

NEW HAVEN HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, January 14, 2026, Regular Meeting, 6:30 PM

Location: 165 Church Street New Haven, City Plan Department Conference Room, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor and  
via Zoom

**Chair Trina Learned calls to order the meeting at 6:30pm.**

**In attendance:** Kaelie Moran (Planner II and staff to the Commission), Laura Brown (Director of City Plan), John Ward (Counsel), Trina Learned (Commissioner and Chair), Cordalie Benoit (Commissioner), Karen Jenkins (Commissioner), Michael Waters (Commissioner), Richard Munday (Commissioner)

**1. Roll Call**

**2. New Public Hearing**

**2.1 26-01-CA 50 Exchange Street (MBLU: 162 0735 00400) Quinnipiac River Local Historic District. Owner: Catherine MacRae; Applicant: Jonathan Schneider, Earthlight Technologies. Seeking approval to install a roof-mounted solar energy system.**

*Jeff Hunt, 50 Exchange Street*

*Catherine MacRae, 50 Exchange Street*

*Nathan Schneider, Earthlight Technologies*

Mr. Schneider explains that the project is to install 23 solar panels. The panels will be arranged in five arrays on four separate roof planes. They will install micro invertors and will have to move the dual meter socket outside. He shows where the meters will be installed on a small wall near the front of the house. Commissioner Waters raises that from viewing the photograph a minisplit HVAC unit has been installed on the facade and it was not brought before the Commission. Ms. MacRae responds that she does not know why there was no building permit pulled. Chair Learned explains that it makes this application difficult because of all of the external mechanical equipment in one spot that is highly visible from the public view.

Mr. Schneider explains the iron rail system attached to the roof which hold the panels. A structural engineer will review the installation to ensure the roof will handle the load. They are black, stationary panels, about 5” off the roof. A small amount of ¾” conduit will attach to each array and then down the side of the house to the panel. He shows photos of the utility meter that is required to be outside as well as a rapid turn shutdown switch, PV meter, and an Enphase monitoring system. The microinverters are attached on the roof rails and they cannot be seen from the ground. Chair Learned asks about the position of the installation on the house; whether on the foundation plywood or clapboard above. Mr. Schneider says they have flexibility to make it look as aesthetically pleasing as possible, but the utility meter will be on the front facing brick. It is required in this location for access to the meters. It is determined the current fence was also installed without approval from the Commission. Chair Learned explains that there could be a better fence installed because of the amount of equipment that will be at the corner of the house. Solar installations are not considered permanent but should be installed in a minimally invasive

way. Ms. MacRae would consider a new fence but is hesitant about wood because its north facing position. Commissioner Waters suggests painting the conduits to match. Commissioner Munday thinks it should be possible to see where the equipment will be located and what it will look like from the street for this application. Chair Learned agrees and wants to know what the whole project will look like when it's finished. Commissioner Waters asked about the statute of limitations for work done without being approved by the Commission. Ms. Brown thinks it is three years but Mr. Ward is unsure. Commissioner Benoit asks Mr. Schneider who decides where the meters go. United Illuminating (UI) decides where the one they own will go and his company will decide where the others go. Commissioner Munday adds that if the Commission could let the owner know what the needs are for placement that could guide where UI puts it. Chair Learned asks for a depiction of where the equipment will go and if the homeowner can mask the public point of view. Commissioner Jenkins asks about why they would be asked to mask the equipment because these pieces are required for solar panel installation. Chair Learned explains that due to its visibility and if it is possible to mask it, that should be part of the application. Commissioner Waters adds that it seems like this could have been told to the applicant in advance so as not to delay the project. Ms. Brown suggests the Commission create a checklist of what they would like to see. Chair Learned tells the owner and applicant that they would like to continue this application to the next meeting with additional information provided including depiction of the equipment and conduit location, anything currently on the wall that will be removed, and possible masking.

### **3. Discussion Items**

#### **3.1 Demolition Delay Items:**

- **649 Howard Avenue – Full Demolition**

Ms. Moran summarizes the last meeting and shows the structural report by Michael Horton Associates which was requested by the Commission.

#### ***Shawn Galligan, Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center***

Commissioner Waters asks about the agreement with the city when the building was acquired by the health center. Ms. Brown replies that she needs to review the Development Plan Disposition Agreement (DLDA) to get clarity on the provision, but the question of zoning will be outside of this purview and City Plan cannot stop the demolition. The ambiguity will need to be resolved before a demolition permit can be issued. Chair Learned and Commissioner Waters agree that the report concludes there will be costs associated with restoration but not that it is beyond restoration. Commissioner Waters explains that the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) got letters from concerned residents about the demolition. The Commission, in its advisory capacity, should decide if it will submit a letter as an entity to object to the demolition as well. Commissioner Waters adds he thinks there should be SHPO review due to the use of state funding and change in plans since demolishing the back addition. Chair Learned invites members of the public to testify.

#### ***Miguel Pittman, 82 Orchard Street, Hill North Community Management Team***

Mr. Pittman objects to the demolition and references the structural report which he does not think decisively states it needs to be demolished. He thinks parking solutions are flexible and should not result in demolition of the building for that purpose. He thinks there are non-profit

organizations that could use and renovate the building. This case raises a larger question for the city, and he would like to see historic buildings in the Hill afforded the same patience, creativity and investment as those in more affluent areas.

***Janice Parker, 635 Howard Avenue***

Ms. Barker objects to the demolition, offers solutions for additional parking and expresses they don't need more parking lots in their community.

***Kishwar Rizvi, 62 Livingston Street***

Ms. Rizvi is an architectural historian who teaches at Yale and is part of a nonprofit called the Ely Center that has expressed interest in acquiring the building. They are currently on Trumbull Street and need to find a new office. They would do an assessment to determine feasibility, but the owner has not allowed access to the building.

***Joe Ficada, 27 Adeline Street***

Mr. Ficada is a contractor who did an evaluation of the building and finds it is sturdy and in good condition. He has been touring thousands of historic buildings and he has not found any like it in the state. He feels it is unique for its style as a former precinct and as a record of how police business was conducted 150 years ago. He feels strongly about not tearing down buildings in the name of progress.

***Olivia Martsen, 228 Dwight Street***

Ms. Martsen explains that this was the Hill Development Corporation for many years and she thinks it is important to continue the legacy of that organization.

Chair Learned closes public comment.

**Commissioner Waters makes a motion for the Commission to write a letter to the owner and to SHPO to oppose the demolition on the grounds of its architectural and cultural importance.**

**Commissioner Munday seconds.**

**Aye: 5 (All present)**

**Nay: 0**

**Abstentions: 0**

**All in favor at 7:11.**

**• 1515-1517 State Street – Full Demolition**

Ms. Moran explains this proposed demolition which is a 1893 building and is included on the New Haven Historic Resources Inventory.

***Paolo Desiato, 123 Canner Street***

Mr. Desiato explains he bought the building in 2005 and lived there for eight years. Living between the railroad and State Street was arduous at times (building shakes when the train comes by) and they left to raise a family elsewhere in town. A small empty lot next door plus

this parcel would allow for developing the lot into a multi-unit building. They are selling it to a developer to remove the building and start with a clean slate.

Commissioner Benoit comments that it is the most attractive building in the neighborhood. Commissioner Waters thinks it is a shame to have it go like the rest of the buildings around it have and without a plan for what will replace it. Commissioner Munday adds that if the Commission sees the value in preserving historic fabric then maybe the building could contribute to a larger development. A letter from the Commission doesn't inhibit the owner and could create a possibility for its reuse. Chair Learned understands his point and invites a future discussion on the Commission's role with demolition delays. Mr. Desiato describes that by creating dense housing in that area, it will increase the safety of the area, like what has happened nearby with other renovations. Commissioner Benoit comments that it seems like sustaining this building as a place someone will want to live will be difficult.

**Commissioner Waters makes a motion for the Commission to not pursue writing a letter in objection.**

**Chair Learned seconds.**

**Aye: 4 (Learned, Waters, Benoit, Jenkins)**

**Nay: 1 (Munday)**

**Abstentions: 0**

**Motion carries at 7:27.**

### **3.2 Approve amendments to 2026 HDC Calendar.**

Ms. Moran describes an amendment which is the meetings will begin at 6:30pm.

**Chair Learned moves to approve the calendar.**

**Commissioner Waters seconds.**

**Aye: 5 (All present)**

**Nay: 0**

**Abstentions: 0**

**Motion carries at 8:14pm.**

## **4. Minutes**

### **4.1 Approval of November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Upon recommendation by Commissioner Munday the Commission requests Ms. Sorensen review with Ms. Brown and resubmit for a vote.

## **5. New Business**

There is a discussion about advocacy and communication from Commissioners regarding items that are on the agenda outside of Commission meetings. Ms. Brown adds that Commissioners should refrain from communication with one another about items on the agenda because it could be considered a quorum without public hearing. It also makes them appear to not have impartiality.

Chair Learned suggests there are ways of making the meetings and discussions more efficient as well. Commissioner Waters agrees and adds that prior technical review will help decrease the number of times applicants need to return. Chair Learned commends city staff and Mr. Herzan for their efforts in making applications better over the past several years.

**Chair Learned moves to adjourn.**

**Commissioner Jenkins seconds.**

**Aye: 5 (All present)**

**Nay: 0**

**Abstentions: 0**

**Motion carries at 8:38PM.**

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Sorensen, recorder