

**CITY OF NORWALK  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - FEBRUARY 25, 2026  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**ATTENDEES:** Rich Stein (Chair), Dana Laird, Mark Jackson, Eric Chandler, John Cusano, David Westmoreland, Diane Jellerette, Susan Gilgore, Doug Hempstead, Lisa Wilson Grant

**STAFF:** Michelle Andrzejewski.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Stein called the regular meeting of the Historical Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Stein conducted roll call. A quorum was established. Mr. Westmoreland experienced initial technical difficulties but joined shortly thereafter.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

A. Regular Meeting: January 28, 2026

**\*\*MR. CUSANO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2026, REGULAR MEETING WITH THE CORRECTION THAT THE SPEAKER FOR THE WOMEN AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE PROGRAM IS MARK ALBERTSON.**

**\*\*MS. LAIRD SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS CORRECTED.**

Mr. Stein allowed Mr. Westmoreland to make the motion below to amend the agenda and add an item under new business.

**\*\*MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED TO ADD A NEW ITEM UNDER NEW BUSINESS: A POSSIBLE VOTE TO ADD 70 TAYLOR AVENUE TO THE HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY.**

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

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The item was added as the final item under New Business.

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No public participation.

## **V. REPORTS FROM BOARDS**

### **A. Norwalk Historical Society – Ms. Jellerette**

Ms. Jellerette reported that the Valentine’s Day program featuring George and Martha was well attended and successful. She thanked the Department of Public Works for clearing snow from the stairway at Mill Hill Historic Park in time for the event. She announced an upcoming free lecture on Schoolgirl Samplers on March 7, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at Mill Hill, featuring discussion of 1800s samplers in the collection and stories of girls before the Industrial Revolution. She also reported that the March 21, 2026, program on Women and the Right to Vote by Mr. Mark Albertson at 2:00 p.m. at Mill Hill will be promoted with assistance from the League of Women Voters of Norwalk. She noted upcoming participation in the City’s Earth Day events in April, including a potential tree planting at Mill Hill, and a Rachel Revere program in May as part of the 250th anniversary activities. The Historical Society is increasing collaboration with other organizations and the State of Connecticut for the 250th anniversary.

### **B. Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum – Ms. Gilgore**

Ms. Gilgore reported that the museum has launched a young artist competition titled “How I See America’s 250th,” with submissions due by the end of May 2026. The exhibit “A Journey of Hope: the Irish American Immigrant Experience” opens in a few weeks with loans from Quinnipiac University and the Irish Great Hunger Museum of Fairfield. The opening reception on March 12, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. already has 85 reservations and several group tours booked. The 2026 lecture series begin April 19, 2026, with Mr. Chandler presenting “Connecticut in the American Revolution: Provision State and Arsenal of the Revolution.” A spring tea is scheduled for May 3, 2026, with a talk on Gilded Age Gardens. A new exhibition, “Revolutionary Roots: Generation of Change,” is in development for June 2026, revealing stories of Lockwood and Mathews ancestors and other figures involved in the Revolutionary War.

## **VI. REPORTS**

### **A. Buildings**

Mr. Doug Hempstead thanked the Commission for its support and reported that the \$275,000 funding was approved in three and a half weeks with excellent cooperation from the City’s Finance Department and other departments. He noted that the mansion has been open during winter for the first time, resulting in more cancellations due to snow, but providing valuable information about winter operations and maintenance needs. He thanked Parks and Recreation and DPW crews for their assistance.

Mr. Westmoreland reported that the Common Council approved \$275,000 for the conservatory replacement study and design. The next steps involve coordination with Purchasing and Facilities to determine bidding requirements for an architect, noting existing state purchasing guidelines. The RFP for interior renovation of the Smith Street Jail has been issued, with a bidder walkthrough scheduled soon. The RFQ for the architect for the basement renovation at the Historical Society Museum is awaiting release by Purchasing. He noted an incident in which snow removal equipment from the Harbor Apartments development damaged the barn door

frame on Smith Street; Facilities is working with the property owners to address repairs, with costs expected to be covered by their insurance.

#### B. Cemeteries

Mr. Westmoreland reported there was nothing new to report regarding cemeteries.

#### C. Financials

Mr. Westmoreland reported that finances are in good condition. The proposed operating budget for the next year has been recommended by the mayor's office and Finance Department.

### VII. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Interpretive Sign for the West Cedar Street Bridge Project

Mr. Westmoreland explained that the West Cedar Street Bridge was replaced with state funding, and as a condition of that funding, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) required the installation of an interpretive sign. He noted that a marble plaque from the original bridge is being added to the Historical Commission's collection. The proposed interpretive sign, developed by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and SHPO, incorporates elements to maintain the character of the original bridge. Mr. Westmoreland stated that he found the wording on the sign to be very good and appropriate.

Mr. Stein inquired whether the sign includes any logos or certifications to indicate its official historic status, noting that brown signage is typically used for historic sites nationwide. Mr. Westmoreland confirmed that the sign follows DOT standard design without additional logos or photos.

Ms. Grant asked if a photo of the original marble plaque could be included on the sign. Mr. Westmoreland replied that he had inquired about adding photos, but DOT and SHPO indicated that this is their standard sign format and photos are not permitted.

Mr. Stein expressed approval of the language on the sign and asked if other members had comments. No additional concerns were raised.

**\*\*MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED THAT THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION APPROVE THE LANGUAGE ON THE INTERPRETIVE SIGN FOR THE WEST CEDAR STREET BRIDGE PROJECT.**

**\*\*MR. ERIC CHANDLER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Grant noted difficulty reading the small text on the shared document and requested it be enlarged or referenced by page. Mr. Eric Chandler indicated the sign text appears on page 9 of the packet, with plain text on page 10. After reviewing, Ms. Grant confirmed she was satisfied with the wording.

Ms. Andrzejewski confirmed that the motion as stated captured the necessary approval.

#### B. Cultural Alliance lease extension requests at Gate Lodge

Mr. Kim Morque, Vice President of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County, introduced himself and noted that he was joined on the call by Ms. Cheryl Williams, President of the Cultural Alliance, and Mr. Douglas Lautsen, the new Executive Director who began in January 2026. Mr. Kim Morque thanked the Commission, particularly Mr. Westmoreland, for the opportunity to address the meeting.

Mr. Kim Morque stated that the Cultural Alliance has been a tenant at the Gate Lodge for over ten years. He described the Gate Lodge as a great historic building in excellent condition, located in a beautiful campus within Matthews Park. He noted his background in real estate and historic preservation projects and expressed appreciation for the building as a treasure in Norwalk. He highlighted the cultural district feel of the area, including proximity to the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, the Contemporary Print Center, and nearby ArtSpace. He requested a lease extension for the Gate Lodge and offered to answer any questions.

Mr. Westmoreland asked about the proposed term of the extension. Mr. Kim Morque proposed a five-year extension, describing it as normal and customary. Mr. Stein inquired whether that matched the term of the previous lease. Mr. Kim Morque clarified that the existing lease was for ten years. Mr. Westmoreland noted that the city normally does five-year extensions once an initial lease is in place.

Mr. Kim Morque added that the Cultural Alliance has enjoyed a very good relationship with the City, including DPW, the property manager, and other staff. He expressed the organization's desire to activate the building more actively, using it as a cultural center and being a good neighbor by engaging more with the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum, the Contemporary Print Center, and ArtSpace. He mentioned a recent event held at ArtSpace the previous summer and his long-standing professional relationship with Mr. John Cusano.

Mr. Stein asked Ms. Andrzejewski for procedural clarification on the Commission's role. Ms. Andrzejewski explained that the Commission's input and blessing would be relayed to the Building Management Department, which would then handle the more formal leasing process. She noted that the City is restructuring leasing procedures for city-owned properties.

Mr. Westmoreland outlined the subsequent steps: Corporation Counsel would draft the lease, which would then go to the Land Use Committee of the Common Council and finally to the full Common Council for approval. He emphasized that, per city code, the Historical Commission has statutory authority over the Gate Lodge, meaning any leasing decision requires the Commission's involvement first.

Mr. Cusano asked whether the Commission's agreement carries weight in the process. Mr. Westmoreland confirmed it does, given the Commission's authority. Mr. Cusano emphasized the value of greater use of the building for convening small groups, meetings, and activity in the historic space, especially on the campus, and noted the ease of collaboration with nearby Norwalk Art Space.

Mr. Kim Morque agreed and stated that the Cultural Alliance's board has discussed activating the space more. She explained that the organization is now leaner (previously with six to eight

staff members) and intends to use the building for member meetings, small group meetings, possible small art shows, social events, and collaborative efforts with the park and nearby cultural entities. She referenced the robust art program at Lockwood-Mathews and expressed interest in participating in similar activities.

Mr. Cusano commended Mr. Douglas Lautsen for his strong start as Executive Director and the positive feedback he has received in the community.

Mr. Kim Morque noted challenges in recent years, including the passing of the previous dynamic executive director and impacts from COVID, but expressed excitement about moving forward.

Mr. Kim Morque added that, based on his historic preservation experience, the Gate Lodge is a gem. He affirmed the organization's commitment to being a good caretaker, working cooperatively with the Commission on any needed improvements, including addressing inappropriate additions such as the "funky" porch at the back, and aligning with restoration goals.

Mr. Westmoreland asked whether Chris Radio continues to use the small addition. Mr. Kim Morque confirmed they do, though Ms. Cheryl Williams was more familiar with the details. Mr. Westmoreland stated the Commission's intention to remove the addition to improve ADA access but expressed reluctance to displace Chris Radio due to appreciation for their work. Mr. Kim Morque suggested there is adequate space in the main building to potentially accommodate a collaborative solution.

Mr. Westmoreland welcomed the possibility and noted improvements in property management under the current system.

Mr. Doug Hempstead stated, for the record, that the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum supports the lease extension request.

Ms. Cheryl Williams thanked the Commission for the opportunity and shared that, having grown up in Norwalk, the building feels like part of home.

Mr. Westmoreland moved to recommend a five-year lease extension by the City of Norwalk.

**\*\*MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED THAT THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF A FIVE-YEAR LEASE EXTENSION FOR THE CULTURAL ALLIANCE AT THE GATE LODGE.**

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

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Kim Morque, Mr. Douglas Lautsen, and Ms. Cheryl Williams thanked the Commission.

C. Minor Change to WALK Bridge/Manresa Island Land Swap

Ms. Andrzejewski explained that the item concerned a request from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) / Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for comments on an extension of permitting related to the WALK Bridge project and vicinity historic resources. The request involved a proposed minor change to relocate the staging and storage yard to another part of the Manresa Island site to allow the developer redeveloping the island to begin work. She noted that the Commission's comments would be forwarded to USDOT/FTA if any concerns or issues were identified, and that a 30-day comment period from the letter dated February 10, 2026, applied.

Mr. Stein summarized his understanding that the change would move the staging and storage yard to another portion of the site, with an assessment concluding no historic properties would be impacted. He referenced the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determination that the Norwalk Harbor Generating Station (Manresa power plant buildings) is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and that the assessment found no historic items of note affected by the relocation.

Mr. Westmoreland stated he had no issue with the proposed change for the bridge project purposes. However, he expressed disagreement with SHPO's eligibility finding, noting that when the power plant buildings were designed and constructed in 1960, they received a design award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for their contemporary architectural significance. He described the buildings (absent later additions such as antennas) as well-designed modern structures but clarified that the disagreement did not affect his position on the land swap proposal.

Mr. Cusano asked whether the power plant building would remain. Mr. Westmoreland confirmed it would stay, with planned modifications, and reiterated that his comment was for informational purposes.

Mr. Stein noted that the assessment of effects paragraph referenced staging and stockpile activities on previously disturbed soils, correcting his earlier misreading. Ms. Grant interjected that the meeting was being recorded, prompting a brief technical discussion about Zoom recording, audio feedback, and duplicate participant appearances, which were resolved.

Mr. Cusano asked whether, in practice, trucks and activities would take care not to disturb unintended areas. Mr. Eric Chandler pointed out that the letter indicated no significant disturbance in the work areas. He also inquired whether the land used would be returned to the owner's use at the conclusion of the project. Mr. Stein noted the letter mentioned fencing, sediment controls, inlet protections as necessary, and compliance with CTDOT easement restrictions, including no soil removal or excavation on site. He suggested requesting clarification from CTDOT on replacement of any soil that might be disturbed or removed.

Ms. Andrzejewski confirmed the Commission could request clarification but emphasized the need to submit comments within the remaining time (approximately 15 days from the meeting date).

Mr. Westmoreland clarified that no formal vote on approval was required, only consensus on comments to be sent.

