

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 25, 2025
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

ATTENDANCE: Dana Laird (Chair), James Frayer, Richard Stein, Mark Jackson, Eric Chandler, Elizabeth Golden

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHERS: Diane Jellerette, Susan Gilgore, Patsy Brescia, David Westmoreland

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Laird called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Laird called the roll as reflected above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. REGULAR MEETING: MAY 28, 2025

The following corrections were noted:

Page 3, should read Eric Chandler collaborated with Drew for 10 years, not Dana Laird.

Under Reports for Cemetery, please replace “vent” with “fence”.

Under Old Business, Ms. Laird should be referred to as “she” not “he”.

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MINUTES.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. GOLDEN).**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment at this time.

V. REPORTS FROM BOARDS

Ms. Jellerette shared updates on recent and upcoming events, including a concert with Perry and Friends at Mill Hill, which is free and will be held in the garden. She mentioned the Connecticut

Open House Day at the museum and participation in the Juneteenth on the Green event, which had a great turnout.

Ms. Jellerette also highlighted a recent Algonquian Living Historian presentation and the upcoming Independence Day celebration, where the Town Clerk will read parts of the Declaration of Independence, and a soloist will sing the National Anthem. Additional events include a Gettysburg presentation on July 20 and a summer beer tasting and barbecue on July 31.

Ms. Laird asked about the concert on Friday. Ms. Jellerette clarified that while reservations are not required, they're being used to estimate attendance due to snacks and other provisions.

Ms. Gilgore thanked everyone for their support of the grand reopening of the Mansion, noting it has been very busy with a successful collaboration with Silvermine, over 100 attendees at an exhibition reception, and 200 visitors during the Art in the Park Festival organized by Ms. Gordon Brown. She reported that tours and group visits continue steadily and announced a September exhibition, "Bulls of Wall Street," featuring rare artifacts from the New York Stock Exchange and private Connecticut collections curated by Ms. Danielson, for which over \$70,000 was raised. She added that September will also include the Old-Fashioned Flea Market, a book signing with Mr. Dylan Schneider, and a finance talk by Ms. Kaplan. She mentioned ongoing plans with Mr. Chandler and Ms. Kathy for a lecture related to America 250, as well as work with the Connecticut Chair of the Irish American Commission on an exhibition highlighting the history of Irish Americans connected to the mansion's servants' quarters.

Ms. Brescia described the challenges of moving back into the Mansion, reestablishing utilities, and training new staff, noting that the process of closing out State and City grants will not conclude until later in the summer. She explained that although most funds went into mechanical systems, the mansion is now one of the most sophisticated city-owned buildings, requiring close cooperation with City departments. She stated that the project is nearly closed out and shared that a surprise State inspection in June produced a very positive review. She emphasized the reopening as an opportunity to expand the mansion's cultural and educational role and stressed the need for more volunteers, as tours are now year-round.

Ms. Brescia also highlighted the completion of the physical archival setup, an essential step toward qualifying for future grants and curatorial support. She noted it will take a couple of years to fully organize but represents major progress in preserving and sharing the mansion's historical and cultural resources.

A. BUILDINGS

Mr. Westmoreland reported that \$10,000 remaining in the Historical Commission's budget was used for repairs to the third and fourth floor servant stair hall and the coat room, with work expected to finish by Friday. He is also obtaining quotes for painting and repairing the front porch veranda.

He noted the gate lodge roof must be replaced. Although he hoped for a grant to restore the slate roof, delays with the State's National Register update require moving forward with an asphalt roof using capital funds at a cost under \$15,000.

At Mill Hill, plans are underway to replace the well house with a storage shed painted to match the schoolhouse and roofed with wood shingles. He also reported that video security systems at both the Museum and Mill Hill have failed and will be replaced with updated, cloud-based systems.

Mr. Westmoreland explained that the State has been slow updating the Mansion's National Register nomination, which delays preservation funding. He described frustration with the process and said he may raise the issue with Senator Duff. Ms. Laird noted similar funding delays elsewhere. Mr. Frayer asked about facilities management, and Mr. Westmoreland said he works with Mr. Lo and Mr. Rennie of Facilities Management.

Mr. Frayer questioned how increased maintenance costs would be handled and said the Commission should review the budget and spending more regularly. Mr. Westmoreland explained the Commission shares its budget with facilities, with him previously authorized to manage projects under \$10,000, while larger amounts required Commission or Council approval. He agreed to circulate the expense and capital budgets, share regular updates from Ms. Alvarado in Economic and Community Development, and supported greater Commission involvement to make the process more sustainable.

B. CEMETERIES

Mr. Westmoreland reported that the Tree Alliance replaced six dead trees at Pine Island at no cost to the City and committed to watering them. He also noted ongoing work with an Eagle Scout project to straighten and clean tombstones at Pine Island, now expected to take place in the fall rather than August.

C. FINANCIALS

Mr. Westmoreland reported that a \$725,000 grant from 2017 for Mill Hill has now been fully closed out after completing ADA improvements around the barn, jail, and hill path. He worked with the city's Grants Coordinator and the State to finalize requirements, including signage, and the city will be reimbursed the full amount. He confirmed railings have been installed on the jail path, though additional railings could be considered.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. UPDATE ON DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE

Mr. Stein reported that he drafted new language for a revised ordinance after the city showed little attachment to the original version. He has shared the draft with Mr. Frayer and Mr. Chandler for feedback and plans to circulate a revised version to the full Commission. The proposed ordinance would establish a process in which demolition opposition letters trigger review by an independent consultant, procured through an RFP, with available grants to help

fund the work. He noted contacts at the State and in New York who could provide resources and expertise. Mr. Stein said the goal is to strengthen and professionalize the demolition delay process.

Mr. Chandler praised Mr. Stein’s draft and asked that the notice-by-publication provision be restored. Mr. Frayer also commended the work, urged Commissioners to give feedback, and suggested later review with Councilwoman Shanahan. Mr. Stein noted consultant reviews may cost about \$2,500 per project, with grants to help offset expenses. Mr. Frayer proposed a fee structure so applicants share costs.

Mr. Stein said he would circulate the revised draft before his July travel. Ms. Laird raised concerns that renovations, such as on Witch Lane and Willow Street, are not covered by the ordinance and should be monitored. She and Mr. Frayer discussed the Witch Lane property, noting its many past alterations.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. BUDGET FOR LOCKWOOD MATHEWS MANSION

B. BUDGET FOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr. Westmoreland reported that the 2025–2026 budget provides \$150,000 each to the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion and the Norwalk Historical Society, for a total of \$300,000 in annual operating grants to support utilities and public access. He noted the mansion requested early approval due to financial strain from its recent closure.

**** MR. JACKSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE GRANTS TO THE LOCKWOOD MATTHEWS MANSION, AND TO THE NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$150,000 EACH, FROM OPERATING ACCOUNT 016-300-5620 GRANTS AND DONATIONS, AFTER JULY 1, 2025.**

**** MR. CHANDLER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Frayer asked if the \$150,000 grants required Finance Committee review. Mr. Westmoreland said no, as the funds are already approved and each institution will submit a request for release. He noted the Commission also has about \$79,000 budgeted for expenses, with some costs covered by Facilities, and responsibilities for the mansion’s new systems still being determined.

Mr. Frayer stressed efficiency and avoiding duplication, while Mr. Westmoreland emphasized city staff should handle work rather than volunteers. Both noted improvements in facilities management and the condition of historic buildings. Mr. Chandler praised Mr. Westmoreland’s efforts, who credited Ms. Brescia, Ms. Laird, and the Commission. Mr. Frayer added that strong department heads under Mayor Rilling have helped the city progress.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.