

Meeting House National Register Nomination Considered

By Toni Gold

On Sunday, June 12, the Buildings and Grounds Sub-council (B&G) voted 12-0 to move forward a process for informing the congregation of benefits and process for pursuing a nomination of the Unitarian Meeting House to the National Register of Historic Places. The first step will be a hearing on the matter occurring after the service on July 17th. The outcome of the hearing will determine next steps, if any.

B&G received a report from a subcommittee consisting of Toni Gold, Jim Venneman, and Laura Cipriano recommending the next step in the designation process. Following discussion and explanations from Mary Falvey, Executive Director of the Hartford Preservation Alliance (HPA), which would be hired on a consulting basis to manage the nomination, the full B&G Sub-Council including one member on Zoom, voted to approve \$1,500 from the B&G budget to accept the offer from HPA, if the hearing outcome is favorable to the nomination idea.

B&G set July 17, following the Sunday service, as a hearing to present and explain the National Register process and to answer questions.

If attendee reactions in the hearing are generally positive, and the Board voices no objection, HPA would move forward to apply for a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office to fund the work of a consultant, who would be competitively selected from a list of approved architectural historians to do the research and writing necessary to prepare a full nomination. The full nomination would then be presented to the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council, and upon approval, to the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register of Historic Places is a subdivision of the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior. See:

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/what-is-the-national-register.htm>

National Register status qualifies a property for up to \$200,000 for maintenance and restoration work from the state of Connecticut. Once designated, the Meeting House could qualify for funds, for example, for roof work, a geo-thermal system for heating and air conditioning, and a number of other major structural projects.

The Meeting House qualifies as a candidate for the National Register of Historic Places because it 1) is at least 50 years old, 2.) is an important example of the Midcentury Modern architectural style, and 3.) is an example of work by a significant architect (Victor Lundy).
