

**CITY OF NORWALK  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – OCTOBER 22, 2025  
VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE**

**ATTENDEES:** Dana Laird, Rich Stein, Liz Golden, Jim Frayer, David Westmoreland, Mark Jackson, Eric Chandler.

**STAFF:** Michelle Andrzejewski.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The regular meeting of the Historical Commission was called to order by Ms. Laird at 7:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Laird conducted the roll call, noting a quorum.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. Regular meeting: September 25th, 2025**

Ms. Laird noted several corrections to the September 25, 2025, minutes, including capitalizing "Cooked Up" on page 1 under item 5A, correcting "Mark Albertson" to "Mark Albersen," changing "Cloder Family" to "Kloter Farms" on page 2 under Buildings, amending "61 Witch" under item 7 Old Business to "61 Witch" spelled W-I-T-C-H.

**\*\*MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2025, REGULAR MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

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

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (MR. FRAYER AND MR. WESTMORELAND).**

**B. Regular Meeting: July 23rd, 2025**

**\*\*MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 23, 2025 REGULAR MEETING.**

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

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

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Diane Cece introduced herself as a resident of Olmsted Place. She commented on the proposed demolition delay ordinance, asking who drafted it, when the Commission received it, and expressing concern over limited public review time and its appearance on the agenda for possible action. She commended the effort to refine the ordinance but said additional clarification was needed.

She recommended automatic referral of demolition applications for buildings 70 years or older from the Building Department to the Commission to align with national standards and reduce reliance on residents to identify historic properties.

Ms. Cece suggested clearer procedures for objection-based reviews, including automatic Commission review, public notice improvements, and use of a small pool of pre-qualified third-party experts, with related costs budgeted annually. She also urged that fines for violations, including demolition by neglect, be imposed immediately and continue until resolved.

She questioned exemptions allowing demolition of structures deemed public health threats without Commission input, citing the need to better protect significant historic buildings such as the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion. She further proposed adding a completion deadline to demolition permits to avoid prolonged partial demolitions, referencing 16 Connor Street as an example.

## **V. REPORTS FROM BOARDS**

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

Ms. Jellerette provided an update on recent and upcoming events for the Norwalk Historical Society. The Society recently screened the documentary *Hidden History of Slavery in New York* by Larry Epstein, a former News 12 producer, on October 5. The event drew strong attendance and included a Q&A session, with plans to host similar programs in the future.

Upcoming events include a Zoom presentation titled "*Vampires in Connecticut*" on October 26 from 2:00 to 3:00 PM, led by Nick Bellantoni, the former Connecticut State Archaeologist. The talk will cover 19th-century vampire lore and public scares, with registration available via the Historical Society website to obtain the Zoom link. On November 9 at 2:00 PM, Mark Albertson will deliver an in-person talk on "*Militia History and Evolution into the National Guard*" at the Mill Hill Town House. Additionally, a holiday open house is scheduled for December 7 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Norwalk Historical Site & Museum, which opened in December 2015 in the former Lockwood House.

Regarding America 250 initiatives, the Society collaborated with Southern Connecticut State University students on the Connecticut Revolutionary War Trail project. This included interviews with Eric Chandler and Ed Eckardt highlighting Norwalk's 1779 burning, resulting in planned video content and stories. The Society is partnering with the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion and Historic Rowayton for events under the Middlesex 250 group, which covers former Norwalk areas in Darien. The group's website is now active with event listings, focusing Norwalk efforts on these three organizations. The first city America 250 meeting is set for November, and the Historical Society is affiliated under Connecticut Humanities, contributing to a statewide event collection website.

Facility updates include the installation of a new security camera system at the museum, with completion expected by October 23; upgrades at Mill Hill were already completed in response to heightened security needs. For December, the exhibit will feature a refresh in the WPA room,

including new displays such as the needlepoint collection, repainting, and color updates while retaining the original mural.

### **B. Lockwood-Mathews Museum; Susie Gilgore**

Ms. Lordan and Ms. Brescia provided updates on recent events and operations at the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion. The September flea market was highly successful, benefiting from ideal weather and receiving positive feedback from vendors and attendees. The October annual gala was one of the most successful to date and featured a generous donation from the Brescia family, Patsy's children and grandchildren, to support archives, research, and institutional priorities.

Construction is nearing completion, with the punch list in progress and bi-weekly meetings ongoing with Consigli Construction. Final billing is being reviewed to identify surplus funds for "Day 2" enhancements, such as installing a railing on the grand staircase leading to the basement archives and education room. A state grant extension has been requested, as the original end date is December 23, with the final report pending subcontractor accounting and liability clearances. During move-in, compromised supports in the conservatory were identified, prompting immediate stabilization efforts and planning for a full rebuild. Systems issues have been resolved, including HVAC problems with compressors and thermostats, and a 38-camera security system now covers all doors and windows. Appreciation was extended to Facilities Management, specifically David Westmoreland, for repainting and scraping the veranda, which received positive feedback from gala attendees.

Progress on the archives includes intensive organization downstairs following the move, with substantial contributions from volunteers; special recognition was given to Patsy Brescia and the team, though additional work continues.

Upcoming events include a presentation by curator Alex Cooney on November 23, a holiday lecture on November 28, and an open house on December 14 featuring Santa Claus with updated elements in the Christmas presentation.

## **VI. REPORTS**

### **A. Buildings**

Mr. Westmoreland reported that work is ongoing at Mill Hill and the Museum, including the installation of the new security systems. The veranda painting has been completed and looks excellent, with a few smaller painting projects still in progress around the building. A new roof was installed on the Gate Lodge, which looks very good and is expected to resolve prior leak issues. Some minor chimney work is also being completed to further prevent water intrusion.

He noted that a serious issue has developed at the conservatory, where water has slowly leaked in behind the supports over time, causing significant rot that only recently became visible. Temporary shoring of the main supports is planned until a more permanent solution can be determined. The conservatory was rebuilt in the 1970s after a tree fell on it, replacing the original

glass with plexiglass panels that have since faded and discolored. The team is exploring what it would take to completely rebuild and restore the structure to its original appearance, with more information expected at the next meeting.

Mr. Westmoreland also mentioned that additional documents were sent earlier in the day related to the next phase of museum renovations and apologized for the lateness of the distribution. He explained that many project bills have not yet been processed, such as those for the Gate Lodge roof and the new security systems, so they do not yet appear in the financial reports. He intends to coordinate with the Facilities Department to produce a monthly recap summarizing all project expenditures to make it easier to track how funds are being spent.

In response to a question about the capital account balances, Mr. Westmoreland clarified that the \$466,000 showing for the Smith Street buildings is earmarked for the interior restoration of the jail. He stated that the architectural work is ongoing, with delays related to HVAC engineering, but the goal is to put the project out to bid by the end of the year and begin construction in the spring. Similarly, the museum project has more than \$300,000 allocated, which will be used for continued ADA and master plan renovations. He explained that this work represents the fourth phase, focused on basement renovation, with a fifth phase being planned for the attic to provide collection storage and allow the ground floor space currently used by the Health Department to be returned to the city.

Mr. Westmoreland noted that all projects are phased to avoid requesting large capital appropriations at once, making it easier to secure funding. He added that while account balances may appear high, the funds are already committed and will be expended as work progresses through the year. The Commission thanked him for his detailed report and agreed that reviewing these numbers periodically provides a helpful perspective on the amount of work being accomplished.

## **B. Cemeteries**

Ms. Laird reported that several trees had recently come down and, although they had been cut up, the logs were left near the secondary entrance at Love Lane. She noted that the cap of one monument near the Route 7 expressway entrance had also been knocked off. It was unclear whether the logs had been placed there for convenience or left inadvertently due to the heavy overgrowth in the area.

Mr. Westmoreland recommended arranging a meeting with the Parks and Recreation Department to address the issue. He explained that the same area is not being mowed regularly, resulting in monuments becoming overgrown each year. Although the Commission has cleared this section multiple times, the mowing schedule has not been adjusted to maintain it properly. He added that while it is acceptable for debris to be stored in the gully beyond the Love Lane entrance, Parks

and Recreation must ensure a clear path for access and avoid dumping logs directly along the site.

The Commission agreed that meeting with Parks and Recreation would be beneficial to discuss overall cemetery maintenance and vegetation control. Mr. Westmoreland mentioned that the maintenance staff had recently changed and that Mr. Stowers should now be contacted regarding these concerns.

Ms. Laird also stated that she and Mr. Westmoreland plan to apply D/2 Biological Solution at Brookside Cemetery on Saturday morning. She will be available from approximately 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. to assist. The cleaning project is intended to improve the cemetery's appearance ahead of the upcoming 250th anniversary events, which will include tours and reenactments, and to ensure the gravestones receive a fresh application before winter.

The Brookside Cemetery, located near Rowayton Avenue and Woodchuck Lane just before the bridge, was described as a historic but often overlooked site that was once part of the former Middlesex Parish. Ms. Laird added that she typically monitors Brookside and Pine Island cemeteries and plans to inspect the others soon. She mentioned she drives by Keller-Comstock Cemetery several times a week and recently noticed a displaced flag, which may have come from one of the other properties.

Mr. Westmoreland confirmed he has several gallons of D/2 cleaning solution remaining from a past Boy Scout project, which will be used for this work. He stated there are no immediate plans to reapply the cleaner at Mill Hill at this time.

The Commission noted that progress continues to be made in maintaining the city's historic cemeteries, and further coordination with Parks and Recreation will help ensure consistent care and access to these important historic sites.

### **C. Financials**

Mr. Westmoreland stated that he had just received the financial reports earlier that day and shared them with the Commission, noting he would review them in greater detail later but could address questions in the meantime.

Mr. Frayer asked about the "Other Professional Services" line item. Mr. Westmoreland explained that it covers conservation work on collection items, handyman services, consulting needs such as demolition delay reviews, and National Register research. He clarified that "Other Contractual Services" pertains to facility maintenance contracts, such as elevator servicing, managed by third-party vendors.

Mr. Westmoreland added that the budget now includes a new line consolidating these costs and noted a \$14,556 charge under "Buildings" for Guardian services, representing annual maintenance billed by Facilities. He confirmed the expense was budgeted.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Discussion of Pine Island tree removal**

This item was covered with Mr. Westmoreland above, as noted by Ms. Laird. There was no further discussion.

### **B. Discussion of demolition signage**

No discussion occurred on demolition signage.

## **VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Discussion and vote on Demolition Delay Ordinance**

The Commission discussed the updated demolition delay ordinance at length, incorporating Ms. Cece's public comments. Ms. Andrzejewski explained that the document was developed by staff with input from the Commission over several months. An initial draft was shared in July 2025 and later revised based on feedback from members including Mr. Chandler and Mr. Frayer before being finalized for this meeting. She clarified that the Building Department would handle initial permit applications and refer those involving structures over 70 years old or of historical significance such as those associated with notable persons or events to the Commission. She outlined that objections would be triggered through legal notice publication, followed by a Commission review to determine significance at the next meeting or sooner, with the option for third-party evaluation if warranted, and a potential 90-day delay if recommended.

Ms. Andrzejewski addressed funding for third-party reviews through annual budgeting, estimated at \$5,000 based on low historical volume, and confirmed fines for violations including demolition by neglect, would be immediate and accruing daily until remedied. On exceptions, she explained they align with state law for imminent hazards but affirmed the Commission's advisory role could still influence outcomes for significant structures. Regarding permit lapses, she noted the existing six-month commencement and extension provisions and agreed to explore adding completion timelines to prevent prolonged partial demolitions.

Mr. Chandler emphasized the ordinance's intent to protect potentially historic structures without overburdening owners, suggested refining language for clarity on referral triggers and third-party selection via a rotating list and supported automatic 70-year referrals to reduce resident burden. Mr. Frayer advocated for broader public notification beyond legal ads, such as targeted mailings or website postings, and questioned fee structures to ensure affordability. Mr. Stein inquired about drafting origins, confirming staff lead with Commission revisions. Mr. Westmoreland and Mr. Jackson offered general support for the refinements. Ms. Laird summarized the consensus on ambiguities and best practices integration. The Commission agreed to further revise based on the discussion, including automatic referrals, tightened exceptions, completion deadlines, and enhanced notifications, with a public hearing targeted for the November 19, 2025, meeting.

No vote occurred on the ordinance.

## **IX. DISCUSSION**

Mr. Westmoreland presented proposed renovations to the Historical Society Museum basement as a preview for future approval, describing them as the fourth phase of facility improvements to enhance programming space. He reviewed current floor plans showing storage areas, mechanical and electrical rooms, an ADA accessible bathroom, and a new elevator to the basement. The proposal would reconfigure the area into two larger rooms: one for lectures and presentations with a pull-down screen, and another serving as a gallery or event space. An exterior glass stair entry is also planned to improve natural light and meet code requirements. He noted ongoing code challenges related to supports and safety areas but said the design aims to maximize usable space. No upper-floor work is planned, as previous ADA upgrades are complete. The project would allow lectures to be held on-site rather than at Mill Hill and continues the phased improvement approach following a 2015 decision against a large scale expansion.

Mr. Westmoreland presented a scope-of-work proposal from Rostenkowski-Magani Architects, the firm retained in 2015 as architects of record. The proposal totals \$70,000 and covers design, bidding, construction administration, HVAC, and engineering services. He noted that Facilities Management will oversee the project through Mr. Lo's department, with Mr. Rennie managing construction. Bidding will proceed in three phases: exterior, demolition, and rebuild, with construction anticipated to begin in spring 2026. Additional funding may be sought if bids exceed the current budget. In response to questions, Mr. Westmoreland confirmed no upper-floor work is planned and clarified the project management structure. The Commission expressed general support, with further review expected in November or December 2025.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary