

MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
Friday, December 6, 2024, 9:30 a.m.
In-Person at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford and
Teleconference via Microsoft Teams (Recorded)**

Present: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki (Teams), Ms. Dyer-Carroll (Teams), Mr. Herzan (Teams), Mr. McMillan (Teams), Ms. Panjwani (Teams), Ms. Saunders (Teams), Mr. Wigren (Chair)

Absent: Dr. Feder

Staff: Jenny Scofield (presenting), Jonathan Kinney, Elizabeth Shapiro;
Teams: Cory Atkinson, Kevin Berger, Mary Dunne, Catherine Labadia, Todd Levine

Guests:

IV.A.1 Kevin Bernier, Christine Longiaru, Nicholas Stuller
Teams: Don Andrews, Emily Bousaada, Amy Von Culin, David Drubner, Lisa Flaherty, ShawnaLee Kwashnek, Jennifer Mahr, Bob Nerney, Bob Marages, David Payne, Thomas Rice, Dana Shepard, Candice Strawley, Susan Striker, Philip Walker, Caroline Wright, Steve Wyman
(additional guests via phone)

IV.A.2 Teams: Alexia Belperron, Mary Dean, James Sexton

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wigren confirmed a quorum and called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. He introduced the State Review Board members and described the Board's role. The Board is an advisory body that makes recommendations based on local knowledge. Mr. Wigren mentioned the National Register Criteria.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Ms. Scofield provided the hybrid meeting procedures.

III. Approval of the September 13, 2024, meeting minutes

Minor edits to the minutes were heard.

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Ms. Panjwani, to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2024, meeting, as amended (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

IV. Action Items

A. Completed National Register Nominations

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the State Historic Preservation Review Board (SRB) and by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff.

1. Timex Headquarters, Middlebury (Criteria A & C, national level)

Ms. Scofield stated that the nomination is for the Timex Headquarters, which is a corporate office building completed in 2001 on an originally 93-acre lot in Middlebury, which includes land from 555 Christian Road and 764 Southford Road. The building was designed by Douglas Disbrow, then of Fletcher Thompson with a landscape plan by Jack Curtis + Associates. The landscape is counted as one contributing site and the sculpture is counted as 1 contributing object. The building is constructed of an insulated glass curtain walls with steel supports and a domed roof and was designed to look like a watch.

Ms. Scofield summarized that the property is proposed for national significance under Criterion A in the category of Commerce for its association with the clock and watch-making industry, and Criterion C in the category of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for its symbolic design and early use of sustainable building practices. Since the building was constructed in 2001, it has to meet Criteria Consideration G (age exception) for the whole period of significance. The period of significance proposed was 2001, when construction was completed, through 2023, which is the end of ownership by Timex. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff recognizes the interesting design of the building. SHPO regularly evaluates Modern and Post-Modern buildings and have looked at corporate complexes. In this case, staff does not think the exceptional significance is justified in the text at this time.

The nomination was initiated by Save Historic Middlebury. Notice of the proposed nomination was sent to the current property owners (Southford Park LLC and Timex Group USA), 30 days before the meeting, along with the Town of Middlebury First Selectman and Planning and Zoning staff, and Save Historic Middlebury, Inc. The Town of Middlebury is not a CLG. Letters of objection were received from each property owner and each owner sent two versions of their letter so there is a total of four. A letter with the opinion that the property is not eligible for listing was also sent from a consultant on behalf of the owners. One letter of support was received from a Middlebury resident (who also emailed). All letters were shared in advance with the Board. Several general emails of support were also received during the nomination process. Ms. Scofield acknowledged that several members of the public were in attendance for the nomination, in person, online, and by phone.

Mr. Wigren invited public comments.

John Pollard introduced himself as a Middlebury resident and a real estate broker/development consultant. He had the privilege to be associated with Timex during the development of the Headquarters. During conversations with Fred Olsen, he had conversations about the philosophy incorporated into the Timex Headquarters design. Mr. Pollard stated that the building is a treasure that deserves to be timelessly protected. He mentioned an article in *Entrepreneur Magazine* and suggested the Board read it before making a decision; it includes an interview, which will help you understand that Olsen was a visionary in many industries. He pioneered Morsey oil fields and had a ship making business that created new designs and fabrication of offshore oil rigs. He was big in the renewable energy sector and has wind farms on land and offshore; he created a new mechanism for how to put those in the ocean without disturbing, in order to protect whales. Mr. Pollard stated that “Watch Hill” is not just a building; it is a globally significant tribute to a man and a company that had a major impact on the direction of our world. The Timex Headquarters on Watch Hill was designed by Fred Olsen. During his time as Chairman, he spent years searching for the perfect property to be a tribute to the Waterbury Clock Company that became the Timex Corporation. Mr. Pollard shared some history of the Olsen family leaving Norway in 1940. They bought a majority stake in the Waterbury Clock Company and built a factory in Middlebury that built timing fuses for anti-aircraft munitions and devices for munitions; they made the majority of munition fuses for the U.S. and allied forces during

WWII. By the 1950s, television ads included stress demonstrations on Timex watches, and it is the most well-known watch brand in world. The Headquarters structure was designed to meld into the topography of the site. The site did not impose on the natural vegetation. The building is a timepiece called a “meridiana”, which is a sundial device. The building keeps time in seasons inside. The glass walls allow everyone inside to have a view of the natural environment around the building. Mr. Olsen considered that important for creativity and mental health. He designed a walking track inside the building, and it includes fitness facilities, meeting rooms, a cafeteria and an amphitheater. He got zoning approval to move the parking lot downslope so as not to interfere with the views from the building. Every detail of the design was meticulously created; the rain leaders were designed to be a work of art in a waterfall ladder as opposed to just a pipe. It is a magnificent creation by a visionary person, and it represents a historic company in the history of the world.

Jennifer Mahr introduced herself as the Second Selectman in Middlebury. She is not representing the Town but is representing the constituents of Middlebury who are interested in this preservation effort. She stated that Middlebury has connections to two worldwide historic events – the Rochambeau encampment and Timex. That connection to early American history is just as significant as recent American history. She stated that the Timex connection to WWII, the mechanical advantage, the moving of an industry from its early to later technology, the military prowess – that happened in Middlebury and the impact on global events is significant. The idea that something that is perfect and pristine and is a testimony to its original design – the thought that the building would be mowed down does not fit well with the temperament of the town.

Kevin Bernier introduced himself as general counsel and COO of Atlantic Management Corporation, which represents Southford Park LLC, the owner of the building. Southford Park LLC and Timex have both objected to the nomination. Their attorneys have been in touch with Save Historic Middlebury’s attorneys and have extended the offer to take photographs of the property prior to anything further happening with it. Southford Park LLC filed an objection; they hired a consultant to give an opinion, and their architect also weighed in. Mr. Bernier mentioned that [the Headquarters] is a 23-year-old office building. It is obsolete and does not meet the threshold required to list it. The nomination doesn’t talk about this building and the exceptional significance of this building. He stated that [Save Historic Middlebury] wanted to file an injunction under the Protection Act; they have withdrawn the injunction. The property can’t be listed because they have objected.

Tom Rice introduced himself as a Middlebury resident. He thinks the building needs to be preserved and does not understand the idea that it is obsolete. He stated that it meets the requirements for listing under the National Register for the less than 50-year threshold. There are other buildings listed under that. It is ridiculous to think about tearing it down; it is a beautiful structure on a beautiful site. It was well thought out and it is not a waste of anyone’s time to go through this exercise. Once you destroy something, you can’t get it back; look at New York’s Penn Station.

Sally Romano stated that she lives in Middlebury and spoke in support of saving the building. She grew up in Middlebury and has a PhD in the History of Medicine and Science. She did some work on the radium dial painters. The building has significance for the broader history of medicine, science and industrial health. The Timexpo Museum [in Waterbury, CT] that closed in 2015 paid some tribute to the radium dial painters but has since been closed. This building is the surviving legacy for that piece of Timex history. The industrial health connection to this building is the attention paid to employee health through the walking track and view from the building. To lose this building would be a loss of an important piece of that industrial health history.

Susan Striker, a resident of Middlebury, emphasized that despite legalities, it is important to see what it is that the majority of the people in town want. The people in town have overwhelmingly spoken about not following that edict, and to keep a beautiful part of town that people are proud of.

David Drubner introduced himself as part of the ownership for Southford Park. They reviewed the application and all the legality around the National Register and the Criteria. The application made no claim of why the building is of exceptional significance. It does not include scholarly articles as required in [National Register Bulletin] 22 for buildings less than 50 years old. Southford Park LLC objects to the listing. Mr. Drubner stated that Save Historic Middlebury was created in 2024 after they lost in other venues to stop the demolition of the building. The development process has been two years. They have not shown why this building rises to the level of significance of the Cape Canaveral launch pad, or other properties that rise to the level of being landmarked under 50 years.

Don Andrews, a resident of Middlebury, shared that he moved to Middlebury several years ago. It was a source of pride that the Timex Headquarters was located there. This site was made in order to be in harmony with nature; that is a trend that has started in the last 20-30 years. Buildings like that need to be preserved. Otherwise, they will be lost to other types of corporate establishments who no longer value that. He expressed support for Save Historic Middlebury and hopes people see the value in buildings like this that represent a new age in architectural design.

Selectman Jennifer Mahr read comments from ShawnaLee Kwashnek shared in the chat. She is in full support of Save Historic Middlebury, Inc. and for saving Timex as a historic property. She stated that the Timex building reminds her of the Mid-century Modern movement influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright with its brilliant use of time and the natural layout of the land to blend in with its natural surroundings. This is a one-of-a-kind gem that we have the privilege and responsibility to preserve for generations to come. She is in full support of preserving the Timex building. Its innovative design is historic, and it would be a wonderful addition to a Mid-century Modern trail. It would be a future gem; every historic building starts somewhere.

Dana Shepard stated that she is a resident of Middlebury and of the Benson Woods development. Benson Woods was initially owned and developed by Timex; the Timex property is adjacent. She was in the building for meetings. It is a gorgeous building. The fact that it is a timepiece sitting on a hill shouldn't be ignored. She supports Save Historic Middlebury and the preservation of the Timex building for its architectural significance.

Kevin Bernier clarified that Timex sold the building to Southford Park LLC and are moving out. Timex is not going to keep it; the ask here would be for someone else (the new owner) to preserve it.

Philip Walker introduced himself as a lawyer working for the Save Historic Middlebury Group. They did not seek an injunction until after the nomination appeared on the SRB agenda and under the Attorney General's opinion of 1984, that means the building was "under consideration" at that time. That status of under consideration gave the building status of a protected resource under CEPA [Protection Act]. He did not receive the letters of objection until the end of last week. He referenced 36 CFR 60; he acknowledged that the building cannot be listed because the owners objected. Save Historic Middlebury withdrew the court case upon further discussion with South Park LLC's counsel. Save Historic Middlebury is seeking a federal Determination of Eligibility (DOE). Mr. Walker noted that he has worked with many preservation organizations and commented on the condition of the building noted in South Park LLC's objection letter. The condition of the building is secondary as long as the building retains its character-defining features. He reiterated that the purpose of the nomination was to pursue a DOE.

Don Andrews provided comment in chat, which was read by Jonathan Kinney. He noted that there were other potential owners of the building, prior to the new ownership, without any potential changes to the historically significant building.

Nicholas Stuller introduced himself as President and founder of Save Historic Middlebury Inc., the nonprofit organization who is the sponsor of the application. He shared that he was given a tour of Timex last October [2023] and met the CEO and lead designer, and several employees. It was clear by the length of the tour that the building was unique and that the employees loved the building. As a current and former CEO, he has shopped for buildings for his team and to put them in a building like that would be extraordinary. He incorporated Save Historic Middlebury with a charter to preserve historic places in Middlebury and begin drafting preservation laws; unlike the majority of towns in Connecticut, Middlebury has no preservation laws at all. Timex is a symptom of a greater problem. The town has lots of historic structures and if nothing changes, they could be wiped out with a \$200 demolition permit. They informed Timex that they were going to apply for the National Register. At that time, Timex was a tenant. The reason why Timex should be on the Register is because it is the only building that is an operating example of the product that the company makes; the building itself is a time-telling device. There is an oculus in the ceiling that shines light on brass markers, telling the equinox and the solstice. Save Historic Middlebury asked the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Docomomo, AIA, and the New Haven Urban Design League if they had heard of a building like that. They also reviewed the 3,800 properties listed in the National Register that are less than 50 years old and used a commercial AI tool to study the buildings in the National Register. The Capitol Records building looks like a record. There are buildings that look like what they are, but this building is what the company makes. On the point of exceptional importance, there are many on the National Register; the Rothko Chapel was 25 years old at the time of listing, Dulles Airport in Virginia was 11 years old when listed and the Nautilus Submarine in Connecticut was 25 years old. It was one of many nuclear submarines, but was the first one to go under the polar ice cap. When you look at Criteria Consideration G, and compare side by side to the worst example on the list, Timex clearly qualifies under Consideration G.

Mr. Wigren invited SRB comments.

Mr. McMillan stated that the building is exceptionally interesting architecturally and clearly there is a lot of passion about it. He suggested that given more time to evaluate its significance in a larger context, it would be eligible, but he doesn't think the case for Consideration G has been made. The places it falls short is under Criterion A, there is a rich discussion of 170 years, but it is not tied to this 23-year-old building. Under the sustainable, green, or health aspect, he does not see the context on health. He suggested looking at the Salk Institute [by Louis Kahn in collaboration with Jonas Salk] in California, which was designed to foster collaboration between the scientists that worked there. He does not see that Consideration G is met for Timex.

Mr. Barlow agreed that the property does not meet the Criteria. He doesn't think architects are significant or that the architecture is significant, especially for a 23-year-old building. When you look at buildings that are less than 50 years old, it is compelling that the owner is moving out after 23 years. Perhaps it was an innovative building, but it hasn't stood the test of time.

Mr. Wigren stated that the nomination doesn't provide context. It talks about this building but doesn't give the bigger context that it fits into. He asked what other watch and clockmaking companies were doing at the time that Timex was in this building. How does what was going on in this building relate to the products Timex was making at the time? He asked if those products innovative, the first of their kind, or if they were they exemplifying trends. In terms of the architectural statement, Mr. Wigren noted that there is a little bit on the trend of open plan offices, but there is no discussion of other

buildings designed for sustainability, and no mention of the buildings from the AI research that was discussed. To understand how important the building might be, you need the bigger picture. Regarding the lack of scholarly evaluations of 21st century corporate architecture, if you can't cite scholarly works, you need to do the research yourself; do your own evaluation and analysis of what's being built at this time. Many of the sources cited are documents from Timex or the architects; these are not objective evaluations (often they are promotional). Other sources are needed in order to evaluate whether the building really does what the architect says it is doing. Mr. Wigren concluded that this looks like an interesting building and a beautiful site, but the case has not been made here for significance to list it in the National Register.

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow second by Mr. Herzan to recommend the Timex Headquarters for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-0, N-8, Abstained-0).

Board members voting no: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

2. Darling Family Farmstead and Tavern (Update), Woodbridge (Criteria A & C, local level)

Ms. Scofield summarized that the nomination is an amendment and update of the 1979 Thomas Darling House & Tavern, with the same boundaries (but clarified). The 1979 nomination was a checkbox form with a general period of significance of the eighteenth century and Architecture, Agriculture, and Transportation checked as the areas of significance. The outbuildings were briefly mentioned. The amendment clarifies and expands the period and areas of significance, includes description of outbuildings and the landscape along with a map, data table, and photo coverage. The current areas of significance are Criterion A for Agriculture (the land was farmed from the 1770s through 1920 for subsistence and cash crops). It also meets Criterion A for Social History for its association with enslaved people from 1772 to at least 1791, and for Transportation for the association with the development of Straights Turnpike. It remains eligible under Criterion C for Architecture. The original nomination was thorough, but new information was added about the construction of the house and barn from firsthand sources that are not typically available. The amended period of significance is 1772 to 1930.

The nomination was initiated by the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society with a SHPO Survey and Planning grant and permission from the Town (as landowner). Notice is not required since the property is already listed in the National Register but was completed. Notice of the SRB meeting was sent to Town of Woodbridge and the historical society 30 days before. The nomination update was posted to SHPO's website. The Town is not a CLG, and no letters were received in response. James Sexton (AHS, consultant) and Alexia Belperron and Mary Dean of the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society attended the meeting in support of the nomination.

Mr. Wigren invited public comment. None were heard initially.

Mr. Wigren invited SRB comment.

Dr. Bucki stated that the new description of workers on the property including enslaved people and indentured servants is interesting and well done.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll shared that the nomination was well researched, had strong documentation, and was enjoyable to read. She mentioned an issue with the figures – Figures 2a and 2b are references but there is only one Figure 2; there are two Figure 5s.

Mary Dean of the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society commended the consultant for their work. She shared that the nomination achieved the goals of full documentation of all the buildings and incorporated scholarship since 1979. The complete account of history of this site is a springboard for educational programs. It is a model example [nomination].

Mr. McMillan stated that the nomination was well written and researched. He asked for correction of inconsistencies in the description of the privy (number of holes) and in captions versus descriptions of the carriage barn/carriage house (clarify that it is a subset of the stable). He requested photos of the two contributing elements – the stone wall and bridge. Mr. McMillan stated that there are good descriptions of wood markings in cow barn. He requested clarification that the evidence of circular saw marks or modern metal attachments is an exception; the majority of the barn still has mortise-and-tenon or hand-hewn marks.

Mr. Wigren requested correction of footnote 2 on p. 7 (1773 barn instead of 1794 barn). He requested more agricultural context be included for the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to match the level of information provided for the earlier periods. Mr. Wigren discussed the historical context for the piazza and wondered how many more are lurking under 19th-century verandas. He asked how the placement of the piazza was determined; he asked if it is related to interior spaces, facing the road, or oriented for the best view. James Sexton noted that it faces the road but is not on the building's façade. Mary Dean clarified that the Turnpike is on the piazza side of the house.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Ms. Saunders to accept the updated documentation for the Darling Family Farmstead and Tavern to the National Register of Historic Places (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

Ms. Saunders initiated discussion about National Register updates. She commented that the Darling Farm was a good addition to the record and history of people. She asked if updates could be encouraged. Ms. Scofield responded that the Survey & Planning grant can cover updates and SHPO can continue to encourage them. Mr. Wigren acknowledged the project of Stacey Vairo and Jenny Scofield to study nominations needing updates and noted that SHPO staff has limitations on the time available to process them.

V. Discussion

A. 2025 Schedule

The SRB voted to accept the 2025 schedule as proposed. Meeting dates are March 21, June 13, September 12, and December 5.

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Herzan, Mr. McMillan, Ms. Panjwani, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

B. State Review Board Informational Presentation

Ms. Scofield gave a brief PowerPoint presentation about the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, including the purpose and requirements of this shared historical context.

VI. New Business

No new business was heard.

VII. SHPO Staff Report

Jonathan Kinney thanked the Board for their service.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Barlow, second by Ms. Saunders to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.