**\*\*MR. STEIN MOVED THAT THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION AUTHORIZE A RESPONSE TO THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION REQUESTING CLARIFICATION FROM CTDOT ON (1) THE REPLACEMENT OF ANY SOIL REMOVED OR DISTURBED DURING STAGING AND STOCKPILE ACTIVITIES, AND (2) THE RESTORATION AND RETURN OF THE AFFECTED LAND TO THE OWNER’S USE UPON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT.**

**\*\*MR. WESTMORELAND SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Andrzejewski agreed to draft a letter incorporating the requested clarifications and send it to Mr. Stein for review.

Mr. Westmoreland raised a related but separate matter concerning the WALK Bridge/Manresa Island project. He noted that the Commission had not received an update in over a year on the archaeological program, including consultation with tribes, artifact processing, and progress on the multi-year schedule established years earlier. He referenced prior Commission complaints to the FTA, which had resulted in a convened meeting, a plan, and a subsequent update, but no further communication since approximately 2021–2022. He requested that a formal letter be sent to the FTA (copying the DOT archaeologist, Ms. Mandy Ranslow) seeking an overdue update on archaeological findings, tribal consultations under NAGPRA, artifact status, and the overall schedule.

Mr. Stein requested that Ms. Ms. Andrzejewski, Mr. Westmoreland, Ms. Laird, and Ms. Grant compile relevant prior correspondence and context to assist in drafting a polite but firm follow-up letter from the Commission, to be sent within the next week to week-and-a-half.

Ms. Grant emphasized the significance of the site, noting it had remained undisturbed for centuries, yielded a major archaeological find (described by some as the most significant in the Northeast in 50 years, dating to 1614–1641 during first contact), and that the Commission had previously received highly redacted documents but no final reports or interpretations. She highlighted the importance of understanding the findings related to Indigenous peoples of Norwalk.

Mr. Westmoreland clarified that the Commission did not seek ownership of the approximately 50,000 artifacts (due to storage and handling limitations) but desired a long-term loan of a selection for exhibit purposes. He noted that non-sacred artifacts would likely be stored at UConn, while sacred items would be repatriated to tribes under NAGPRA.

Members agreed that the archaeological update request would be handled separately from the land swap comment letter.

D. Addition of 70 Taylor Avenue to the Historic Resource Inventory

Mr. Westmoreland presented the Historic Resources Inventory form for the Alexander Morton House at 70 Taylor Avenue, prepared by consultant Todd Bryant. He expressed high confidence in the assessment, noting his personal familiarity with the property, which is located a couple of blocks from his residence. Mr. Westmoreland stated that the house is in excellent condition, has been carefully maintained by the previous owner with a focus on preserving its original features, and continues to be well cared for by the new owners. He explained that the current owners seek listing on the local historic resource inventory to become eligible for state historic tax credits for future repairs, such as roof work.

Mr. Westmoreland provided context on the local inventory process, noting that Norwalk maintains a significant compilation of historic structures, largely compiled by Ralph Bloom and supplemented over the years through grant-funded consultant surveys covering small sections of the city (typically 200 properties at a time). He acknowledged the challenge of inventorying all 35,000 structures in Norwalk and explained that the repository consists of physical files stored in a file cabinet at the History Room of the Belden Avenue Library. These files are referenced when properties are proposed for demolition or other actions. He described 70 Taylor Avenue as a vernacular worker housing example, a classification recognized by the State of Connecticut following the creation of the Lexington Avenue historic district. The house represents this category of historic worker housing associated with round factories.

The requested action was to approve the addition of the property to the local inventory, after which a file would be prepared and placed in the library repository, and the owners would be notified of the listing.

Mr. Stein asked whether there were any records of alterations to the home. Mr. Westmoreland replied that, aside from updated bathrooms and kitchen, the house remains largely original, with a clean exterior and well-maintained landscape, reflecting excellent preservation efforts over the years. He described the house as simple but very appealing.

Mr. Cusano expressed enthusiasm about adding a property of this type to the inventory.

**\*\*MR. WESTMORELAND MOVED TO PLACE THE ALEXANDER MORTON HOUSE AT 70 TAYLOR AVENUE IN NORWALK ON THE CITY OF NORWALK'S HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY.**

**\*\*MR. MARK JACKSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Proposed amendments to Demolition Delay Ordinance**

Mr. Stein introduced the discussion on proposed amendments to the Demolition Delay Ordinance, noting that Mr. Cusano had previously made a round of edits focused on improving clarity of language while retaining necessary legal terminology.

