

**CITY OF NORWALK**  
**HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
**APRIL 24, 2019**  
**THE TOWN HOUSE**  
**MILL HILL HISTORIC PARK**  
**2 EAST WALL STREET**  
**NORWALK, CT 06851**

**ATTENDANCE:** Suzanne Betts, Chair; Holly Cuzzone, Dana Laird, Thomas Livingston, Lisa Wilson Grant.

**OTHERS:** Susan Gilgore, Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum; Diane Jellerette, Norwalk Historical Society; David Westmoreland.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Betts called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: JANUARY 23, 2019**

Page 2

Ms. Jellerette report, fourth bullet: Replace word “met” with “meet”

- Executive Directors from Fairfield County Historical Societies/Museums will “meet” .....

Page 3

Upcoming events, first bullet, line 7: Replace word “an” with “and”

.... Children can create cards “and” .....

Page 6

First paragraph, first sentence: Replace work “ Land” with “ Preservation”

Mr. Bryant of the Norwalk “Preservation” Trust

**\*\* MS. CUZZONE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED.**

**\*\* MS. LAIRD SECONDED.**

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

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Guest visitor Karen Salviano attended to the meeting with the purpose to explore options to volunteer within the city organizations.

City of Norwalk  
 Historical Commission  
 April 24, 2019

## REPORTS – BOARDS

### A. Norwalk Historical Society

Ms. Jellerette submitted the following report:

- Continue work exhibitions: Caught in the Crosshairs, Norwalk Changing Communities: Norwalk Before 1835 and Schoolhouse exhibition.
- The Little Red Schoolhouse is back in session at Mill Hill (April-June). All 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes in the Norwalk Public Schools will be attending this year! A Middle School offering has been officially added.
- “Remembering the American Revolution” series. This year will be commemorating the 240<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the battle and burning of Norwalk. There will be a living history day on Saturday, July 13, 2019 with re-enactors at Mill Hill.

### Past Events

- **I Could Not Call Her Mother: The Evil Stepmother in Early America Lecture**, Sunday, March 3, 2019, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Norwalk Historical Society Museum. Admission: \$8.00. This lecture was presented by Leslie Lindenauer, a professor at Western Connecticut State University, she explores the role of the evil stepmother in early American popular culture (with a glance into later pulp fiction and film noir). Very popular lecture.
- **History Kids Craft Day**, Sunday, March 31, 2019, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. at Norwalk Historical Society Museum. Admission: \$5.00/Child. Children (ages 5-12) made crafts from different periods throughout history.

### Upcoming Events

- **Jewish Participation in the American Revolution**, Sunday, May 19, 2019, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Mill Hill Historic Park. Admission: \$8.00. This lecture is presented by Eric Chandler.
- **Caught in the Crosshairs Exhibition**, Opening Reception, June 8, 2019, Noon – 4:00 p.m. at Norwalk Historical Society Museum. Admission: free. Northrup Grumman Norden Systems donation.
- **Revolutionary Connecticut Beer & Cider Tasting**, Thursday, June 20, 2019. 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at Mill Hill Historic Park. Admission: \$45.00 in advance, \$ 50.00 at the door.
- **Make Music Day**, Friday, June 21, 2019, 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Mill Hill Historic Park. Admission: Free. International event and the first year in Norwalk.
- **The Battle and Burning of Norwalk**, Sunday, June 23, 2019, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Mill Hill Historic Park. Admission: \$ 8:00. This lecture is presented by Ed and Madeleine Eckert.

B. Lockwood Mathews Mansions Museum

Ms. Gilgore submitted the following report:

The water issue, which had created concerns for the Mansion throughout 2018 and the first part of 2019, is close to an end, as the City is currently installing a new, smaller water line that will resolve the issues of stagnant water and bacteria in the pipeline.

The state has not released the contract documents for the \$5 million bond and we are waiting for those documents to be released to proceed with Phase IV of the Master Plan and construction project. We understand 2.5 million is in the Capital Budget over the next couple of years.

We continue to be concerned about the Veranda, which is slowly collapsing, and we look forward for the restoration process to begin. We thank David Westmoreland and Commissioners for your support and attention to this matter.

The 2019 Season is off to a great start, with several student tours and group tours, and 100 plus attendees to the opening reception of the new exhibition titled, *Historic Grounds & Modern Gardens*.

On May 16, the much anticipated suffrage exhibit, *From Corsets to Suffrage: Victorian Women Trailblazers* will open to the public with an opening reception, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. We hope you can all attend as our guests! It will be followed on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. by a lecture by Dr. Heather Prescott, titled, Fashioning Women's Suffrage.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, there will be an Open House at the Mansion with a tour and a wine and cheese reception to celebrate the City of Norwalk and you will receive an invitation very soon.

On Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. we will be launching a Treasure Hunter's Adventure in collaboration with the Center for Contemporary Printmaking and Stepping Stones Museum for Children. The event will take place in Mathew's Park, and participants will use a faded map and a downloadable APP to unlock the escalating levels of the game at all three buildings, which will lead to the endgame inside the Mansion.

We hope that you will join us for some of the exciting 2019 events and programs and we thank you for all your support, which helps us to keep the doors open for a very enriching season for our community.

Ms. Gilmore also handed a flyer for the upcoming event: Young Writer's Competition – Grades 3–5 & Grades 6-8, Whodunit at the Mansion, A Victorian Era Mystery. Some of the requirements are:

- All papers must be submitted by Friday, June 7, 2019,
  - Stories should include at least 3 facts about the history of the Mansion,
  - Students are encouraged to research the topic and gather information for their story.
- Students should also visit [lockwoodmathewsmansion.com](http://lockwoodmathewsmansion.com) for additional requirements and guidelines. Winners will receive cash and other prizes. Competition winners and their families will be Guests of Honor at the Awards Ceremony on Sunday, Nov. 17, 2019.

## REPORTS

### A. Buildings

Mr. Westmoreland reported the following:

The second case of the ADA project at the Norwalk Museum is finished, just minor things to be done, such as to put some weather strips around the door and to replace the section of the sidewalk on the side of the building because it floods when it rains.

The city replaced the chiller.

The project funded by the state grant has started and it's moving along. The second floor level and the hill side, on the entrance to the jail, has been excavated. The project is moving along slowly.

The architects finished the bid package for the elevator in the museum, the bathrooms and the kitchen and updated the budget. However, we do not have enough money. We can build all the constructions: build the shaft for the elevator, build the machine room in the basement, reconfigure the bathrooms and kitchen, but we won't put any bathroom, kitchen nor axle elevator car, for those, we need to get more funding. The idea is to have all the horrible construction out of the way.

### B. Cemeteries

Eagle Scout project

Mr. Westmoreland commented that the Methodist Church from Main street exceeded expectation. There were 25 boys and associated parents. We re-set 25 – 32 headstones. Brushes were cleared out. He said it was a great project.

Mr. Westmoreland said that he received a note from the education person at Darien Historical Society requesting permission to stop by Brookside Cemetery because they are having a third and fourth grades program and decided to stop at this Cemetery.

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April 24, 2019

C. Finance

Ms. Betts reported that had a meeting with the City for the capital budget and went well. They are very receptive to the 5 million dollars needed to the LMMM.

Ms. Betts asked Mr. Westmoreland to share his findings referent next year budget. Mr. Westmoreland shared that he pulled out the recommended operating budget and found that 68 thousand dollars had been cut from the Historical Commission. This amount is for professional services. He said that it was a mistake and he will meet with BET to fix it.

**OLD BUSINESS**

No old business was discussed this evening.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Betts mentioned that there was a meeting to discuss the potential plan to demolish Columbus School. She sent the following letter to the BOE referring to the proposed demolition of Columbus School:

We have been advised of the option to demolish Columbus School and replace it with a new building, instead of the current plan to rehabilitate the existing building and construct an addition. It is our understanding that the option to demolish and replace the school is at an additional cost of \$1.5M to Norwalk taxpayers.

We strongly urge that the BOE stay with the current plan of rehabilitating the existing building. The 1938 brick structure adds significant historic character to the Chestnut/Concord Street neighborhood that is rapidly being lost through new development and gentrification. While a new building may be slightly more optimal, we have not heard any overwhelming deficiencies that will be addressed by building a new building, especially when it is at a higher cost. It is also hard to believe that any newly-built structure, constructed by the lowest bidder, will be of the same quality as the existing building.

Additionally, the building is eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places, which in turn makes the rehabilitation project eligible for additional reimbursements of up to \$4.5M through the State of Connecticut Historic Tax Credit program, which could result in a total savings of up to \$6M versus construction a new building.

We understand that this is a time-sensitive issue but urge you not to decide on this tonight. The Historical Commission will discuss this issue at its regular monthly meeting, which is scheduled for tomorrow night, Wednesday, April 24, 7 p.m. at the

Town House at Mill Hill Historic Park, 2 East Wall Street. We invite members of the Board of Education to the meeting to participate in the discussion with us.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ms. Betta also handed out a page with pros & cons of the new construction versus renovation of existing building.

After some discussions , Mr. Westmoreland mentioned that BOE may have a lot of recommendations, but the Council will give the final approval. He also noted that there is a sense of urgency on this decision because in order to get the reimbursement from the state whether the current building is rehabilitated or a new building is build , a plan has to be filed by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Central Business District**

Ms. Betta mentioned that she was informed that as an incentive , new floors will be built on top of the old buildings at Wall Street /West Avenue.

There was a brief discussion about it, since not all commissioners had the chance to read the information, this item will be discussed in the next meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MS. CUZZONE MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MR. LIVINGSTON SECONDED.**

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

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marizete Venancio  
Telesco Secretarial Services

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