

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION, NORWICH, CONNECTICUT****21 December 2010**

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The regular meeting off the Norwich Historic District Commission was held on 21 December 2010 in Room 319, Norwich City Hall at 5 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Malcolm Edgar, Chairman  
Desiree Champagne  
Judith Hamblen  
Gideon Loewenstein  
Marco Middleton  
Pamela Muccilli  
Cort Murphy

**Members Absent:** Nancy O'Neil

**I. REGULAR MEETING****A. Minutes**

Minutes of the regular November meeting were approved unanimously as presented.

**B. Chairman's Report**

Dr. Edgar reported that he and Mr. Loewenstein had attended a workshop sponsored by the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. The featured speaker was Donovan Rypkema, a principal of PlaceEconomics, a Washington, D.C. based real estate and economic development consulting firm. Mssrs. Edgar and Loewenstein described in detail the topics addressed by Mr. Rypkema that were particularly germane to the issues and problems facing the Historic District Commission.

The report led to a lengthy discussion about how the commission must step up its efforts in the preservation of valued properties in Norwich. There was unanimous agreement that it is essential to coordinate communication and united action among the municipal agencies and commissions.

Mr. Loewenstein volunteered to initiate contact with the mayor and other principals as a first step toward creating cohesive efforts for preservation in Norwich.

[A recap of the issues discussed at the workshop is attached to these minutes.]

The chairman provided an update on the budget proceedings for the commission, advising that, as requested by City Manager Bergren, budget requests were submitted reflecting five, ten and fifteen percent reductions. A discussion followed. Members aired misgivings as to how the commission can continue to fulfill its responsibility if resources are pared down much further.

Edgar described a letter from EBI Consulting requesting an opinion by the commission for erecting a communications tower at St. Peter and Paul Church. As the project is not within historic districts of Norwich, there is no need for formal action on behalf of the commission.

An informal search has begun looking for future commission members with architectural/historic preservation backgrounds.

### **C. Old Business**

The group agreed to move forward with plans for to present a program for the public co-sponsored by the commission and the Norwich Historical Society. Ms Champagne will oversee the date, location and publicity for the event. Members of the historical society will be contacted to attend the next commission meeting.

### **D. New Business**

The nominating committee comprised of Ms Muccilli and Msrs. Murphy and Middleton recommended that the current slate of officers be reelected to serve another term. On motion made and seconded, the slate was unanimously elected.

Malcolm S. Edgar – Chairman  
Cort Murphy – Vice Chairman  
Judith Hamblen – Secretary

Based on the discussion of the relevance of the workshop previously discussed, the group agreed that all members be kept informed of future opportunities.

Edgar reported that he had contacted the public works department about a section of the Norwichtown Green that had been curb-cut and paved, creating a parking space.

A query about an apparent construction project on Cemetery Lane resulted in agreement that one of the members will investigate before the next meeting.

### **E. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm S. Edgar, Chairman

The ROI of Historic Preservation  
Donovan Rupkema  
December 11, 2009

Mr. Rypkema's company, PlaceEconomics, provides presentations to city governments regarding the economic impact of specific proposals.

Econometrics - The application of statistical methods to the study of economic data and problems. A science that measures the cost-effectiveness of proposals for:

Downtown revitalization  
Historic preservation  
Affordable housing

The following data provides information relating to studies presented by PlaceEconomics.

- Thirty two states underwent major studies on the economic impact of preservation projects since 1991.
  - Measurements of the projects include:
    - Tax revenues
    - Job creations
    - Property values
    - Household income

Specific findings:

- Rehabilitation involves *less materials* than new construction, but significantly *more people – more local people*.
- In North Carolina building rehabilitation created more jobs and almost twice the average household income as textile manufacturing (per \$1 million in output)
- In an analysis of visitor activity in Virginia, sites visited rank in the following order:
  - Historic preservation
  - Discount centers
  - Shopping centers
  - Theme parks
  - Golf courses

Historic preservation sites had far more first time as well as repeat visitors, **and** heritage visitors stay longer, visit twice as many places, and spend 2½ times as much money per trip.

- There were parallel findings in Maryland, Florida, Kentucky and North Carolina
- **No** example was found of a long time successful downtown rehabilitation *that did not include historic rehabilitation.*
- In recent years, Philadelphia spent \$1.1 billion revitalizing downtown including more than half its historic buildings. Occupants in 83% of these spaces employed fewer than 20 people – not Fortune 500 companies, but small local businesses, with significant local economic impact.
- Property value appreciation rates in six historic districts in Maryland were greater than in the city overall. The same finding was noted in nine communities in South Carolina.
- Local historic districts have the greatest positive impact on property values when:
  - The historic commission is staffed
  - There are written, illustrated guidelines
  - Firm, consistent decisions are made
  - There is educational outreach
- The current need for affordable housing is being met more and more through older and historic homes, for both ownership and rental occupancies
  - The vast majority of housing is provided with no subsidies, incentives or governmental intervention of any kind.
  - The existing supply of older and historic housing is *disappearing* at an alarming rate – **557 units every day for the past thirty years.**