



**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
NORWICH, CONNECTICUT**

**RULES OF
PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS**

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SECTION 1: GENERAL

PURPOSE:

Under Connecticut general statutes the purpose of the Norwich Historic District Commission is to promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places associated with the history of, or indicative of, a period or style of architecture in the municipality, of the state or the nation. Furthermore, the Norwich Code of Ordinance designates the purpose of the Norwich Historic District Commission is to promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the city through the preservation and protection of buildings, places and districts of historic interest within the city.

Additionally, these procedures and regulations provide guidelines for the following:

- Organization of the Commission
- Administrative Procedures
- Meetings
 - Regular
 - Special
 - Public Hearings
- Certificates of Appropriateness
 - Application
 - Standards for Determining Appropriateness
 - Actions by the Commission

SECTION 2: ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission shall be organized in accordance with Chapter 97a of the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-147 and in accordance with the City of Norwich Ordinance 439.

2.1 Commission Members Appointment and Terms

The Council of the City of Norwich shall appoint a Historic District Commission consisting of five (5) regular members and three (3) alternate members all of whom shall be electors of the City of Norwich holding no salaried municipal office.

2.1.1 One regular member is appointed each year to serve a five-year term.

2.1.2 Three alternate members are to be appointed, each for a two-year term.

2.2 Vacancy

In the event of a vacancy from whatever cause arising, the Council of the City of Norwich shall appoint a successor to fill the vacancy and such successor shall serve the remainder of the term as a regular member or alternate member as appropriate.

2.3 Commission Officers

At its regular December meeting, and if such meeting is not held, at its next regular meeting or at a special meeting noticed for the purpose, the Historic District Commission shall elect a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson, and a Secretary from its members who shall serve one year terms from January 1st to December 31st of the year following the December meeting. Should these officers be elected other than in the month of December they shall serve as officers until December 31st of the year of their election.

2.4 Quorum

At any meeting of the Commission a quorum shall consist of three members. If three regular members are not present, an alternate member or alternate members may be appointed to vote as a regular member or regular members at that meeting when necessary to provide a quorum.

2.5 Absence

In the absence of a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, the members of the Commission present and constituting a quorum shall elect a Chairperson Pro Tem.

2.6 Committees

Committees will be appointed by the Chairperson and dissolved as needs require.

SECTION 3: ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

3.1 Minutes

3.1.1 At each meeting of the Commission, minutes shall be taken and maintained as a permanent record of its resolutions, transactions, and determinations and the vote of each member participating therein.

3.1.2 The vote of each member, pro or con, on any issue will be made available to the public within forty-eight hours of the meeting.

3.1.3 The minutes of each meeting (unapproved) will be made available to the public within seven days of the meeting.

3.1.4 Copies of the minutes will be filed with the City Clerk and will be posted on-line at www.norwichct.org.

3.2 Conflict of Interest

If for any reason a regular or alternate member of the Commission believes he or she has a conflict of interest, that member shall abstain from any discussion or vote on that particular issue and the Chairperson shall appoint an alternate to serve in place of that member.

3.3 Procedures for Amendment of Rules and Regulations

3.3.1 The Historic District Commission may modify the Rules and Regulations contained herein as it deems necessary to improve the workability as well as the effectiveness of said Rules and Regulations.

3.3.2 Changes shall conform to limits as prescribed and as amended in state statutes previously herein referred to. (Section 7-147c(e)).

3.3.3 Proposed changes shall be submitted to a public hearing prior to adoption by majority vote of the Historic District Commission.

3.4 Distribution of Rules and Regulations & Amendments Thereto

3.4.1 Within 60 days after adoption of rules, regulations and any amendments thereto, the Commission shall make reasonable efforts to inform all property owners within the historic districts, as well as the Mayor's office, the Building Official, the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the Commission on the City Plan and any other appropriate parties of the changes.

3.5 Enforcement

3.5.1 If any provision contained herein or any action taken or ruling made by the Historic District Commission pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 97a of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended; the Ordinances of the City of Norwich or the Regulations adopted by the Historic District Commission has been violated, the commission may, in addition to other remedies, institute an action in the superior court for the judicial district of New London, which court shall have jurisdiction to restrain such violations and to issue orders directing that the violation be corrected or removed.

3.5.2 The commission may inspect and examine any building, structure, or premises from a public area off site without any permission and may examine or inspect any building, structure, or premises on site with permission, for violations of these regulations as per the Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-147h as amended.

3.5.3 Appeals

Any person or persons severally or jointly aggrieved by any decision of the Commission or of any officer thereof may, within 15 days from the date when such decision was rendered, take an appeal to the superior court for the Judicial District of New London in accordance with General Statutes Section 7-147i.

SECTION 4: MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARING

4.1 All meetings are open to the public.

4.2 A schedule of the monthly regular meetings will be made available to the City Manager and the City Clerk and are posted on-line at www.norwichct.org

4.3 Regular Meetings

Order of Business

a. Roll call and appointment of alternates, if necessary

b. Public hearing (if any)

c. Approval of minutes of preceding meeting

- d. Old business
- e. New business
- f. Chairman's report
- g. Adjournment

4.4 Special Meetings

The Chairperson shall call a special meeting on an as needed basis, to address one or more specific issues. No business other than that posted on the notice shall be considered. The notice will be given not less than 24 hours prior to the time of such meeting by filing a notice with the office of the city clerk.

4.5 Public Notice

For all applications for COA and for other issues of public interest such as a discussion of standards and guidelines, presentation of bylaw revisions or amendments, etc., the Commission shall cause a notice of the hearing to be published in a local newspaper not more than 15 nor less than 5 days before the date of the public hearing.

SECTION 5: REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

- 5.1 No building or structure located within a historic district shall be erected, altered, restored, moved or demolished until an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) has been issued by the Historic District Commission. In determining appropriateness the commission will consider all architectural details visible from a public way as well as siting, neighborhood compatibility and historic interest. A COA is required for, but not limited to, any of the following exterior work.

5.1.1 PROJECTS REQUIRING A COA:

- Construction of a new building or structure or relocation of an existing one.
- Alteration, removal, or addition to exterior architectural features.
- Any proposed demolition, whole or part of existing structures.
- Any change in materials.
- Replacement, addition or modification of windows, doors, storm windows or doors, shutters, skylights.
- Replacement of roofing using different materials.
- Installation or replacement of outdoor signs.
- Installation or replacement of fences, walls, curb cuts, driveways, exterior lighting and other fixed structures such as: utility meters, fuel tanks, air conditioners, antennae, satellite dishes, and solar heating units.

The application for a COA can be obtained from the chairperson of the Norwich Historic District Commission or down-loaded on-line from the city's website.

5.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

5.2.1 "Erected" means constructed, built or installed.

5.2.2 "Altered" means changed, modified, rebuilt, reconstructed or enlarged.

5.2.3 "Building" means a combination of materials forming a shelter for persons, animals or property.

5.2.4 "Structure" means any combination of materials, other than a building, which is affixed to the land, and shall include, but not be limited to, signs, fences and walls.

5.3 PROJECTS GENERALLY EXEMPT FROM COA

5.3.1 Routine maintenance and repair using materials in kind and without change in design.

5.3.2 Paint color. (Change in surface treatment does require a COA).

5.3.3 Mailboxes.

5.3.4 Any work or project certified by the Building Official as necessary for public safety.

5.4 DEMOLITION

No permit for demolition of a structure or building located within a historic district should be issued by the Building Official until a COA has been processed. This commission may request a 90-day delay to determine any historic or architectural interest and to assist when appropriate in finding an alternative solution.

5.5 PARKING

Any area within a historic district used for industrial, commercial, business, home industry or occupational parking requires an application for COA. The issues to be considered are the size of the parking area, the visibility of cars in the parking area, the closeness of the parking area to adjacent buildings and other similar factors. The provisions of this section shall apply to new parking areas and to the enlargement or alteration of any existing parking areas.

5.6 HARDSHIP VARIANCE

The Commission may modify compliance with any provision of these regulations where, by reason of topography, boundary issues, or because of other unusual circumstances solely with respect to a certain parcel of land, strict adherence to these regulations would impose undue hardship on the applicant. A written request for such variance detailing the basis for hardship must accompany the application for COA.

SECTION 6: ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

- 6.1 Wherever possible the primary interest of this commission is to retain historical and architectural details appropriate for buildings and their neighborhoods within a historic district. In addition to the specifics listed below our intent is to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's standards (36 Code of Federal Regulations 67 and 36 CFR 68) and two volumes published by the U.S. Department of the Interior: 1. *Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (1995), and *The Preservation of Historic Architecture* (2004).
- 6.2 Architectural details relating to windows include but are not limited to dimensions of overall openings and of panes, muntins, stiles, rails, trim, and depth of reveal. Also of interest are construction materials and surface texture. The preferred choice in maintenance is to re-glaze, repaint, and repair; replacement in kind is a second choice. Change of construction materials, e.g., to vinyl or aluminum, is generally not acceptable. However, surface treatment such as vinyl clad windows, and vinyl or aluminum storm systems may be considered.
- 6.3 Architectural details relating to doors include but are not limited to dimension and arrangement of glass panes and wood panels, hardware, sidelights or transom lights and the overall opening dimensions. Construction materials and texture are also important.
- 6.4 Architectural details related to roofs include but are not limited to the dimensions and texture of the proposed as compared to the existing roofing material, and any visible solar energy systems. If it is not reasonable to replace cedar shingles in kind, architectural shingles, preferably with a dark or "weathered" color, may be used.
- 6.5 Architectural details related to siding include but are not limited to the dimensions and texture of the proposed as compared to the existing siding material. In no instance will synthetic siding such as aluminum or vinyl be approved as the dominant material on a historic structure.
- 6.6 Architectural details related to fences and outdoor walls include but are not limited to construction material, texture, dimensions and historical and architectural appropriateness.
- 6.7 Signage Guidelines

Signs are subject to zoning regulations and to review by the Historic District Commission. Signs simple in shape and color are preferable. The sign should relate to and not obscure its surroundings. It should be compatible in design, material and details to the building and its style.

Temporary signs do not require a COA. These include Property-for-Sale signs, but they shall be removed within two days after the closing of the sale. Temporary signs for political, charitable and civic purposes are permitted under the following conditions:

1. Maximum size of six square feet
2. Political signs must be removed the day after Election Day.
3. Tag sale signs are allowed two days prior to and the day of the event.
4. All other temporary signs must be removed within 24 hours of completion of purpose.

No sign that flashes, blinks, or revolves will be permitted. Neon tubing, visible bulbs, luminous paint and noise-producing equipment will not be approved.

6.8 Satellite Dishes Guidelines

A satellite dish should be minimally visible from public view, less than one meter (39.37 in) in size, and use colors that tend to mask its appearance.

When a satellite dish is affixed to a building, it must be installed to avoid damaging the structure of the building.

A certificate of appropriateness is needed for an installation that either significantly affects the visual character of a building or its surrounding area, or is in a location that is clearly visible.

The homeowner in their application shall show all possible locations where there is an acceptable signal reception and provide a drawing showing why an exception to the minimally visible placement rule is justified.

If the only possible location for a satellite dish is in clear view, then effort must be made to screen the dish so it is not readily visible.

SECTION 7: ACTION ON THE APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

The Commission will decide by vote to approve, continue or deny the application. Voting will take place after the close of the public hearing. Decisive action needs to be taken within 65 calendar days after the receipt of the completed application. Failure on the part of the Historic District Commission to act within 65 calendar days shall constitute approval.

7.1 Approval

7.1.1 If the Commission approves the application, a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be issued.

7.1.2 The certificate may contain specific stipulations or modifications as conditions of approval.

7.2 Denial

A COA Application may be denied when, for reasons stated, the project is deemed inappropriate to the setting or unacceptable in the use of replacement materials, or for other reasons enumerated.

7.3 Continuation

7.3.1 If there is insufficient time to conclude the discussion and bring the application to vote, the matter may be continued until a subsequent meeting.

7.3.2 If the 65 calendar-day limit is approaching and the concerns of the Commission have not been addressed it may be necessary to **deny** the application and invite the applicant to submit a new application.

7.4 Notification of Action

Following the action taken, four signed copies of the application results will be distributed to the following:

- a. the Applicant
- b. the Building Official
- c. the City Clerk
- d. Historic District Commission files

SECTION 8: SEPARABILITY

If any section herein contained is found to be in violation of constitutional rights by court decree, this action shall not invalidate the remainder of these Rules of Procedure and Regulations.

SECTION 9: BOUNDARIES OF DISTRICT

9.1 The Norwichtown Historic District shall be that area shown and bounded as such and as described in Ordinance No. 439, Section 7, adopted October 2, 1967, entitled "An Ordinance Establishing an Historic District and an Historic District Commission for the City of Norwich" or any amendments or other areas so designated.

9.2 Little Plains Historic District shall be that area shown and bounded as such and as described in Ordinance No. 523, adopted August 3, 1970, entitled, "An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 439 of the City of Norwich by Adding an Additional Historic District thereto."

Approved and Adopted: April 15, 2015
Norwich Historic District Commission
Gideon Loewenstein, Chairman