



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK  
**Historic District Commission**

*William Childress, Chairman  
Barbara Harms, Vice Chair  
Jan Furman, Secretary*

[www.oldsaybrookct.gov](http://www.oldsaybrookct.gov)  
302 Main Street  
Old Saybrook, CT 06475  
860-395-3131

*Diane Aldi DePaola  
Laura Gray  
**Alternate Members**  
Richard Peters  
Alan Cantor  
Paul Knierim*

**MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Thursday, February 23, 2023, at 11:00 a.m.**  
Hybrid Meeting  
Town Hall 1st floor conference room  
302 Main Street, Old Saybrook

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman W. Childress called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

**Members Present** – Alan Cantor, William Childress, Jan Furman, Barbara Harms, Richard Peters

**Members Absent** – Laura Gray, Diane Aldi DePaola, Paul Knierim

**Staff Present** – Chris Costa, Town Planner and Zoning Officer; Lynette Wacker, Assistant Town Planner; K. May, HDC Recording Clerk

**Guests Representing OS Historical Society Present** – Wayne Harms, Linda Kinsella

**Guest Presenter:** Mary Dunne, Certified Local Government & Grants Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

**III. DISCUSSION**

Mary Dunne, via Zoom, was introduced to the attendees. She is the Certified Local Government & Grants Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the Department of Economic Community Development (DECD). The powerpoint presentation was a refresher about Certified Local Government (CLG) status and Municipal Preservation Plans and included:

A. Explanation of what is a Certified Local Government. There are 54 CLGs in Connecticut and Old Saybrook has been a CLG for 10 years.

B. The process of becoming a CLG

- C. Responsibilities of being a CLG
- D. Benefits of becoming a CLG?
- E. Funding opportunities for CLG
  - Historic Preservation Enhancement grants (non-matching Federal funds up to \$20,000)
  - Supplemental Grants (non-matching funds up to \$30,000)
  - State Funding for Historic Preservation (survey and planning grants, Partners in Preservation grants and Historic Restoration Fund)
- F. National and State Registers and Local Historic Districts
- G. Municipal Preservation Plans
  - Protection of historical resources and architectural character through proactive planning.
  - Identifies goals and creates an action plan. Encourages economic development and provides for better understanding of historic preservation.
- H. Why have a plan?
  - Community wide, cohesive approach to planning and preservation. Can help determine that the community intends for growth. Educates the public about history and architecture and identifies areas of need.
- I. Components of a plan
  - Formal Resolution to adopt a plan – commitment as a CLG
  - History of the Town
  - State and local regulations
  - Identify historic resources
  - Encourage public engagement
  - Goals, objectives and measuring progress
  - Action plan to achieve goals and objectives
- J. What are the next steps?
  - Discussion within the Town
  - Announce intentions to the community
  - Consider applying for funding to hire a consultant

End of presentation. Mary Dunne asked for questions.

Wayne Harms asked about the implications of an historic district on property insurance. Ms. Dunne answered that if your property is on the National Register, you do not have to repair it to original state. Insurance companies may or may know this and may or may not raise rates. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation.

Bill Childress asked about homes on the National Register and flood ordinances. M. Dunne reported that FEMA or local requirements can get exemptions to protect property.

Mary Dunne will talk to her staff to get the rundown from the environmental review team and email it to the Planning Office.

Barbara Harms asked if there is funding available to update a survey. Yes, funding is available. Updates for surveys are important and can be funded.

Alan Cantor asked about contractors. When they are hired, how deep into the history of a house do they typically go? Mary answered that architecture and past history is just as important to preservation as appearance. Architecture could have association with historical figures (women and minorities are two categories) and research would be done for important architectural and historical aspects.

Barbara Harms asked if homeowners in historic designations can get a grant. Ms Dunne replied that grants are for towns and local non-profits only and not individuals. The Historical Society could apply for a grant. For individual homeowners, there is an Historic Tax Credit Program that offers a financial incentive. A program manager might come out to verify work is done.

Mary Dunne then reported that 50 years is the national threshold. Historic districts are often about houses over 100 years but homes from the 1930's could be identified as important and listed. There is a historic district from the 1950's on the National Register.

A discussion followed about Old Saybrook beach communities like Cornfield Point. Mary Dunne commented that, if these communities are over 50 years old, they could be included as an historic district.

Lynette Wacker asked if funding is available for managing inventories. Mary Dunne explained that SHPO is able to explore that for the town including what is on National Register, on State and what is listed as an historic district to get a cohesive look at the towns' inventories. A town does not have to apply for funding for this – SHPO will do it.

Alan Cantor asked about how to deal with demolition by neglect. Mary Dunne suggested that the solution might be in a blight ordinance. There might be legislation to delay the demolition to review the historic designation of a demo property. This is a real challenge when a resident buys a home they know they want to demolish to build new. It's very challenging to get homeowners to buy in to committing to historical preservation of a 50-year-old property.

Wayne Harms asked about categories of historic properties. He asked if surveys categories the historical significance of properties. Mary Dunne reported that it is just data. The report identifies areas of higher degrees of integrity but it is not a tier system. It will show what is important to a town and identify properties who rise to National Register level.

Barbara Harms asked how long the process is to achieve National Register recognition. Mary Dunne responded that designation is part of the National Park Service. You can write the nomination yourself or ask for a grant to find someone to do it for you. It will take six months to a year to complete the process. The state review board meets four times a year.

Jan Furman asked about OS beach communities that are over 50 years old. Owners of small, historically important cottages will sell to someone who wants to demo and build a mansion and there is nothing the HDC can do. Chris Costa added that this could also be the situation of a property needing demo by neglect. M. Dunne responded that this is frustrating and if the property owner doesn't want to recognize the significance of the historic nature of the house, it's difficult to fight that. Passing local legislation might be an answer.

Alan Cantor commented that perhaps residents don't know there is an historic aspect to their home. A discussion about Realtors followed and how they should provide history of a home to a buyer. Mary Dunne suggested a campaign of education to raise awareness – get information out into the communities. It was commented that Indian Town has an historic background and residents would benefit from having a sense of history. Fenwick has a sense of community history. Beaches are in high flood zones, however, and there are FEMA requirements in place. The HDC wants to save what the neighborhoods looked like if they can't be saved. Mary Dunne said she would try to do some research. There is 3D imaging of areas that can be funded. They will also fund video documentation.

Bill Childress thanked Mary Dunne for the interesting, informative presentation and Q&A.

#### IV. ADJOURNMENT

<p><b>MOTION</b> to adjourn the meeting at 12:25 p.m. until the next regularly scheduled meeting of Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 6:00 p.m., Old Saybrook Town Hall, 302 Main Street, <b>MADE</b> by W. Childress; <b>SECONDED</b> by: A. Cantor; <b>VOTED IN FAVOR:</b> A. Cantor, W. Childress, J. Furman, B. Harms, R. Peters; <b>Opposed:</b> None; <b>Abstained:</b> None. <b>APPROVED:</b> 5-0-0.</p>
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Respectfully submitted,  
Krista May, HDC Recording Clerk