

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, December 14, 2022, Regular Meeting, 7:00 PM

Location: Web-based meeting via Zoom

**Chair Trina Learned calls to order the public hearing at 7:04 pm.**

**In attendance:** Laura Brown (City Plan Director), Fatima Cecunjanin (Staff to the Historic District Commission, Planner II), John Ward (Special Counsel to Economic Development), Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair), Susan Godshall (Commissioner), Doug Royalty (Commissioner), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner), Richard Munday (Commissioner), Dylan Christopher (Commissioner), David Valentino (Commissioner), Sarah Tisdale (New Haven Preservation Trust)

**1. Roll Call**

**Chair Learned reviews New Haven's Zoom meeting HDC policies and procedures and the point of New Haven's Local Historic Districts and the Historic District Commission (HDC).**

**2. Public Hearing**

No public hearing items.

**3. Discussion Items**

**3.1 Approve 2023 Calendar**

Ms. Cecunjanin explains that there are a few conflicts with the upcoming calendar for the regular meeting dates. The March meeting falls within the week of Holi, a Hindu holiday, and the April meeting falls within the week of Passover. She has been working on a new calendar, pushing both meetings out by a week. The corrected dates would be March 15<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup>. She also adds that there is an option for taking a month break in August. Chair Learned explains that she is hesitant to take a month break out of respect for the homeowners who are trying to do construction projects. Commissioner Godshall agrees and questions if the new March and April meetings will conflict with City Plan Commission meetings. Ms. Cecunjanin will double check.

**Commissioner Godshall moves to approve the January meeting date and the rest of the calendar will be considered at that meeting with corrected dates.**

**Chair Learned seconds.**

**Chair Learned and Commissioner Christopher will not vote.**

**All in favor at 7:13.**

**Motion passes.**

### **3.2 Election Nominations**

Ms. Brown explains that they met with the mayor's office to discuss and better understand the Commissioners' terms. For some, there is additional research necessary. For those who started in the middle of a term, taking over for someone else's, it means that person's term resets at the new term so as not to have Commissioners all expiring at the same time. Staff will provide more information and update the Commission.

### **3.3 Brewery Square Gatehouse**

Commissioner Godshall explains that in December 2018, a building was demolished at the corner of River and Ferry Streets which caused damage to the gatehouse at the Brewery Square Apartments (National Register and Local Historic District property). The city asked the owners to repair the damage but that did not happen, and they put a tarp on in 2019. The tarp has come loose, and the damaged area is exposed again. She was wondering if there was a tool to use to get a permanent solution to the problem. Her and Ms. Tisdale brought it to the attention of the State Historic Preservation Office, and they were concerned about the potential for further demolition should the situation deteriorate. Chair Learned asks what the role of the Commission would be. Commissioner Godshall replies that she is asking who has the role of enforcement. She adds that the owner is not the owner of the apartment building. Mr. Ward replies that demolition by neglect is a concern because then the building department has to take it down if it is dangerous. There are mechanisms for fining but ultimately preventing demolition by neglect would need to be looked into. Ms. Brown adds that there would need to be clarity on what ordinance is being violated in this situation. Ms. Jenkins lives at Brewery Square and does not think the deterioration is as bad as photos that were shown. She says that Shoreline Corporation

owns the property, and she has talked to them about using the building for bike storage. Commissioner Godshall says that Shoreline Corporation is the property manager of the apartments but not the owner of the small building. Commissioner Jenkins thinks jumping to enforcement seems to be drastic. Mr. Ward clarifies that he is talking about the larger issue of demolition by neglect, not this particular building because he does not know all the facts yet. He thinks the process would start with the building department though. Commissioner Godshall replies that if four-year-old damage existed to a National Register building on the Green, someone would know what to do. Ms. Brown suggests taking more updated photos to forward to Living City Initiative or the Building Department. Chair Learned summarizes that what is in question is the process and who steps up. Commissioner Jenkins repeats her suggestion about contacting Shoreline Corporation about it. Commissioner Godshall thinks that if they haven't fixed it in four years, she is unsure why they would now, but there is no harm in meeting. Commissioner Christopher agrees with Chair Learned that the methodology needs to be explained for demolition by neglect. Commissioner Jenkins clarifies that she is not arguing against the point of deterioration of the gatehouse, but it seems that they could make a call to the Corporation while also pursuing out the methodology of how to enforce against demolition by neglect. Commissioner Munday asks under what auspices would the Commission write a letter and to whom would they direct the question. Chair Learned agrees that this would not be a Commission act. Commissioner Royalty agrees with Commissioner Jenkins but there is an unfortunate precedent, so it is worth raising an alarm if there is deterioration. He suggests a regular report from New Haven Preservation Trust about threatened properties to keep the Commission informed as it seems they are one of the last to be informed. Chair Learned responds to Commissioner Jenkins that she should not contact them as a Commission member but could as a citizen. Commissioner Godshall feels that level of communication would not rise to the level needed. Mr. Ward will research more into the situation. Chair Learned asks that he also look into buildings that are in all designated districts as well.

#### **4. Minutes**

##### **4.1 Approval of November 9, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

**Commissioner Godshall makes a motion to approve minutes.**

**Commissioner Valentino seconds.**

**Commissioners Godshall and Munday will not vote.**

**All in favor at 7:52.**

**Motion passes.**

**5. New Business**

Commissioner Valentino asks about the information provided to him by former Commissioner Kimberly because it seems outdated and wonders if there is additional material available. Chair Learned replies that there have been efforts for advocacy and education. Ms. Tisdale adds that people can be directed to the New Haven Preservation Trust for information as well. Commissioner Jenkins raises that information for new Commissioners and continuing information for Commissioners would be helpful as well as education for the constituents. Commissioner Valentino says that the owners of 67 Howard Avenue are doing extensive renovations so he would like to be informed. Chair Learned advises him to call the building department. Commissioner Valentino offers to put together information and Ms. Cencunjanin also says it is on her list of things to do. Commissioner Jenkins also would like to participate.

**Commissioner Valentino makes a motion to adjourn.**

**Commissioner Christopher seconds.**

**All in favor at 8:10.**

**Motion Passes.**

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder.