

MEETING MINUTES
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

March 8, 2023

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission meeting was held remotely in a Zoom meeting.

Chairman Rosenberry called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm. On behalf of Secretary Galvin, he welcomed the Commissioners. Chairman Rosenberry next addressed the audience, thanking them for attending. For those individuals who may not have attended commission meetings in the past, Chairman Rosenberry explained the structure of the meeting and when in the process the public could address the commission. Chairman Rosenberry then took attendance to determine that a quorum was met.

The Chairman turned to the first item on the agenda, the **approval of the February 8, 2023 meeting minutes**. He called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the minutes. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. Hearing no questions or comments, the chair moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the National Register nominations, and asked for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Ben Haley, National Register Director. Mr. Haley presented the nominations with presentation slides. A copy of the slides is on file with these minutes.

The first nomination presented was for the **American Optical Company Historic District in Southbridge**. The applicant is the Southbridge Associates II LLC with Ryan LLC, preservation consultants who prepared the nomination. The nomination is being pursued as part of federal rehabilitation tax credit project.

The American Optical Company Historic District is located in the northeast part of Southbridge. The district is located on an 81-acre site on the banks of the Quinebaug River bounded by dense forest to the east and south, and by early 20th-century residential neighborhoods to the north and west. The district includes 17 contributing buildings, 8 contributing structures (a pump house, three footbridges, two vehicular bridges, a dam, and a gate house), 1 contributing site (Lensdale Pond), and 2 non-contributing buildings. The contributing buildings range in construction date from 1888 to 1965.

The terrain of the district slopes upward to the east to form a hill with rocky outcroppings, with several buildings built into the slope. Near the center of the complex is Lensdale Pond. The American Optical Company constructed buildings on both sides of the river and pond (and on an island at the southern end of the pond) with foot and vehicular bridges connecting the buildings across the campus.

The 17 buildings that contribute to the district are of brick, steel, or reinforced-concrete construction. They are predominantly standalone structures, although several are connected by footbridges or subterranean concrete tunnels used to run electrical conduits from the Power Plant. These buildings were used in the research, manufacture, and assembly of numerous types of optical products, including eyeglass lenses, frames, cases, safety goggles, and ophthalmic and scientific equipment.

The district meets Criterion A in the area of Industry with significance at the state and local levels for the American Optical Company's leading role as an innovative developer of influential optical products and machinery. Beginning with the manufacturing of eyeglass frames and progressing to the production of their own lenses, protective eyewear, ophthalmological equipment, contact lenses, Polaroid cameras, binoculars, and other products, the company was the largest optics manufacturer with the most diversified and innovative product line in Massachusetts.

The district also meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture with significance at the local level as the largest and most intact industrial complex in Southbridge that displays a wide array of architectural styles, construction methods, and materials that reflect the evolution of industrial architecture in the United States over the course of nearly a century. Architectural styles range from Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival to International Style and a stylistic utilitarian exteriors, while structurally the buildings showcase 19th-century timber-frame and load-bearing brick masonry construction as well as steel and reinforced-concrete framing that came to dominate 20th-century design. Some of the buildings are typical of the period in which they were built while others were innovative.

The period of significance for the district begins in 1888, with the construction of the oldest extant building in the complex, and ends in 1967, when American Optical Company merged with Warner-Lambert Pharmaceutical Company, initiating a gradual removal of American Optical Company manufacturing from the complex.

As noted, the buildings reflect a variety of architectural styles and methods of construction:

The **Main Works Building** was designed in the Romanesque Revival style and exhibits many of the style's hallmarks, including an overall solid and weighty massing, decorative brickwork in the form of corbelling, polychromatic patterning, and castellation, and the use of towers and round arches. The choice was not only popular for its day but was also in keeping with the American Optical Company's new emphasis on "strength and permanency."

The **Grinding Plant**, completed in 1901 and expanded in 1907 and 1944, was the first building in the district to use steel framing and concrete floors.

The three-story **Print Shop** was completed in 1908 and is another example of early steel-frame construction in the district

The **Lensdale Building** and the **Power Plant**, both completed in 1910, are the first examples in the district of reinforced-concrete framing. The Power Plant reflects the Classical Revival Style.

The **Warehouse** is the first example in the complex of an International Style industrial building. Completed in 1949, it is of steel-frame and reinforced-concrete construction

Southbridge was the center of Massachusetts' optical industry for a century—it was known as “the Eye of the Commonwealth” for its prolific number of optical companies. The American Optical Company was the oldest and largest continuously operating optics manufacturer in Massachusetts. It was founded in 1868 by Robert H. Cole (1818-1900), and George W. Wells (1846-1912).

Apart from its age and size, the innovations of the company and its wide array of optical products set it apart from its competitors in Southbridge and the state.

The company originally produced metal eyeglass frames for imported European lenses and expanded to manufacture eyeglasses with its own lenses and numerous other optical products and machinery as demand came from other fields, from the practice of medicine to protective needs at steel foundries.

The company were innovators in technologies, manufacturing processes, and products which greatly influenced the optics industry as a whole. George W. Wells invented many of the industry's first and widely adopted eyeglass machines and methods of production. Some important products were:

Rimless eyeglass (1874)

Toric lenses for the correction of astigmatism (1893)

The first pair of safety goggles for the industrial worker (1909)

First supplier of goggles to US military pilots (1914)

Fulvue eyeglass frames which moved the arms or temples of the eyeglasses from the middle of the lens to the top of the frame, revolutionizing the style of eyeglasses (1930s)

Renowned scientists on staff developed important ophthalmology devices that vastly improved the precision of prescription lenses. Two scientists were particularly instrumental in advancing the optical industry while working for the American Optical Company. One was top industry scientist Dr. Edgar Tillyer, hired in 1916 as director of research at the Southbridge plant. The other was mathematician and astronomer, Dr. Anna Estelle Glancy, who was hired in 1918 to work with Dr. Tillyer on lens calculations. During her career, Dr. Glancy was the only female scientist in the field of eyewear lens design. Both Tillyer and Glancy generated several patents over their long tenures at the company. Two of their important contributions were:

The Lensometer - a revolutionary ophthalmological device that made it possible to precisely measure a lens's effective power and thereby provide improved prescriptions (1921)

Tillyer Lenses –first lenses to have a curve, which enabled the most precise prescription to that point (1925)

The buildings on the campus are in varying stages of occupation. Several have been or will be rehabilitated using historic tax credits.

The Main Works Building has served as a conference center since 2001;

The Power Plant was rehabbed for continued use as a power plant in 2020 using historic tax credits;

The Molding Room was rehabbed in 2022 for office use using historic tax credits;

The Glass Plant did not use the tax credit but was rehabbed in 2022 for light industrial use;

The Casedale Building was rehabilitated in 2022 for use as low-income housing;

The Grinding Plant is planned for rehabilitation for residential use with the Shipping House and Cold Storage Building functioning as a leasing office and vestibule;

The Frame Plant is planned for rehabilitation for industrial tenants.

The next nomination presented was for the **Mary E Wells School in Southbridge**. The applicant is the Wells School Limited Partnership with Ryan LLC as the preservation consultants who prepared the nomination. The nomination being pursued as part of a federal rehabilitation tax credit project.

The Mary E. Wells School is a Classical Revival-style former school building located at 80 Marcy Street in Southbridge, MA. Constructed in 1916 with additions made in 1921, 1923, and 1985, the building was the town's first dedicated high school. The building is situated on a roughly 5-acre, L-shaped lot at the northwest corner of Main and Marcy streets, about a quarter-mile northwest of the Downtown Southbridge Historic District

The Mary E. Wells School functioned as a high school through the 1960–1961 school year. Following construction of a new high school, the building served as the town's junior high school from 1962 until it closed in 2011. Between 2020 and 2022, school was converted to 62 apartments for residents ages 55 and older using state and federal historic tax credits.

The Mary E. Wells School meets Criterion A in the area of Education as the linchpin of the modern school system in Southbridge. When it was constructed, it represented the town's ambition to provide both general and vocational education to students in the upper grades, as well as evening educational opportunities for immigrants. Its expansion in the 1920s reflected the growth of the town as local industries flourished and attracted new residents, expanded course offerings, and also a continuous struggle to provide adequate academic buildings across the town school system.

The building also meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture with a local level of significance as an influential public school design that impacted new public school buildings constructed in

Southbridge through the mid-20th century. It is the only public school building designed by a nationally recognized architectural firm in Southbridge, the distinguished firm of Peabody & Stearns, and was the first public building in town to adopt the Classical Revival architectural style.

The period of significance for the Mary E. Wells School is 1916–1973, reflecting its continuous use by the town of Southbridge as a school building.

The town of Southbridge sought to construct a noteworthy building that not only met the needs of the town but would also be a source of pride. They selected the Boston architectural firm Peabody & Stearns for their prominence. They also had the site reviewed by acclaimed landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and followed his suggestion to orient the building to Marcy Street.

Limited funding resulted in some modifications to the original design, including inverting the plan, as constructing an auditorium was not viable as part of the initial construction, and paring back some architectural embellishments like the bell towers.

The School was named for Mary E. Wells, widow of George W. Wells, (one of the founders of the American Optical Company in Southbridge), and an active advocate for the public schools. Mary Wells funded an auditorium addition which was delayed until 1921 due to World War I.

The school received another addition in 1923 to accommodate the growing student body, more space for vocational classrooms, and overflow from grammar schools. This was designed by the successor firm to Peabody & Stearns, Appleton & Stearns.

The school was the first educational building in Southbridge to adopt modern principles of school design in outward appearance and plan, serving as a model for later public school buildings in the town. In its interior layout, the building was larger than any previously built public school building in town and was the first to incorporate learning spaces other than traditional classrooms, such as vocational and domestic science classrooms, an auditorium, and a gymnasium. These design attributes became a model for new public school buildings constructed in Southbridge through the mid-20th century.

As the largest and most modern school building in a town, Southbridge relied heavily on the Wells School as a stop-gap for its inadequate school buildings for lower grades for decades. The town began building more modern grammar schools modeled on the Wells School in the 1930s with Federal aid. A new vocational school was constructed with private funds in 1927, and a new high school was constructed in 1961, at which point the Wells School transitioned in use to a junior high school.

After nearly a century of growth, the town population remained steady from the 1950s until the 1980s. A spike in growth between 1980 and 1990 resulted in more demand, and a new addition to the Wells school by Ramon Hovsepian Associates Inc. in 1985.

Following the 1985 expansion and renovation, the building continued to function as Southbridge's Junior High School for another quarter-century. In 2010, the town initiated a

study to replace the Wells School and the Cole Trade School/1961 High School with a new building that would combine the junior and senior high schools again. Each of the existing buildings faced deferred maintenance issues and their respective locations were deemed problematic for safely dropping off and picking up students and having limited outdoor space. A new combined Junior-Senior High School building was constructed outside the downtown area in 2012 and following that the Wells School was closed.

The conversion of the Mary E. Wells School to residential units using state and federal historic tax credits was completed in 2022.

The next nomination presented was for the **Elias Brookings School in Springfield**. The applicant is HC Brookings LLC with Epsilon, preservation consultants. The nomination being pursued as part of federal rehabilitation tax credit project. MHC received a letter of support from the Springfield Historical Commission and the property owner.

The Elias Brookings School is located at 367 Hancock Street in the Six Corners neighborhood of Springfield in Hampden County. Constructed between 1924 and 1926, the Collegiate Gothic school building is set on a 1.8 acre parcel of land on the east side of Hancock Street.

The main block of the school is approximately rectangular in plan with a gymnasium block extending to the east from the north end of the rear (east) elevation, forming an L-shaped footprint. The Brookings School is located in a primarily residential neighborhood, generally characterized by wood-frame dwellings from the mid-19th to early 20th century.

Constructed during Springfield's third wave of public school construction in the 1920s, the Brookings School contributes to the historic fabric and architectural character of Springfield. The building served as a public elementary school for the City of Springfield and remained in continued use by the City until 2011. Recently rehabilitated, today the building retains its historic integrity. The period of significance is 1924 to 1926, the years in which the building was planned and constructed.

The Brookings School meets National Register Criterion A in the area of Community Planning & Development for its association with broad patterns of development in Springfield, specifically the City of Springfield's third wave of public school construction, which was initiated in the 1920s to replace antiquated and small school buildings which did not accommodate a growing school-age population. The building also satisfies Criterion C as a locally significant and rare example of the Collegiate Gothic style of architecture utilized for a public school building.

The Elias Brookings School was constructed during a period of economic prosperity in the City of Springfield and an associated rapid growth in the number of school-aged children. Anticipating continued growth into the mid-20th century, in the early 1920s the Springfield School Board adopted a policy which mandated that all new elementary school buildings feature at least 20 classrooms. The first and only elementary school in Springfield to be constructed during the third wave which exceeded this requirement, the Brookings School was designed with 24 classrooms, a large kindergarten, and various other specialty rooms and offices, bringing it up

to modern standards. The school replaced the ca. 1890 Alden Street Elementary School, which had been identified by the School Board as overcrowded and antiquated.

At the time of its construction, the Brookings School was the largest elementary school in the city in both number of classrooms and number of desks, reflecting Springfield's vision of continued population growth and the local emphasis on education.

Additionally, the school featured an attached gymnasium wing and was specifically sited next to the Ruth Elizabeth Park, created a few years earlier in 1922. These actions on behalf of the School Board demonstrated their compliance with the new physical education requirements enacted in Massachusetts in 1921, as well as their understanding of the value of play and physical activity as part of a progressive education.

The Elias Brookings School is the work of local architect Morris William Maloney, a Springfield native who specialized in the design of school buildings in western Massachusetts from the 1920s through the mid-20th century. The building is designed in the Collegiate Gothic style popular among schools and universities, both public and private, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but is rare within Springfield. The Elias Brookings School is, in fact, the only example of a public school building in this popular style in Springfield. The building is also only one of six documented buildings of any use type in the city in this style, making it an important local example of a nationally significant architectural movement.

