

NORWICH HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Minutes of the February 18, 2026
Regular Meeting
Hybrid via ZOOM & Room 319, City Hall
100 Broadway, Norwich, CT
5:30PM

Members Present:

Regan Miner (Chairperson)
Tyler Booth
Edward Aberbach (ZOOM)
Dayne Rugh
Gregory Johnson (ZOOM)

Members Absent: Meghan Campbell, Sean Edgecomb and Nancy O'Neil

Guests: Pam Kinder (ZOOM), John Mills (ZOOM) and Kari Wall

I. Public Meeting

The public meeting was convened at 5:30 pm. Regan Miner delivered instructions and information concerning the meeting. The meeting was then opened to the public hearing at 5:31 pm.

II. Public Hearing

- COA 601 – 2 Canterbury Turnpike (Josh Armstrong) – *Chimney/Liner Cap*

The applicant was not in attendance.

- COA 602 – 55 Town Street (United Community and Family Services) – *Mural*

John Mills stated his non-profit organization the Alex Breanne Corporation worked within Connecticut to research the formerly enslaved, find their descendants and resolve that in the communities where they lived, worked or died. John Mills stated the proposed mural depicted Primus, a man enslaved by the Lathrop family that resided right beside the East District Schoolhouse. John Mills provided a brief history of Primus and his lineage. John Mills stated their goal was to create a story telling mural relative to his story. John Mills stated that artists from Norfolk, Virginia and George would be traveling to Connecticut to paint the mural on portable polytab, which is what they would like to install on the wall. John Mills stated the mural would be composed of five panels, each telling a different portion of the story of the family's journey.

Pam Kinder of United Community & Family Services stated they were thrilled to host the mural on their property and felt the location being adjacent to the

cemetery brought synergy to the area.

Tyler Booth asked if the polytab portion of the painting would be created by the artist and then partially filled in by the community, similar to a paint-by-number. John Mills stated that was correct and they were scheduling a community paint day for that portion. John Mills stated the artist would help direct the mural creation and the polytab made it easier for the mural to be worked on indoors. John Mills stated that once applied to the wall it visually looked like paint. John Mills explained that many murals are done this way and the polytab held up better over time than paint. John Mills stated a protective coating would go over the completed mural to protect it from graffiti and other elements. John Mills stated the mural was designed with the intent to last forever.

Edward Aberbach noted that the ‘Whale Mural’ in New London had to be repainted many times and asked who would be responsible for the long term maintenance of the mural when it did need to be addressed. John Mills stated the process they intended to use was much more progressive but they were working in collaboration with the Norwich Historical Society. John Mills stated his non-profit group would support raising additional funds for any work the mural may need in the future and they were committed to maintaining the longevity of the mural. Discussion ensued.

Kari of the Norwich Historical Society stated that the project was being done in collaboration with the Public Art for Racial Justice Education group who completed many local murals frequently who she was sure would also be ready and willing to aid in any upkeep needed, as it fell into the scope of their work.

Dayne Rugh recommended putting a comprehensive maintenance plan for the mural into writing that could be followed.

Tyler Booth noted the existing building currently sat on what was previously partially land from the cemetery and Lathrop Meadows and asked if there was any concern with that spot being used for commemoration. John Mills stated another portion of the project was a commemorative plaque that would tie into the mural. John Mills stated the project was intended for remembrance, acknowledgement and education. Gregory Johnson clarified that the Lathrop Meadow Association traded some property that became incorporated into the existing plaza, but it was not from the cemetery.

Edward Aberbach asked if any thought was put into relocating the handicap parking spaces that were in that area. Pam Kinder stated there was not as the spaces were for the convenience of patients and there were numerous other spots to accommodate visitors of the mural.

- COA 603 – 71 East Town Street (Norwich Historical Society) – *Accessory Structure, Liberty Pole / Monument*

Kari Wall stated that the America's 250th Norwich Connecticut Committee was seeking to install a Liberty Pole on the Norwichtown Green. Kari Wall stated Liberty Poles existed in Norwich historically the past had been 75 to 92 feet tall. Kari Wall stated they did not intend to make the proposed pole that tall so that it would fit within city guidelines and be appropriate to the landscape. Kari Wall stated the committee felt the Liberty Pole was an important part of remembering Norwich's history and places where people once gathered to speak freely. Kari Wall stated they were looking to build education into that aspect of Norwich again.

Edward Aberbach asked about the maintenance of the pole. Kari Wall stated the Norwich Historical Society agreed to maintain the Liberty Pole and there was a full maintenance plan in place that was submitted with the monument application to the City of Norwich. Kari Wall stated the application was approved at the previous evening's city council meeting and that public works would install the pole.

Edward Aberbach asked if any subtle changes to the pole, such as the flag, would need to come before the commission for approval. Dayne Rugh and Regan Miner responded that they may not need to necessarily and clarified the flag would be akin to a decorative flag on a historical home.

