. He went on to say this would occur in late summer or early fall. There was some discussion about several headstones that had fallen or needed repairs.

B. Cemeteries

There was no report on cemeteries.

C. Financials

No financial report was presented.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. 16 Cottage Street - Objection to demolition - Commission to vote if the building is historically or architecturally significant.

Ms. Laird commented on the uniqueness of the house at 16 Cottage Street. Mr. Frayer wanted to see what Mr. Matikas was proposing in terms of demolition.

Mr. Matsikas said the whole purpose of the project is to bring life back to the neighborhood. He said the plan included some landscaping and greenery

Mr. Matsikas gave an overview of his background and experience doing historical restoration in South Jersey and the greater Philadelphia area. He stated the elements of the house are Queen Ann Era. On the other hand, he felt The Gable/Erected railing though unique seems to be freestyled. He stated he had not seen anything similar in Connecticut or any other places where he had worked. He explained his plan saying he could re-use elements on either side and create a simpler gable that is ornamentally appropriate. He presented a slide of what he planned. The image showed the house with the upper railing system and porch removed. It also shows dropping down the porch on the second floor to the first floor. He noted it the lower porch was in more of a Queen Anne style.

In response to Mr. Frayer, Mr. Matsikas described other changes to be made to the property that will improve the floor plan.

Mr. Frayer asked for and was given, confirmation that the only thing they significantly changed was the upper porch. He asked if it would be a multi-family rental. Mr. Matsikas responded yes adding they planned to remove the third floor and square off the footprint, creating four two-bedroom bathroom apartments. Mr. Jackson requested clarification on the footprint. Mr. Matsikus reiterated they were squaring the footprint off.

Mr. Frayer asked if there was any history of renovations and alterations at the property. Mr. Matsikas stated that no renovations have been done since his grandfather purchased the house around 1983 or 84.

When asked about Materials Mr. Matsikas stated it would be Hardy board fiber cement and he added the building height would remain the same. He also indicated the porch would protrude from the house. He pointed out many of the choices made for the renovation are inspired by the neighbor who is in the process of restoring her home.

Ms. Rosenfield-Anderson, the neighbor, expressed her support for moving forward with the plans. She went on to describe the current state of Cottage Street. She stated that it was not a

historic street where the character of the neighborhood was at stake.

Ms. Cece was invited back to speak. She stated the demolition delay was triggered by the age of the house. She went on to clarify other issues that could have triggered a demolition delay.

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO REMOVE THE DEMOLITION DELAY FOR 16 COTTAGE STREET.**
**** MR. JACKSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. 14 Pennoyer Street - Objection to demolition - Commission to vote if the building is historically or architecturally significant..

This Item was removed from the agenda.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discussion of proposed revisions to Chapter 55 Demolition Delay Ordinance.

Ms. Andrzejewski gave a presentation titled Demolition Delay Ordinance Modifications. The slides were as follows:

- A description of the purpose and process of the demolition delay ordinance.
- Why the Historical Commission is looking at this ordinance.
- Clarified and consistent language for the definitions associated with the process.
- The formation of a Historical Review committee to avoid conflicts of interest..
- The description of who the review committee will be made up of and which groups can act in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Jackson asked why this required a whole separate entity. He also wanted to know whether the committee would answer to the Commission. Ms. Andrzejewski reiterated it was to avoid conflicts of interest. Mr. Jackson indicated they would then have to rework the Commission's mandate to prevent redundancy. Mr. Frayer disagreed and explained his reasoning. Mr. Stein felt the Review Committee should be answerable to the Commission. Mr. Frayer said the review committee was an opportunity to get a professional or semi-professional opinion on what is historical and what isn't. Mr. Stein wanted clarity on the mandates of both entities and how would they ultimately work together. Mr. Stein felt the committee should just present facts and the Commission taking into consideration those facts, ultimately makes the decision. Ms. Andrzejewski said she could make that suggestion to their law office. Mr. Frayer suggested cleaning up the language and making the roles of both entities more clear. Ms. Laird felt a clarification of what defines historic was in order.

Mr. Chandler joined the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Mr. Chandler said the members of the committee language needed to be clarified. He suggested it should read as two from Pand Z three appointed members from the public and two alternate members.

Ms. Andrzejewski continued with the following:

- Applicability...What would trigger a demolition delay.
- The pre-demolition process
- The objection process

Mr. Frayer and Mr. Stein registered their concerns that the language took away the authority of the Commission to make such decisions..

- Alternatives to demolition.

Ms. Golden joinen the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

- Exemptions
- Violations

Ms. Andrzejewski presented a flow chart showing the process from start to finish. She noted that the commission wanted clarifications in the ordinance for how the Historical Commission and the Historical Review Committee relate to each other. She said she would take their points to city staff and the corporation council to work out what meets the Commission's needs. In response to Mr. Frayer, Ms. Andrzejewski described the committee as an as-needed group that would meet when an objection comes through. Mr. Frayer requested further clarification on the role of the Commission in the objection and determination process. Mr. Stein reiterated that the draft as written significantly limits the scope of the Commission. Ms. Andrzejewski stated she would rework that section of the draft for presentation at the next meeting. Mr. Frayer suggested avoiding a conflict of interest. Members of the commission can not bring a demolition delay.

IX. DISCUSSION

There were no other topics to discuss.

X. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. STEIN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** MR. CHANDLER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

A. April 23rd, 2025

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services