Mr. Cusano explained that his edits aimed at supporting clarity, though he had not replaced certain legalese after researching terms. He noted that track changes in the document differentiated edits by color.

The Commission reached consensus to amend the delay period from 120 days to 180 days for significant buildings.

**\*\*MR. STEIN MOVED TO AMEND THE DEMOLITION DELAY PERIOD TO 180 DAYS.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Commission confirmed agreement to retain the age threshold for triggering review at 50 years rather than 70 years.

Members reviewed the definition of “significant building” and found the existing A, B, C, D criteria to be consistent throughout the document and sufficiently comprehensive. Ms. Laird emphasized the importance of preserving the overall architectural and historic fabric of neighborhoods and vernacular streetscapes, such as Taylor Avenue and areas associated with oyster shop owners. Discussion considered whether to explicitly reference contributions to historic neighborhoods, districts, or groups of buildings. Ms. Grant noted examples where individual buildings contribute to a larger historic context, such as South Norwalk. After review, members agreed that the existing criteria, particularly item D regarding documented historical or architectural importance in terms of period, style, method of construction, or association with a recognized builder or architect, adequately covered contextual and contributory significance. Consensus was reached to retain the current definitions without adding broader “historic fabric” language, pending a future comprehensive inventory to better define districts and neighborhoods.

The Commission discussed public notice requirements for hearings. Members agreed to modernize the language to require publication in the Norwalk Hour (as the publication of record), one additional print newspaper, and one electronic/online publication (broad enough to include community or neighborhood blogs relevant to the property’s area), while ensuring compliance with any applicable state statutes.

Ms. Andrzejewski agreed to review state law requirements and incorporate compliant language for online and additional print/electronic notice.

The Commission confirmed understanding of the proposed timelines, including the initial 14-day submission period and subsequent steps. Members supported including a step-by-step timeline list (as appearing on page 39 of the meeting packet) to accompany the ordinance for public and Council understanding, though a formal graphic flowchart would be developed after Council approval.

Discussion turned to the third-party peer review process and the 30-day period for completion of the review report following the initial hearing. Members agreed 30 days was realistic given the limited number of applications and availability of qualified reviewers. To provide flexibility for unforeseen circumstances (e.g., holidays or scheduling), the Commission agreed to allow a

possible extension of up to 15 days upon request by the peer reviewer and approval by the Commission.

**\*\*MR. STEIN MOVED TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE TO ALLOW AN EXTENSION OF UP TO 15 DAYS FOR COMPLETION OF THE THIRD-PARTY REVIEW REPORT, UPON REQUEST BY THE PEER REVIEWER AND APPROVAL BY THE COMMISSION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION TOAMEND WAS ACCEPTED UNANIMOULSY.**

The Commission reviewed the fine structure and found the current maximums (the lesser of \$30,000 or 10% of assessed value, with per-day fines) insufficient to serve as a deterrent. After discussion, members agreed to propose increasing the per-day fine and raising the maximum total fine cap to the lesser of \$100,000 or 20% of the assessed value.

**\*\*MR. STEIN MOVED TO AMEND SECTION A5511 TO INCREASE THE PER-DAY FINE AND THE MAXIMUM TOTAL FINE CAP TO THE LESSER OF \$100,000 OR 20% OF THE ASSESSED VALUE.**

**\*\*THE MOTION TOAMEND WAS ACCEPTED UNANIMOULSY.**

Ms. Andrzejewski confirmed that the proposed changes would be incorporated into a clean revised draft for review at the next meeting. The Commission agreed to hold a public hearing on the revised draft at the March 25, 2026, meeting, with the timeline chart included for public reference. The target is a formal vote in March or April 2026, followed by advancement to the Common Council's Ordinance Committee in May 2026.

Mr. Westmoreland recommended, and members concurred, that a public hearing on the revised draft would be appropriate. Ms. Andrzejewski will prepare the clean draft with all agreed edits and circulate it in advance of the March meeting.

## **IX. DISCUSSION**

Ms. Laird inquired whether a member of the City Council would be appointed to the Commission. Ms. Andrzejewski reported that the new staff in the mayor's office is aware of the vacancy and working on the appointment. Mr. Cusano asked about the total number of seats on the Commission. Members confirmed the Commission has eleven seats, including the Common Council representative. No further items were raised.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*MR. LAIRD SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30 PM.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2026.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary