



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House 150 Benefit Street Providence, RI 02903

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November 1, 2023

Via email: jlagana@cranstonri.gov

Joseph Lagana
Director of Community Development
City of Cranston
35 Sockanosset Crossroad, Unit #6
Cranston, Rhode Island 02920

Re: RIHPHC Project No. 17859
Budlong Pool and Pool house Renovation
222 Aqueduct Avenue
Cranston, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Lagana:

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) staff has reviewed the information that you provided for the above-referenced project. The City of Cranston is proposing to provide U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funds for a project to replace the existing pool and renovate the existing pool house at 222 Aqueduct Avenue in Cranston, Rhode Island. The City has asked the RIHPHC to determine if the property is historic. We have not reviewed any proposed plans and thus are not providing comments on the proposed project at this time.

The concept of Budlong Pool was developed in 1937 largely by then Mayor Ernest Sprague and Public Works Commissioner Elton Durfee. The land was donated by James A. Budlong of Budlong Land Company and was adjacent to city-owned property on Aqueduct Road. The intent was always to supply the water for the pool from Blackamore Pond which sits directly north of the pool. Pool construction began in 1938 with funds from the city and the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). The pool was built by men employed through the WPA and was complete in the fall of 1938. The pool house, initially called a field house, was not constructed until the 1939-1940, also using labor and funding provided by the WPA. The vision of the pool was to provide a safe recreational space for children of the City of Cranston. Newspaper articles of the time state that children were swimming in Blackamore Pond which was deemed unsafe due to vegetation and mud. The American Red Cross spurred the opening of the pool and provided swim lessons and lifeguards. The pool was not able to open immediately, first due a lack of a field house which was needed to provide a place for swimmers to change, and then second, due to health concerns about the condition of the water. This was resolved in the mid-1940s.¹

¹ This information is summarized from the *Cranston Herald* article "The Sad, Sad Story of the Municipal Pool" (May 14, 1942) and subsequent articles.
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The pool consists of a 22,000 sqft concrete pool with a circa 1940s stone pool house constructed in the rustic style. The pool house is one-story from Aqueduct Road with the pool at the rear (south) elevation. The south elevation is two stories and symmetrical in plan. The building is constructed of squared grey stone with stone lintels and stone belt course. To the east of the pool and pool house are three baseball diamonds at least one of which was developed in the early 1950s.

It is the opinion of the RIHPHC that the Budlong Pool and Pool house are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the fields of Entertainment/Recreation and Community Planning and Development, and under Criterion C as a fine and intact example of WPA rustic architecture. Further study would be required to determine if the larger park is also historic and to define a period of significance.

If the project proceeds and uses any state or federal funds, permits, or licenses, the RIHPHC will need to review the project to determine how it will affect this historic property.

These comments are provided in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. If you have any questions, please contact RIHPHC Project Review Coordinator Elizabeth Totten at 401-222-2671 or elizabeth.totten@preservation.ri.gov.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth Totten in blue ink. The signature is cursive and includes the initials 'FOR' written below the name.

Jeffrey Emidy
Executive Director
Interim State Historic Preservation Officer