

**CITY OF NORWALK
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
APRIL 28, 2021
VIA ZOOM**

ATTENDANCE: Dana Laird, Chair; Barry Belardinelli; Eric Chandler; Elizabeth Golden;

Mark Jackson; Lisa Wilson Grant; Thomas Livingston

OTHERS: Patsy Brescia, Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum; Tod Bryant, Norwalk Preservation Trust; Diane Jellerette and David Westmoreland, Norwalk Historical Society

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Laird called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES – MARCH 24, 2021

The following correction was made to the minutes:

Correct the date from February to March.

- ** **MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED**
- ** **MR. BELARDINELLI SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. WILSON GRANT)**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to participate this evening.

REPORTS FROM BOARDS:

A. **NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Ms. Jellerette reported that the Norwalk Museum will open on Wednesday, May 26th with timed admissions and following current CDC guidelines. In addition, tours at Mill Hill will begin on June 5th for self guided tours and June 27th for guided tours.

Ms. Jellerette reported on upcoming events, including a lecture about Nathan Hale and a living history presentation. Mr. Jellerette said she will be working on a fall exhibit at the Town House over the summer.

B. LOCKWOOD – MATHEWS MANSION MUSEUM

Ms. Brescia said it was important to note that Ms. Gilgore, Executive Director of Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum was not invited to this meeting.

Ms. Brescia said she will ask Ms. Gilgore to provide a written update to the Commissioners. Ms. Brescia reported on upcoming events, including the opening of their Turn of the Century Medicine exhibit on April 8th. She said it has gotten a huge response. Tours are open by reservation only. They are following all guidelines.

Ms. Brescia reported that they are planning their usual events, such as the scavenger hunt, gala and tea.

Ms. Brescia said the Mansion was awarded two grants for mechanical upgrades. They expect to move everything out of the Mansion for two years. She noted they will need a lot of support and wisdom to help accomplish this task. She said the work is very intense and detailed. She described the mechanical upgrades.

Mr. Livingston asked where they plan to move. Ms. Brescia explained that with the Mayor's office, they have been looking at locations, but currently, they are doing an inventory of what they have. Many of the items need to be stored in a specific way. Staff will be moving upstairs into the current storage area. Ms. Brescia explained that when the project started in 2008, the Governor visited the Mansion and said it was a \$20 million project; He granted \$5 million and they went to the City for a match and the City awarded them \$2.5 million. Ms. Brescia said they need to find ways to raise money to finish the project. She added that it is a daunting project.

REPORTS:

A. BUILDINGS

Mr. Westmoreland reported that he applied for a \$15,000 grant to update the Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum Historical Register nomination. He said he wants to do this because none of the outbuildings were included in the previous one. This grant was approved by the Common Council and does not require a match. Once those buildings are on the Historical Register, they will be eligible to apply for grants because there is well over \$1 million worth of work needed.

Mr. Westmoreland said that the City finalized the agreement with Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum detailing terms on the \$2.5 million grant. He said that the City approved the project for the last phase of the Jail building. The new fence at Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum is going to be completed next month. A ceremony sponsored by the Department of Transportation will be held. There are some issues with the location of a fire hydrant and sewer line near the Jail. Mr. Westmoreland said he is working with the appropriate departments.

B. CEMETERIES

Ms. Laird reported that Brookside and Kellogg cemeteries need a spring cleaning.

C. FINANCIAL

No financial report was given this evening.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed this evening.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. 132 FLAX HILL ROAD; WORKFORCE PARTNERS

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Livingston left the meeting.

Mr. Bryant shared his screen and provided a history of the home. He also discussed the condition of the home. He described the proposed renovation, noting that Workforce Partners will re-arrange each floor to increase the number of units. The building will have a sprinkler system. They plan to recreate the porch and use an historic color scheme. Currently, there are three units in the building, and they plan to increase that to five. The existing bannisters will be retained. The major changes will be made to the interior and the exterior will be brought back to its original design as much as possible.

Another part of the project will include an ADA ramp and a lift. The existing garage will be removed, which will increase the amount of recreation space.

Ms. Wilson Grant commented that if they want this renovation to be made into historical preservation, the exterior should be made of wood instead of vinyl. She said the renderings and drawings were good, but suggested moving the ADA ramp to the right. She stressed that she did not want to see a vinyl house.

Mr. Bryant explained that currently there is vinyl siding on the house; to bring it back to wood is cost prohibitive. He said that all things considered, they had to make choices to get the project done. Ms. Wilson Grant asked if the porch could be made of wood. Mr. Bryant said it comes down to where they can allocate the funds.

The Commissioners reviewed the plans and asked questions about the design.

**** MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE BEST EFFORT OF WORKFORCE PARTNERS IN THE DESIGN OF 132 FLAX HILL ROAD AND GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE PROPERTY AND THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT; WHILE NOT IDEAL, THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION SEES NO REASON TO BLOCK THIS PROJECT**

**** MR. BELARDINELLI SECONDED**

**** MR. BELARDINELLI; MR. CHANDLER AND MS. LAIRD VOTED IN FAVOR AND MR. JACKSON; MS. WILSON GRANT AND MS. GOLDEN VOTED IN OPPOSITION.**

This item was tabled. The Historical Commission will forward this item to the Zoning Commission.

Mr. Livingston returned to the meeting.

B. DISCUSSION ON EXTENDING DEMOLITION DELAY ORDINANCE FROM 120 DAYS TO 180 DAYS; APPOINT A COMMISSIONER TO ALERT THE COMMISSION ON IMMINENT DEMOLITIONS

With three Board members missing, this item was tabled to next month.

Mr. Westmoreland explained that he and Mr. Bryant had this changed from 90 days to 120 days. He suggested asking the Ordinance Committee to replace the existing 120 days and replace it with 180 days. Mr. Livingston said that the Ordinance Committee would want to see what other communities are doing. Ms. Laird said Norwalk is ahead of the surrounding towns, because they have a 90 day delay. Mr. Livingston said the question will be, what are the surrounding towns doing and why is this delay needed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Chandler mentioned to Ms. Jellerette about grant money from the Smithsonian to film first person narratives for “B” level founding fathers. He will send information to Ms. Jellerette.

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Via Zoom

**** MR. CHANDLER MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MS. WILSON GRANT SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services