Kari Wall stated the hope was for the installation to last for a period but they were not expecting longer than a decade. Kari Wall stated the Norwich Historical Society was aware there would be an expense to remove the feature. Kari Wall stated that they also planned to create a plaque that could remain in place as a more permanent fixture to remember the location and provide guidance for future commemoration if the pole was to be installed again. Kari Wall stated the Liberty Pole would be approximately 35 feet tall and be installed towards the point of the Norwichtown Greene.

- COA 604 – 55 Town Street (Norwich Historical Society) – *Accessory Structure, Signage*

Kari Wall stated the Norwich Historical Society would like to place an interpretive panel at the Norwichtown Cemetery that would elaborate on the colored section of the cemetery, as well as tie into the mural being done on the United Community & Family Services building. Kari Wall stated they felt an integral part of the project was to further education and bring the mural to life while remembering the history of the location.

John Mills stated they were only aware of a few documented people buried in that section of the cemetery but knew many more were there. John Mills stated the panel would document who those people were and marry that section of the cemetery with the mural. John Mills stated the panel would acknowledge that it was the colored section of the cemetery. John Mills stated

the design was being done by Miranda Creative and would mimic the design of the panel on Jail Hill to match the Norwich Heritage Trail signage. John Mills stated they were working off of the 15-inch-by-30-inch design of Jail Hill but the panel would be 24-inches-by-36-inches as that was the standard size provided by the manufacturer. Regan Miner recommended the applicants reach out to the state archeologist to be present during the digging and monitor the installation process.

III. Regular Meeting

The regular meeting was convened at 5:58 pm.

A. Action on COA(s)

- COA 601 – 2 Canterbury Turnpike (Josh Armstrong) – *Chimney/Liner Cap*

Tyler Booth made a motion to approve COA 601 as submitted. Dayne Rugh seconded. Regan Miner showed additional photos on screen submitted by the applicant for all to view. Regan Miner read aloud the email sent by the applicant that accompanied the photos into the record:

“Picture #1 below is the existing home showing both chimneys. The circled one is the one we need to modify the top of. This chimney vents 1 wood burning fireplace on the 1st floor in the home. Mr. Daly would like to put a direct vent gas fireplace into this fireplace as a means of a more efficient heat source. A Direct vent fireplace requires 2 liners to be installed into the existing fireplace flue. One of the liners brings in the combustion air for the gas fireplace. The 2nd liner vents the byproducts of combustion (carbon monoxide) from the fireplace properly to the outside air. Picture #2 shows the top plate, bottom side where the 2 separate liners connect under the cap, picture #3. In order for the fireplace insert to operate safely and correctly, the stone cap and brick piers must be removed, with the top plate and cap installed in their place. The cap separates the intake air from the exhaust of the fireplace, and is required by Building Code and the UL Listing on the fireplace insert to be used. Without this liner and cap setup, the fireplace unit cannot be installed.”

Gregory Johnson questioned if a stone cap could not be installed on the stainless steel liners. Regan Miner stated that was correct and what was shown in the second photo provided would be visible and not match the other chimney. Regan Miner stated the applicant was looking to convert the fireplace to gas for a more efficient heat source. Discussion ensued regarding the proposed design and if other options were available. Dayne Rugh stated he felt the applicant needs to determine a different venting situation or a better design with a lower profile.

Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson, Tyler Booth, Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh voted in opposition. The motion failed unanimously.

- COA 602 – 55 Town Street (United Community and Family Services) – *Mural*

Dayne Rugh made a motion to approve COA 602 as written and presented. Tyler Booth seconded. Gregory Johnson asked for clarification on why the COA was required to be presented to the HDC. Dayne Rugh stated the HDC was requested to review the COA as it is visible from a significant historic asset, but any determinations were only to be made regarding material and compatibility with the historic district, to which Regan Miner agreed. Tyler Booth agreed with the previous comments made regarding developing a maintenance plan as a suggestion. Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson, Tyler Booth, Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

- COA 603 – 71 East Town Street (Norwich Historical Society) – *Accessory Structure, Liberty Pole / Monument*

Dayne Rugh made a motion to approve COA 603 as written and presented. Tyler Booth seconded. Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson and Tyler Booth voted in favor. Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh abstained. The motion passed.

- COA 604 – 55 Town Street (Norwich Historical Society) – *Accessory Structure, Signage*

Tyler Booth made a motion to approve COA 604 as written and presented. Gregory Johnson seconded. Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson, Tyler Booth, Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes of the Wednesday January 21, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Dayne Rugh made a motion to approve the January 21, 2026 regular meeting minutes as written. Tyler Booth seconded. Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson, Tyler Booth, Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Chairman's Report

Regan Miner reported that there was no Chairman's report.

D. Old Business

Regan Miner reported that there was no old business to discuss.

E. New Business

Regan Miner reported that there was no new business to discuss.

F. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday March 18, 2026, at 5:30 pm.

G. Adjournment

- Dayne Rugh made a motion to adjourn at 6:14 pm. Tyler Booth seconded. Edward Aberbach, Gregory Johnson, Tyler Booth, Regan Miner and Dayne Rugh voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously..
- Katherine Rose, Recording Secretary

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