Like the Neo Gothic Revival from which the style is derived, the Collegiate Gothic was inspired by medieval architecture, and while this is a relatively utilitarian building, elements of the style are evident on the exterior in the oriel windows and details around the entryway.

The Brookings School was actively used as a public school from its opening in 1926 until 2011. On June 1, 2011 the school was damaged by a historic tornado which damaged or destroyed numerous buildings in Western Massachusetts. Extensive areas of the brick roof parapet were dislodged and removed, portions of roofing were damaged or lost, and many windows were entirely blown out. The building remained vacant for the following decade. In 2018 the property was sold to HC Brookings LLC, an affiliate of Home City Development, Inc. and the building subsequently underwent a certified rehabilitation in 2021-2022 to adapt the school building for residential use. The rehabilitation created 42 units of affordable housing.

Character-defining features, including wide corridors with terrazzo flooring, glazed brick dados, and figural tiles depicting monks, were retained.

Historic wood chalkboards were salvaged and reinstalled within the new residential units, which are situated within former classrooms. The historic double-height gymnasium, which historically was also used as an auditorium, was preserved for use as a community space.

On the exterior, masonry was sensitively repaired, repointed and cleaned. The replacement windows installed in 1975 were removed and replaced with aluminum-clad wood windows consistent with the original configurations as shown on historic plans. The oriel windows at the end bay pavilions at the façade, removed in the 1975 renovation, were reintroduced based on historic images and plans.

This concluded the presentation of the March National Register nominations. Chairman Rosenberry thanked Mr. Haley. He asked whether any commissioners needed to recuse themselves from voting on any of the nominations. Hearing none, he proceeded with the voting.

Chairman Rosenberry called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendation that the nomination for the **American Optical Company Historic District in Southbridge** be forwarded to the National Park Service for final review. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The Chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendation that the nomination for the **Mary E. Wells School in Southbridge** be forwarded to the National Park Service for final review. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner Ceccacci. The Chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendation that the nomination for the **Elias Brookings School in Springfield** be forwarded to the National Park Service for final review. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The Chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. He recognized Commissioner DeWitt who said that he commended what he had seen in the nomination and the presentation, including the preservation of the gymnasium as a space and the reconstruction of the oriel windows. It seems a particularly good rehabilitation project. The Chairman called for any further questions or comments from the Commission. Hearing none, the Chairman called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the National Register portion of the agenda.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the Local Historic District Preliminary Study Reports, first calling for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Jennifer Doherty, Local Government Programs Coordinator. Ms. Doherty presented the study reports with a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the presentation is on file with these minutes.

Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo Campus, (Roxbury) Boston

Ms. Doherty first presented the **Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo Campus in Boston**. The petition for this landmark designation was accepted by the Boston Landmarks Commission on April 13, 2021.

Located in Roxbury, the Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo campus is comprised of three parcels on Otisfield Street, two with buildings and one a vacant lot at the corner of Blue Hill Ave.

The immediate neighborhood of the campus on Otisfield Street is solely residential buildings, late 19th and early 20th century two-family dwellings that have seen maintenance alterations such as vinyl siding and windows but that largely retain their original forms. Blue Hill Ave. is a neighborhood commercial corridor with three and four story brick buildings forming a street wall. The area is a mix of commercial and residential uses, and a mix of building ages, from the late 19th century to modern construction.

There are several smaller National Register of Historic Places districts in the immediate area. To the west is the Elm Hill Park district, listed in 2021, and the Crawford Street district, listed in 2020. To the east, across Blue Hill Ave., is the Intervale Street-Blue Hill Ave. district, listed in 2020, and the Lawrence Avenue district, listed in 2021. A few blocks south on Blue Hill Ave., the Congregation Adath Jeshurun synagogue was individually listed on the National Register in 1999.

Further to the southwest is Franklin Park, listed on the National Register in 1971 as part of the Olmsted Emerald Necklace park system and designated a local landmark in 1980.

The campus is comprised of two buildings, the synagogue and church building, and the school building. A vacant lot to the south of the campus was the site of a historic hall that was demolished in 1971; it is now owned by the church.

The synagogue was designed by architect Albert J. Carpenter and constructed by contractor Clarence H. Waldman in 1915-1916. A native of Attleboro, Carpenter was a prolific Boston-based architect with about 30 entries in MACRIS, most of them public buildings in Boston and Brookline from the first half of the 20th century. 15 of them are listed in the National Register.

The synagogue sits on an elevated basement with a main floor and balcony level above. It is a simple design executed in brick, with ivory-colored bricks used to accent the slightly-projecting side bays and a large arch encompassing the center three bays. The first and second floors are separated by a cast stone water table with a cast stone panel above featuring Stars of David and rough blocks that may be covering other lettering or images. The abrupt termination of the building at the upper story and repairs to the brick in that area may indicate a missing parapet. The sides and rear of the building are simple brick with a regular fenestration pattern. Small, one-story flat-roofed vestibules located to either side of the façade provide entry to the building. They are accented by cast stone surrounds. There has been some failure of the face bricks and concrete blocks of the basement on the façade in recent years, leading to the current plywood and 2x4s shoring up the façade.

The synagogue/church building is connected to the school building to the north by a one-story gate of cast stone. The gate covers the vestibule entries for both buildings and provides entry into an open courtyard between the two buildings.

Also designed by Albert J. Carpenter and constructed between 1921 and 1923, the school building is a three-story rectangular building with a flat roof and little ornament. A water table of cast stone circles the building above the basement, while another band of cast stone runs between the first and second floors. This features Stars of David, the building's Jewish year of

construction 5682, and rough blocks that may be covering other lettering or designs. The second and third story windows on the façade feature Classical caps in cast stone; the windows on the side elevations have segmental-arched openings.

The building housed offices, libraries, and a recreation room in the basement and first floor, and classrooms on the upper two floors. An article in *The Jewish Advocate* reporting on the school's opening and dedication declared it the largest Hebrew school in the country at that time.

The initial Jewish congregation to move into this area of Roxbury and Dorchester was Congregation Adath Jeshurun, which moved out of the North End in 1894 and worshipped in several other buildings before constructing their own synagogue on Blue Hill Ave. in 1906. That same year, a group of congregants who wanted to pursue a more Orthodox form of worship left the congregation and, under the leadership of Simon Cabelinsky, established Congregation Shara Tfilo. The congregation acquired the lots on Otisfield Street in the 1910s and 1920s, constructing their synagogue in 1915. The Roxbury Hebrew School was organized in 1918 and was the first such school in this part of the city, with the congregation opening the school building in 1923.

Through the first half of the 20th century the neighborhood retained its Jewish population, primarily immigrants from Russia but later also those from Poland, Romania, and others parts of Europe.

The records of Shara Tfilo have not been found, and the names of its rabbis are only known through the 1930s. Founder and major support Simon Cabelinsky died in 1938, and that combined with the changing population of the neighborhood may have accelerated the congregation's decline.

During and after World War II, many of the neighborhood's Jewish residents migrated out to West Roxbury, Mattapan, Brookline, and Newton, with Black and African American residents taking their place.

In 1961, Congregation Shara Tfilo disbanded and sold their synagogue and school properties to the Mt. Calvary Holy Church, an African-American Pentecostal church. The church was founded by Bishop Brumfield Johnson in North Carolina in 1929; the church chartered a congregation in Boston that same year, along with others in New Jersey and New York. The church grew rapidly, and after a fire destroyed its Buffalo, New York national headquarters, it was moved to Boston in 1960. With the purchase of the Shara Tfilo properties in 1961, national convocations were held here until 1990.

The Boston church was strongly identified with Bishop Nellie Yarborough, who joined the church administration at the age of 17 and was named assistant pastor in Boston in 1962, becoming its senior pastor ten years later. She became the second woman to be ordained a bishop in the church in 1994. She founded a popular food kitchen at the church in 1962 and was principal of the Dr. Brumfield Johnson Christian Academy, which operated out of the former Hebrew School building. The intersection of Otisfield Street and Blue Hill Avenue south of the campus was designated Bishop Nellie Yarborough Square by Mayor Menino in 2011, a year before her death.

Although the local congregation is still active, the national church closed the church building to worship and gatherings in 2013. There has been ongoing conflict between the local congregation and the national church over the future of the site.

Because of its association with two significant minority groups in the 20th century development of Roxbury; its architectural significance as a smaller, more vernacular synagogue; and its association with Bishop Nellie Yarborough, a prominent Black, female religious and community leader, BLC staff recommends that the Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo Campus be designated as a Boston Landmark.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Landmark Study Report for the Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo Campus and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission concurs with the recommendations of the Boston Landmarks Commission staff.

Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District Expansion, Uxbridge

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District Expansion in Uxbridge**. The Town of Uxbridge is proposing to expand their Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District, initially established in 2004.

The proposed expansion would extend the district out of Uxbridge Center in three main areas. The first is along North Main Street encompassing approximately 31 properties. The second is north of the district along Capron Street, adding approximately 19 properties. This section would split a large lot at the end of Capron Street that includes both an historic school building, which would be added to the district, and a modern school building, which would be excluded from the district. And then finally the district would be expanded east along Mendon Street, encompassing approximately 40 properties and spanning the Blackstone River.

There are several other designated properties in the immediate area of Uxbridge Center. Many properties in the area were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in the 1980s as part of Uxbridge's Multiple Resource Area listing. Several districts listed under the MRA include the Uxbridge Common District on North Main Street, the Rivulet Mill Complex in North Uxbridge, the Wheelockville District encompassing some of the expansion properties to the east, and further east, the demolished Waucantuck Mill Complex. There are also several individual properties listed under the MRA.

Uxbridge Center is cut north to south by the Blackstone River and canal, with the Uxbridge portion of the canal, noted as especially well-preserved, initially listed on the National Register in 1973, and the full length of the canal in Massachusetts listed separately in 1995.

There is one property in the area with a Preservation Restriction, the Cornet John Farnum House. It is part of the existing local historic district and was listed on the National Register individually in 1980. The property received Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund monies in 2020 and the Preservation Restriction is held by the MHC.

The areas surrounding the Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District are typical for the outskirts of a farming and mill village. Houses trail off along the main arteries of North and South Main, Douglas, and Mendon streets. Most of the historic commercial and institutional buildings are already included in the local historic district, with limited activity of this kind outside of the established district. Houses outside of the district display a wide range of styles and forms, from small early 19th century worker housing to modern single-family dwellings.

The district expansion areas were chosen to end at natural breaks, such as a large modern shopping mall on North Main Street, the end of Capron Street with its modern school building, and new construction to the east on Mendon Street.

The vast majority of the buildings proposed for addition to the district are houses. There is a wide variety of ages, forms, and styles displayed, including late 18th and early 19th century farmhouses, mid-19th century multi-family housing associated with the mills, and limited 20th century construction. There is almost no infill construction in the expansion area. Most of the buildings have some maintenance alterations, such as replacement siding or windows, but the overall form and streetscape of the neighborhoods is still intact.

There are a few non-residential buildings in the expansion area. These include the large Central, later Stanley, Woolen Mill complex west of the Blackstone on Mendon Street, and the Polish American Club east of the Blackstone. The woolen mill is composed of several buildings most of which were constructed in the late 19th century. The Polish American Club is a fairly utilitarian structure built in 1936 with some Colonial Revival details such as a broken pediment over the main entrance and full cornice returns across the gable ends.

At the northern end of Capron Street is the former Uxbridge High School and Veterans Memorial Gymnasium. The high school was constructed in 1936 to Art Deco-style designs by the firm of S. W. Haynes & Associates of Fitchburg. The firm has one other entry in MACRIS, for a school in Otis. The gymnasium, more Classical Revival in style with some Art Deco elements, was added to the complex in 1952 and was designed by George H. Sidebottom. He has 11 commissions in MACRIS, a mix of private residences, schools, and churches from the first three quarters of the 20th century.

The building was closed at the start of the 2018-2019 school year and has sat vacant since then. The Town has no immediate plans for the site.

Well-drained by three rivers, the Mumford, Blackstone, and West, this area of Uxbridge Center was the location of the Nipmuc village Waentuck during the precontact and contact periods. The village likely served as a basecamp for hunting and gathering expeditions with some fishing occurring along the three rivers. In the mid-1600s it was a Nipmuc “praying Indian” village.

European settlement developed through the 18th century and was primarily focused on agriculture, but by the 1810s several mills were developed along the three rivers, including the Capron mills, located in the existing district, and the Wheelockville mills, now demolished but originally located east of the proposed expansion area. The Capron Mill was the first in North America to use power looms to weave whole cloth; previous mills had spun thread but sent it out

to home shops to be woven into cloth. By 1830, Uxbridge had eight cotton and woolen mills as well as several other associated industries. Many of the mills were owned and operated by Uxbridge natives, rather than outside investors. The mills flourished through the Civil War period, when it is said the Central Woolen mill, in the expansion area, operated 24 hours a day making cloth for uniforms.

The opening of the Blackstone Canal in 1828 further connected the growing manufacturing community to the markets in Worcester and Providence, with Worcester providing machines and tools and Providence providing a market to sell finished goods. The canal closed and was supplanted by the Providence & Worcester Railroad in 1848.

The mills in the community continued in operation through the 20th century, with peaks in production experienced during both World Wars. However, towards the end of the century they began to close down, and several have been lost to fire or demolition. In the proposed expansion area, the Stanley Woolen Mill closed in 1989, and has been partially redeveloped with retail spaces.

The Uxbridge Historic District Commission did pursue a similar expansion in 2018, which this commission provided a vote of support for. However, the expansion ultimately failed at Town Meeting. The HDC believes they have addressed earlier concerns and have more support in the community this time around.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the expansion of the Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the Town of Uxbridge to expand the Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Landmark Study Report for the **Mt. Calvary/Shara Tfilo Campus in Boston (Roxbury)**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Ceccacci. The Chair called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The Chair then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Uxbridge Common and Center Historic District Expansion in Uxbridge**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. The Chair then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting. Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, **FY23 Survey and Planning Grant Awards**, and recognized Michael Steinitz, Preservation Planning Division Director.

Chairman Rosenberry turned to the next item on the agenda, the presentation of the **FY23 Survey & Planning Grant applications**. The chairman first called for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to the Director of the Preservation Planning Division, Michael Steinitz. Mr. Steinitz noted that the commissioners had before them a spreadsheet with the subcommittee's recommendations. A copy of this spreadsheet is on file with these minutes. Mr. Steinitz next thanked the Survey and Planning Subcommittee commissioners DeWitt, McDowell and Wilson for meeting with staff before the commission meeting to review the applications for the FY23 grant round.

Each year MHC passes through a portion of its annual federal budget to eligible applicants through matching grants from its Survey and Planning grants program. Projects that receive grant funding include for example historic properties surveys, National Register nominations, communitywide preservation plans, and development of design guidelines, professional staff support, and other sorts of planning and public education activities. It's a 50-50 matching reimbursement grant program. At its December meeting the Commission voted to invite 17 projects to submit full applications. Fifteen of the 17 invited projects submitted full applications.

Under the requirements of our federal funding agreement with the National Park Service, MHC is required to pass through 10 percent of its annual federal funding to Certified Local Governments (CLGs), which for FY23 comes to about \$116,000. As staff noted in December this grant round was open both to the 28 Certified Local Government (CLG) municipalities and to non-CLG applicants.

MHC received full applications from 5 Certified Local Governments and 10 non-CLGs. The 15 projects include as usual mostly communitywide or targeted surveys, but also a handful of other sorts of preservation planning projects. The total request for the 15 projects is for \$300,750.

Based on its review of the proposed projects, staff has made recommendations to the subcommittee on awards. Mr. Steinitz then turned to Commissioner Wilson who presented the subcommittee report and findings.

Commissioner Wilson reported that the Survey and Planning Grants subcommittee reviewed closely with the staff the full applications submitted. Of the 15 proposed projects received, there were 9 survey projects, 1 landscape rehabilitation plan (allowed for CLG applicants) in Easton, 1 survey plan, and 4 preservation plans. The projects include the continuation of projects that have been ongoing for a number of years, including for example the survey work in Marblehead, but some are from new communities, particularly in this round from western Massachusetts, including the towns of Irving, Orange and Greenfield, which had done work in previous decades, where this is an opportunity to restart preservation work. This is much due to the outreach work of Jenn Doherty and other MHC staff to bring in work from the western part of the state. It was noted that there is still concern about the availability of enough consultants to undertake work on these projects, and outreach by MHC staff, for example to consultants in nearby states, is

ongoing. Some changes by NPS allowing projects to extend over 3 years may provide more of an opportunity for consultants to respond to rfqs for these projects. All the proposed projects have matching funds in place or pending approval at spring town meeting, all recommended are recommended at the amount requested, and the CLG pass-through requirement has been met.

So on behalf of subcommittee, including members DeWitt and McDowell, the subcommittee agrees with the staff's recommendations for awarding grants to all of the proposed Certified Local Government applications and all but one of the non- CLG projects, the one non-recommended project application being North Andover. With that Commissioner Wilson concluded his report.

Chairman Rosenberry thanked Commissioner Wilson, Mr. Steinitz, and the members of the subcommittee, and then began the voting process for awarding CLG projects, calling for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$38,000 to the **Boston Landmarks Commission** for the **East Boston Survey Update Phase I**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner Early. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$15,000 to the **Dedham Planning & Zoning Department** for the **Building Form Updates for Old Town Center**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Ceccacci. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$30,000 to the **Town of Easton Department of Planning & Economic Development** for the **Town Hall Historic Landscape Rehabilitation Plan**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner McDowell. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$20,000 to the **Marblehead Historic Commission** for the **Preston Beach & Clifton Neighborhoods Survey**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kleespies and SECONDED by Commissioner Friary. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry next called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$20,000 to the **Nantucket Historic Commission** for the **Nantucket Community-Wide Survey – Phase 3**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilson and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry, turning to the Non-CLG projects, then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$10,000 to the **Billerica Department of Planning & Community Development** for the **Billerica Historic Resources Survey Plan**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$25,000 to the **Concord Planning Division** for the **Concord Historic Preservation Plan**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Early and SECONDED by Commissioner Kish. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$20,000 to the **Erving Department of Community Planning** for the **Historic Properties Survey**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Ceccacci. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to accept the MHC staff recommendation to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$20,000 to the **Greenfield Department of Planning & Development – Greenfield Historic Commission** for the **Cultural and Architectural Resources Inventory Update**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner McDowell. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry next called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$15,000 to the **Mattapoisett Historical Commission** for the **Historic Properties Survey**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$15,000 to the **Orange Office of Community Development** for the **Historic Properties Survey Update**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Kleespies. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$17,500 to the **Stoneham Historical Commission** for the **Stoneham Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Early. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$20,000 to the **Department of Community Development & Planning – Watertown Historic Commission** for the **Southside Neighborhood Survey**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Pride and SECONDED by Commissioner Sullivan. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION to award a Survey and Planning grant in the amount of \$12,500 to the **Town of Webster** for the **Webster Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Ceccacci and SECONDED by Commissioner Friary. There being no discussion, the motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting. Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the **Executive Director's Report**. He then recognized Brona Simon, Executive Director.

Ms. Simon began by announcing that the MHC staff is currently working on our annual Work Program for FY23, required as condition of MHC's federal funding, as well as writing a new, five-year State Historic Preservation Plan. The plan will replace the current plan, which extended from 2018 – 2022. She informed the commissioners that the current plan is available on MHC's website in pdf form.

She reported the National Park Services requires all SHPO offices to develop a five-year plan, and to coordinate with the goals in the plan in each Annual Work program. The new State Plan is due to the National Park Service by June 30, 2023, and is principally being prepared by Jenn Doherty, who has publicized the Plan for public comment. She noted one new aspect of the five-year plan, as well as the annual work program, is the problem of climate change, sea level rise, and response to disastrous storms and flooding. Jenn is participating in several agencies' efforts to plan for climate change and flooding, including Massachusetts COSTEP, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the City of Boston, the Army Corps of Engineers, and FEMA, among others. The five-year plan and annual work program will include goals of planning for responses to climate change and flood damage.

Ms. Simon next reported that the National Park Service has published a new Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Historic Buildings. She offered to provide hard copies or a link to this the commissioners or a link to a digital version online. The booklet is very well thought out with illustrated recommendations, for example, on raising buildings in floodplains. Ms. Simon noted that one of the recommendation in the MHC plan will be to encourage communities that have flood zones to continue to do survey updates for historic properties located in these most critical areas. Following Hurricane Sandy, the MHC received federal funding to survey properties in the counties affected by the storm, but this did not include all the historic properties in these areas.

Ms. Simon also noted the National Park Service's 2022 Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit annual report is out. She mentioned that Elizabeth Sherva at MHC had recommended to the National Park Service that it feature the Worcester County Court House in their annual report, and it is featured, including on the cover. If any of the commissioners would like a hard copy or link please contact Ms. Simon. The report includes statistics by state, and Massachusetts ranks highly in terms of both private investment and the size of projects.

Finally, Ms. Simon noted that the Emergency State law providing remote access to state and municipal bodies to conduct public meetings remotely will expire March 31, 2023. She stated there is an effort in the State House to extend the option of holding virtual meetings until 2025. With that she concluded her report, and she turned to Chairman Rosenberry who she noted has been tracking the legislative effort.

The Chairman noted that there are two versions of the supplemental budget moving through the process, having cleared the House, it is scheduled for debate in the Senate tomorrow. He stated he believes both the Representatives and Senate are in agreement on the extension, but there are other components of the bill about which there is vast disagreement, so the bill may then head to conference deliberation. There is the possibility that passage of this bill may occur after March 31st, at which this point the exiting provisions may lapse. Or the conference may decide to report

out provisions in parts, so they might send out agreed on parts that are time sensitive for a final vote. If Commissioners have concerns they could contact their legislators. He will continue to update the Commission through Ms. Simon.

The Chairman then asked if any Commissioners had new business. He recognized Commissioner Early who asked Ms. Simon if there will be any presentations given on the new National Park Service Guidelines document. Ms. Simon said yes, the authors have done on-line presentations in the past that might still exist on the Internet, and if we can find them we can send out those links as well as the link to the document.

The Chair then called for any other new business, Hearing none, he called for a MOTION to adjourn. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Friary. The MOTION CARRIED, and the meeting adjourned at 2:28pm.

Commissioners Present

John Rosenberry

Charles Sullivan

Dennis DeWitt

Michael McDowell

Gina Perille

Susan Ceccacci

Donald Friary

Simone Early

Mark Wilson

Ashley Stolba

Gavin Kleespies

Anne Pride

Patrice Kish

Kellie Carter Jackson

Staff Present

Brona Simon

Jennifer Doherty

Michael Steinitz

Ben Haley

Elizabeth Sherva

Joshua Dorin

Peter Stott

Paul Holtz

Nancy Alexson

Shari Perry-Wallace

Liz King

A TRUE COPY ATTEST

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Brown