

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 23, 2025
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Chair Ms. Laird. Five members were present.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Laird confirmed a quorum.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public comment at this time.

IV. REPORTS FROM BOARDS

A. NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ms. Jellerette reported on recent and upcoming events:

The Mill Hill Garden Party held at the end of June had excellent weather and great attendance; thanks were extended to Building Community Through Music and Tulip Tree Site Design for sponsorship.

Independence Day celebrations included bell ringing and a reading of the Declaration of Independence by the Town Clerk, with participation of Senator Bob Duff, Council President Barbara Smith, and a young audience member.

An author talk with Ms. Carolyn Albanoff focused on the Battle of Gettysburg, held recently with a book signing afterward. The talk highlighted Civil War-era travel challenges.

Upcoming events include a concert on Thursday, September 18, at 6:30 PM at the Norwalk Historical Society Museum featuring the band "Cooked Up," in partnership with Building Community Through Music.

The museum backyard is looking fantastic, used for lunches and weddings, and Mill Hill Historic Park buildings are open on weekends through August 24.

Planning for America 250 is underway, with a first meeting set for July 31.

On July 31 at 6 PM, a Beer Tasting and Barbecue fundraiser will be held to support the Historical Society, with online tickets at \$35 and \$45 at the door, led by Greg Glaser featuring New England beers.

Ms. Golden commended the beer tasting event and encouraged attendance.

B. LOCKWOOD-MATHEWS MUSEUM

A report was not provided at this time.

V. REPORTS

A. BUILDINGS

Mr. David Westmoreland reported he planned to meet with Mr. Neil Rennie from Facilities regarding roof replacement bids at the gate lodge in Matthews Park, noting that the bids were less expensive than anticipated, benefiting the budget.

Bids for replacing the malfunctioning video security systems at Mill Hill and the Museum are underway.

He obtained three quotes for veranda repairs and painting at the mansion, aiming for work completion in August or September.

Three quotes for a new shed at Mill Hill are being finalized, with installation planned for September or October.

Architects and mechanical engineers are finalizing the bid package for fire-damaged jail interior renovations, with bids expected this fall and construction to begin next spring.

Collaboration with Boy Scouts on Pine Island cemetery work may be delayed.

Both Mill Hill and Brookside cemeteries need treatment with D2 cleaning solution, with alternatives being sought due to discontinuation by the previous supplier.

A cleaner approved by the U.S. Department of the Interior is used for these purposes.

B. CEMETERIES

Discussed under Buildings report as above.

C. FINANCIALS

Mr. Westmoreland summarized the financial reports sent prior to the meeting: FY 24-25 budget totaled \$324,000, with \$7,730 unspent, approximately 2.4% under budget.

FY 25-26 budget is similar to the prior year, with an increase of \$20,000 in grant funds and additional budget lines for plumbing, heating, electrical, and other contractual services related to buildings/facilities maintenance.

A notable budget change is Other Professional Services increased to \$25,000 from \$7,000 due to reclassification of museum conservation expenses from capital to operating budgets, as requested by the City CFO. This category includes national register updates, interpretive sign narrative development, and occasional graphic design work.

Capital budget highlights include:

\$466,000 allocated for jail interior renovation, including a \$375,000 increase this year.

\$75,000 for Lockwood-Mathews Mansion exterior restoration planning, paying for professional conservator expertise on historic materials.

\$380,000 set aside for renovation of the Lockwood House (museum building) basement, possibly executed in phases, starting with gutting and moving basement contents.

Mr. Stein inquired about the increase in Other Professional Services, which Mr. Westmoreland explained was due to the CFO's directive to expense conservation work rather than treat it as capital.

Mr. Frayer asked about potential funds available for expert evaluations related to demolition delays; Mr. Westmoreland noted leftover expense budget funds do not carry over and suggested prudent management of existing budgets.

Mr. Frayer also inquired if the city's Facilities group handles work and charges these accounts, which was confirmed.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Stein inquired about demolition delay and pre-demolition applications forwarded to the Commission. Ms. Andrzejewski explained that these come to the Commission only if there is an objection from the public or Commissioners; no objections have been filed recently.

The Commission discussed the need to increase public awareness and involvement regarding demolition delay notifications. Mr. Westmoreland noted that the Norwalk Preservation Trust is the advocacy organization intended to handle such efforts and historically was included in notifications.

Mr. Westmoreland shared concerns about a loophole where demolition approvals can be "hidden" in large zoning projects, making Commission objections ineffective after zoning is approved. This issue requires further attention and was slated for discussion at the next meeting.

The Commission discussed pending developments in midtown Norwalk (6 and 8 North Street and adjacent properties) with some historic plaques present, but plans remain unclear.

Ms. Andrzejewski confirmed meeting agendas and materials are distributed by email with links and are available online.

The Commission agreed to encourage the Preservation Trust to be more proactive in monitoring demolition delays and related projects.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

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

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

It was confirmed there will be no meeting in August, and the next meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2025.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin