

## Rockland County Historic Preservation Board

April 17, 2023 Minutes

Robert L. Yeager Health Center, Building T

Pomona, NY 10970

**Members Present:** Stacy Alessio, Mary Cardenas, Claudia Cooney, Marianne Leese, Craig Long, Robert Masiello, Peter Scheibner, Charles "Skip" Vezzetti

**Staff:** Michael Kezner, Rockland County Planning Department  
Eugene Bondar, Rockland County Law Department

**Call to Order:** The meeting began at 3:38 PM.

- 1. Introductions:** Board Chair Craig Long welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 2. Review of February 27, 2023 Minutes:** Marianne submitted edits by email to correct minor errors. During the meeting, she also noted that "Village" should be "Town" in the first paragraph on page 2. On a motion made by Pete and seconded by Skip, the minutes with the edits were unanimously approved.
- 3. Properties of Concern:** Mary mentioned an old farmhouse located at the corner of Route 304 and West Nyack Road is being torn down and replaced with a Starbucks. She noted that this has the same issue of being located along a major roadway with a high volume of traffic as a property discussed at the previous two meetings located at the corner of Routes 303 and 340. A short discussion of the location and the existing building ensued. Craig stated that it was used as the Clarkstown police headquarters at one point.

Marianne asked Mary about an article she had seen regarding the creation of a Community Preservation Fund in Orangetown. Mary believes it is a method for the Town to acquire open space. Eugene pointed out that the County has just acquired two parcels as part of their Open Space Acquisition Program and is looking into obtaining two more. These were located at 20 New Valley Road in New City and 1015 & 1019 Route 45 in Pomona.

Robert brought up the Henry Varnum Poor house. The board discussed the ownership issue: the property is owned by Ramapo but is located in Clarkstown. The building has not been maintained and is in poor condition. Members of the Board would like to see something done to preserve the house, but it is likely nothing will be done under the current ownership.

Marianne informed the Board that the County has conveyed the Split Rock property in Hillburn to the Ramapough Lenape Nation. The land is considered sacred to the Nation.

- 4. Old Business:** Marianne spoke with Jennifer Betsworth, Historic Preservation Program Analyst, representing Rockland in the Survey and National Register Unit of the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Linda Mackey, Certified Local Government (CLG) Coordinator of SHPO, regarding a possible CLG grant to do a thematic survey of the Dutch sandstone houses in the County. They informed her that a survey of Dutch Heritage in the Hudson River Valley, as well as portions of Mohawk Valley and New York City, has been completed, sponsored by SHPO in conjunction with the Dutch Consulate General in New York. A comprehensive report was put together in an Excel spreadsheet and includes 79 properties in Rockland. The spreadsheet can be found at the New York State Historic Preservation Office Dutch Heritage [website](#).

The next step is to determine whether any sites are missing from the list, or if anything on the list no longer exists. She is aware that one house – the Abner Taylor House located at 4 Maple Avenue in Monsey – was demolished in 2021. Once a review of the survey has been completed, the Board can determine if any further work needs to be done. If any properties are missing, they can pursue a CLG grant to conduct a study and add them to the list. Claudia was unsure if all buildings were supposed to be included in the original survey, or if it was just a thematic heritage survey that did not represent all Dutch sandstone houses located in Rockland.

The Board also needs to determine whether all properties listed in the survey are in the Rockland County Planning Department’s database. This is necessary to trigger a review and comment by the Board should one of the sites be located within 500 feet of a proposed County undertaking. The proposal would be presented to the Board at its earliest phase of planning.

Craig proposed a subcommittee to continue this work. The subcommittee will be headed by Marianne and will include Mary, Robert, Claudia, and Stacy.

Craig reminded everyone that any email correspondence regarding Board/County business must be done through their County email, rather than their personal email.

- 5. New Business:** Michael received a book from the state on disaster preparedness and historic preservation. He passed it around during the meeting and will hold onto it, but Board members are free to take it when needed.

Michael gave an update on the vacant Director of County Tourism board seat. The current Director would need to be sworn in to officially fill the vacancy. She would like to attend meetings, but would prefer to do so as a guest since she cannot always attend. Michael asked the Board to think of people who would be good to serve as her designee that way the position can be filled with someone who can regularly attend and inform her of any Board actions when she is unable to be there.

Claudia recused herself from the remainder of the meeting.

- 6. Eagle Bay:** Pete wanted to give a recap on the project. Michael gave a presentation to the Board that had originally been presented the previous year by Adam Carsen, the planner who reviewed the project for the Rockland County Planning Department. The 41-acre, waterfront, mixed-use project will include 246 units in 45' tall buildings and 13,500 SF of commercial space. A 100-slip marina and public waterfront promenade and dock are also included. This site is located immediately south of the Stony Point Battlefield.

Pete had spoken to someone from the Battlefield but does not know the status of the project. He noted that Scenic Hudson is the only group he is aware of that has issued comments on the project as part of the Section 106 review. He agrees with the comments, particularly regarding the scale.

Michael shared the 2020 GML review letter issued by the County Planning Department and noted that the Stony Point Planning Board has approved the project.

The Board believes the Section 106 review is still ongoing. Craig suggested waiting to find out where the US Army Corps of Engineers is in the review process before determining whether the Board should issue any comments. The Board agreed with this plan of action.

- 7. Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting will be held on May 15, 2023 at 3:30 in the Building T conference room.
- 8.** Before adjourning, Marianne wanted to inform the Board of a correspondence she had with someone writing a book about a murder at Letchworth Village in the 1920s. He inquired about Theta Building. The cornerstone was laid in 1930, and Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt was present. The inquirer wondered if the building still existed and about the status of the time capsule. Marianne went to take a look and found the building boarded up and cornerstone still intact. The time capsule was set to be opened in 100 years. The Board does not want to see the building demolished without the time capsule being preserved. Skip suggested she reach out to the Stony Point Town Supervisor to make them aware of the capsule.

**Adjournment:** On a motion made by Pete, and seconded by Skip, the meeting was adjourned at 4:44 PM.