CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
JANUARY 22, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

ATTENDANCE: Dana Laird; Chair, Mark Jackson, Liz Golden, Eric Chandler, Lisa Wilson-Grant

STAFF: Michelle Andrzejewski

OTHER: Doug Hempstead, Susan Gilgore, Diane Jellerette, Patsy Brescia

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Laird called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Laird called the roll as reflected above. A quorum was present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: 11/20/24

Ms. Laird pointed out several typos. On page 2, Olstead should be changed to Almstead, on page 3 remold should be changed to remodel and outer years should be changed to other years.

The minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

V. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Chairman

** **MR. CHANDLER NOMINATED MS. LAIRD TO CONTINUE AS CHAIR.**
** **MS. WILSON-GRANT SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. 2025 Calendar

There was no vote. Ms. Laird stated the calendar looked straight forward

C. Proposed Amendment to Demolition Delay

The item was moved to discussion

VII. DISCUSSION

Ms. Jellerette from the Historical Society talked about the December event, which included an open house and tours. She stated it was very successful. She noted they were attracting a lot of new people to Mill Hill. She discussed America 250 for Norwalk. She indicated they have already started a list of possible events. She talked about the Make Music Event and Earth Day on the green. She mentions a collaboration with History at Play for programs that fit into the Victorian Era.

Ms. Wilson-Grant mentioned possible tie-ins with the DAR and SAR for America 250. Ms. Jellerate said there was an upcoming event with the DAR this spring.

Ms. Gilgore presented her report on the Lockwood Mathews Museum. She noted they were at

the end of construction and had an amazing calendar when they reopened. She described various projects in the works.

Ms. Brescia stated they didn't have a firm date on when the construction would be finished. She said they were looking at spring. She indicated they were working towards starting to move back in while they were still under construction. She mentioned items that were already moved in or in the installation process. She gave an accounting of what was and wasn't completed. Ms. Brescia discussed an unexpected expense handled by the city for trusses in the attic that needed to be replaced. She described the projects being worked on the property outside. She talked about the six to seven-foot fence that will most likely be installed in the spring. A major planting will be used to diminish the visual effect of the fencing.

Mr. Hempstead discussed the need for a bathroom and getting the elevator operational.

Ms. Brescia talked about the new lighting system.

C. Proposed Amendment to Demolition Delay

Mr. Chandler raised a question about whether notice should be given by the publication and the newspaper. Ms. Laird was not opposed to the redundancy of posting on the property and in the newspaper. Ms. Andrzejewski said she would bring it up with the law office.

Ms. Andrzejewski walked the commission through the various edits. She stated them as follows.
Strengthening the definition, and purpose. She noted the addition of definitions added by the zoning office. She explained the goal is to remove ambiguity and to clearly define all the elements involved in a demolition project. She pointed out the definition of what a significant building is and that the document now contained the qualifying criteria.
Edits to strengthen the ordinance and put the elements of the process in proper order.
She gave some examples of how that would work.

Ms. Andrzejewski clarified the wording of the State and National register for Ms. Wilson Grant. Ms. Laird mentioned there were plaqued buildings that wouldn't be found on either list. Mr. Chandler having plaqued buildings that are not on the registers was an issue throughout Norwalk. Ms. Wilson-Grant noted that the plaque program doesn't prohibit anyone from doing anything with their property if it has a plaque.

Ms. Andrzejewski listed several items that had been relocated in the document for clarity. She indicated there were no additions. Ms. Grant-Wilson cited a situation under the current situation where a historic structure was ruined when the owners destroyed the second floor. She wanted to know if something was being done to prevent this from happening again. Ms. Andrzejewski said

she would discuss the situation with those involved to catch more situations like these. In response to Mr. Chandler, Ms. Andrzejewski stated there are levels of inspection. Ms. Laird said hopefully the fines will discourage some people, noting people with money would probably not be bothered by them. Ms. Laird noted the need to have tighter eyes on structures that are old, historic, or have significance. Mr. Chandler had questions about the plaqued buildings. Ms. Andrzejewski indicated she didn't have a list.

Ms. Andrzejewski moved on to the section. Ms. Laird noted the possibility of a legal issue resulting from the Historical Commission's ability to object to demolition and then be the entity that determines if a structure is historic. Ms. Andrzejewski stated the 120-day demolition delay timeline hadn't changed. Ms. Laird pointed out the need to update the historic resource inventory.

Ms. Laird was confused by some wording about application procedures on page 4, section 6b. Ms. Andrzejewski indicated there was a typo that would be re-edited..-Ms. Laired wanted clarification about when the clock started on a demolition delay. Ms. Andrzejewski said the language states the 120 days start when the application is deemed filed. Ms. Laird discussed the topic of renovation which isn't covered in the current document. Ms. Golden had a question about district guidelines. Ms. Andrzejewski pointed out there was no legislation or local ordinance to protect the districts. She stated in certain areas projects were subject to a third-part architectural review.

Ms. Andrzejewski provided the procedure overview as described in the document. She discussed what should happen during the delay period. She also mentioned how the appeal process would be handled. She noted that crossed-off language in the document was relocated for clarity. She stated the document forces everyone involved to understand what needs to happen.

Mr. Chandler asked about the amount of time a developer has to act after being issued a building permit. Ms. Andrzejewski stated a year and for a fee they can renew the permit yearly. Ms. Grant-Wilson wanted a clarification on who set the fees and fines. Ms. Andrzejewski indicated the numbers came from the previous ordinance. She indicated she assumed the ordinance was in the prevue of the Building Department.

Ms. Andrzejewski explained the approval process for the ordinance.

Mr. Chandler wanted to know if they should keep an eye on the four recently purchased houses in downtown Norwalk, two of which are plaqued.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Ms. Golden requested a meeting list.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

** **MR. JACKSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
** **MS. GOLDEN SECONDED THE MOTION.**
** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services.