

**CITY OF NORWALK  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 28, 2025  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

ATTENFDANCE: Dana Laird; Chair, Eric Chandler, Mark Jackson, James Frayer, Richard Stein, Lisa Wilson-Grant.

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHER: Susan Gilgore, Diane Jellerette, Patsy Brescia

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Laird called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Laird called the roll as reflected above.

**I. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular Meeting: April 23rd, 2025**

Mr. Chandler noted corrections on page three under “Cemeteries,” specifying that "somebody" contains no “W,” and “Brookside” needs to be capitalized. Mr. Stein pointed out that “cemetery” itself was misspelled.

**\*\* MR. FRAYER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

**\*\* MR. STEIN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR AND ONE ABSTENTION (MR. FRAYER).**

## **II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No one from the public was present for comment.

## **III. REPORTS FROM BOARDS;**

### **A. Norwalk Historical Society; Diane Jellerette**

Ms. Jellerette thanked the April 26 Earth Day Festival attendees, noting its success despite some rain. David Pogue's talk at Mill Hill was well received and turnout was strong. The Society plans to hold the event again next year. She stated the Historical Society was also open on Memorial Day, and several first-time visitors enjoyed the experience. Weekend openings will resume after the Fourth of July.

Ms. Jellerette listed the upcoming events:

On Saturday, June 14, the museum (not Mill Hill) will be open for Connecticut Open House Day, the 21st iteration of the event, with free admission.

On Saturday, June 21 at 2:00 PM, "Scouts and Soldiers: Native Americans in the Colonial Militia" will be presented by Drew Ravas, a Native American living historian. The program is in collaboration with the DAR's Norwalk Village Green chapter. Designed for ages 7 and up, the event will include hands-on historical artifacts. Children under 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

The Mill Hill Garden Party will be held Friday, June 27, from 6:30 to 8:00 PM, featuring live music by Perry and Friends. Attendees may bring lawn chairs and picnics. This event is held with Building Community Through Music.

On July 4, Mill Hill will open at 10:30 AM with a program beginning at 11:00 AM and concluding at noon. It will include the bell-ringing ceremony.

On Sunday, July 20 at 2:00 PM. Carolyn Ivanoff will present "We Fought at Gettysburg". Her talk will focus on the 17th Connecticut Infantry's experiences at Gettysburg. Books will be available for sale.

On Thursday, July 31, a summer beer tasting and barbecue fundraiser will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Greg Glaser will lead a tasting of at least four beers, with possible additions, and light barbecue bites will be provided.

Ms. Laird added context on Drew Ravas, having collaborated with him on educational programming for over ten years. She emphasized his deep knowledge of Algonquian culture and the authenticity of his handmade artifacts. She noted that Carolyn Ivanoff is also an excellent presenter and encouraged members to attend both programs. Mark confirmed he had hosted Drew in his classes and had a photo with him from a previous in-person event.

B. Lockwood-Mathews Museum; Susan Gilgore

Ms. Gilgore thanked members for attending the recent ribbon-cutting ceremony and encouraged others to visit. She noted the event received significant press coverage, including News 12, Nancy on Norwalk, The Hour, and 167 additional features nationwide.

Ms. Gilgore indicated the museum participated in Norwalk Day in Hartford on May 13, organized by Senator Duff. She stated on May 18, classic car historian John O’Leary IV showcased a 1965 Cadillac outside the Stepping Stones Museum. Ms. Gilgore expressed gratitude to Stepping Stones, the library, and the Norwalk Historical Society for their support of museum lectures and collaborations.

Ms. Gilgore noted that tours of the mansion will officially resume on June 4, starting at 8:00 AM with an award presentation by the Norwalk Chamber of Commerce. This marks the reopening after a two-year closure.

Ms. Gilgore discussed the opening of a new exhibition, “Reimagined Reflections,” in collaboration with Silvermine. She stated it will open June 12 with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 PM. The exhibition metaphorically reflects the mansion’s renewal and aims to evoke emotion and introspection.

Ms. Gilgore invited members to visit anytime and noted that the excitement surrounding the reopening has generated many calls and reservations.

Ms. Brescia provided a brief update on the status of the restoration project. The mansion is currently in the punch list stage, which could last from one to six weeks. Final funding from the state—approximately \$104,000—will be released upon closure of all subcontracts. She encouraged members to observe restored details such as the front door, which has been returned to its original design.

The restoration of the Randolph Rogers Lockwood statue and Herter base has been completed and both are in excellent condition. The original kitchen, now functioning as a gift shop, has also undergone significant restoration. This included the removal of eight layers of paint to return it to its appearance from 160 years ago. During the final walkthrough, an original 1867 coal-burning stove with coal and ash still inside was discovered in the anteroom off the kitchen. This has

become a noteworthy addition to the mansion's narrative.

Several members attended the preview yesterday and were encouraged to visit again to see the updates. The process of moving back in, reorganizing materials, and unpacking archives is expected to take approximately another year.

#### IV. REPORTS

##### A. Buildings

Mr. Westmoreland was not present to report on any buildings.

##### B. Cemeteries

Ms. Wilson Grant verified that the vent had been repaired at the work site.

##### C. Financials

Mr. Westmoreland was not present to report on the current financials.

#### VII. OLD BUSINESS

There were no items raised under old business initially. However, later in the meeting, Mr. Chandler brought up the demolition delay ordinance. Mr. Stein and Mr. Chandler had previously volunteered to serve on a subcommittee and were under the impression that city officials would coordinate further action. Rich confirmed he had not received any communication. Mr. Frayer noted that a meeting was scheduled for the following day, with Tom Livingston in attendance. Michelle clarified that she had not initially included everyone but had since sent a follow-up email confirming the meeting details. The meeting will be held via Microsoft Teams at 9 AM. Ms. Laird indicated he was unavailable due to prior appointments. Mr. Chandler offered to discuss relevant concerns privately with Ms. Laird and relay them at the meeting.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Wilson-Grant noted the reinstallation of the architectural element at the CR Gibson building. Mr. Jackson and Ms. Laired indicated they had seen the new installation, which has been

mounted on a brick wall. This design approach was proposed by the building's design team and has been positively received.

Ms. Laird brought up recent demolition notices, including one for a property on Outer Road and another in Shorefront Park. The Outer Road structure appeared to have already undergone significant modifications. In response to Mr. Frayer's question, Ms. Wilson-Grant indicated these notices were not previously discussed and had not been formally added to the agenda.

Ms. Andrzejewski clarified that when demolition notices are distributed, members should indicate if the item is of interest so that it can be officially added to the next meeting's agenda. This ensures transparency and compliance with public notice requirements. Mr. Frayer suggested that all demolition notices automatically be placed on the following meeting's agenda, allowing the commission to evaluate them as needed.

The process and lack of clarity surrounding demolition requests were acknowledged as the impetus for revisiting the demolition delay ordinance. Members noted past instances where demolition requests were left unresolved for months due to unclear procedures. Discussion included whether the ordinance should be revised to better define who holds decision-making authority and establish more definitive timeframes.

Ms. Wilson-Grant raised concerns about significant interior renovations to historic homes, specifically referencing a current project on Willow Street. She noted that what was initially described as a second-story remodel had evolved into extensive demolition, including the use of heavy equipment, and that large arborvitae had been planted to obscure the site from view. This prompted a broader conversation about oversight and whether interior work should be included under the demolition ordinance.

Mr. Chandler raised the point that expanding the ordinance to cover interior spaces could be considered intrusive. However, other members argued that without such oversight, owners might gut historic interiors under the guise of renovation. Ms. Wilson-Grant and others emphasized the need for greater scrutiny and site visits, especially when work goes beyond the scope described in the permit application.

Ms. Andrzejewski and others noted that the ordinance currently defines demolition in terms of the exterior. Any revisions to include interior spaces would require legal review to ensure compliance with state statutes. Corporation Counsel would need to confirm whether state law allows municipalities to regulate interior demolition in historic properties.

The meeting concluded with reminders of the ongoing discussion surrounding the demolition delay ordinance and its future implications.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

- \*\* MS. WILSON-GRANT MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
- \*\* MR. JACKSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

June 25th, 2025

**A. June 25th, 2025**

Respectfully submitted  
China Mayhew  
Telesco Secretarial Services.