

# **Historic District Commission**

Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue Westport, CT 06880 Westportct.gov Telephone (203) 341-1184

To: Michelle Perillie, Director of Planning and Zoning

Planning and Zoning Commission Members

From: Historic District Commission

Date: October 15, 2024

Re: Draft Study Report for Proposed Local Historic Property Designation of Six Historic Bridges

At its March 12, 2024, public hearing, the HDC approved in response to a petition from residents the study of six early 20<sup>th</sup>-century stone bridges for local property designations: Greens Farms at Center Street, Cross Highway over Deadman Brook, Long Lots Road over Muddy Brook, Myrtle Avenue at Violet Lane, Evergreen Avenue over Deadman Brook and Jesup Road over Deadman Brook The Historic District Commission unanimously supported the designations and appointed a study sub-committee to prepare the study report and begin the designation process.

At its September 10, 2024, public hearing, the sub-committee presented the Draft Study Report, which was unanimously approved by the HDC. The Commission supports this designation for the following reasons:

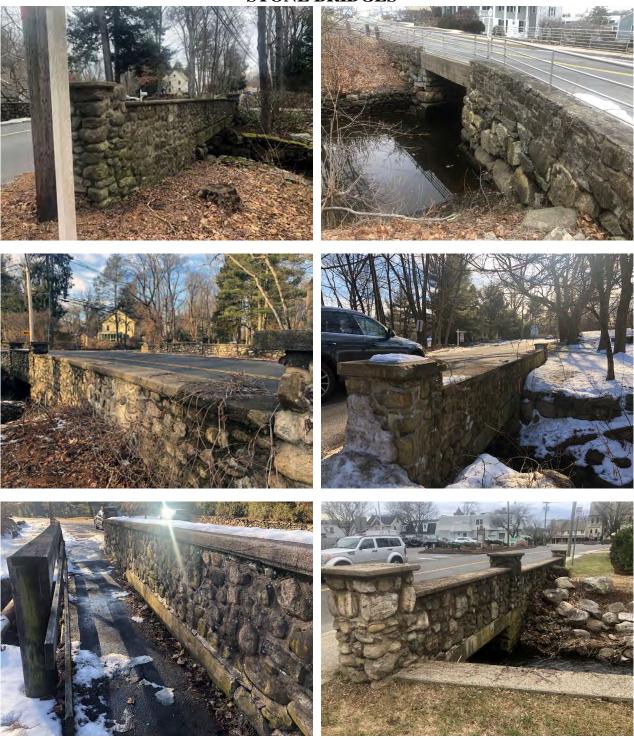
- The bridges are a tangible connection to the history of the Town of Westport.
- These early 20<sup>th</sup>-century bridges are constructed of rustic stonework that appeared as a decorative element on small bridges in order to complement and create the sense of a park-like setting.
- The 2017 Westport Plan of Conservation and Development states that the HDC should employ the full range of preservation methods available to protect and enhance Westport's historic and cultural resources. In order to maintain the town's historic character and qualities represented in its many significant buildings, structures, monuments, landscapes, cemeteries, public rights-of-way, districts and sites, Westport should support existing local historic designations.

The draft study report is submitted to you for your comments and/or recommendations in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes section 7-147(q). This report has also submitted to the State Historic Preservation Council for their review. According to the statute, comments must be returned to the Historic District Commission within 65 days of the transmittal date.

Upon your request, Chairwoman Grayson Braun will present the report to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Please notify us of the meeting date and contact the HDC office with any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Jennifer Tooker, First Selectwoman Jeffrey Wieser, RTM Moderator Nick Bamonte, Assistant Town Attorney Jeff Dunkerton, Town Clerk Pete Ratkiewich, Director of Public Works Amanda Trianovich, Deputy P&Z Director

# STUDY REPORT FOR PROPOSED LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION OF SIX HISTORIC STONE BRIDGES



#### TOWN OF WESTPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Historic District Commission Chair Grayson Braun and Vice Chair Scott Springer Bridges Subcommittee Chair Benjamin Levites and Vice Chair William Ryan Historic District Commission Administrator Donna Douglass

Tuesday, October 15, 2024 State Historic Preservation Council Department of Economic and Community Development State Historic Preservation Office One Constitution Plaza, Second Floor Hartford, CT 06103

#### **RE:** Proposed Local Historic Property Designation of Six Historic Bridges

**Dear Council Members:** 

At a public hearing on March 12, 2024, the Town of Westport Historic District Commission approved in response to petition the study of six early 20th-century stone bridges for local historic property designations: Greens Farms at Center Street, Cross Highway over Deadman Brook, Long Lots Road over Muddy Brook, Myrtle Avenue at Violet Lane, Evergreen Avenue, and Jesup Road.

The Commission accordingly requests local historic property designation for these historic bridges. These early 20th-century bridges are constructed of rustic stonework that appeared as a decorative element on small bridges in order to complement and create the sense of a park-like setting. Of the 19 bridges of this type built in Westport, only these 6 remain as Town-owned bridges continuing to give character to the Town. Their stone parapets and abutments embody turn-of-the-century Westport's picturesque and rustic aesthetic.

The Commission has chosen to seek local historic property designation because these bridges are a tangible connection to the history of the Town of Westport and State of Connecticut. The proposal is a direct response to the replacement of the historic stone Kings Highway Bridge by the Town in 2020. At the time, the pendency of the Certified Local Government-required Plan of Preservation precluded the Commission from proceeding with this study. In investigating these historic bridges, together with research by petitioners, the Commission's Bridges Committee conducted research on these bridges. Its findings contribute new scholarships, information and documentation on these bridges' fuller significance and history. Through this effort, the project strongly aligns with the Commission's goals to promote the interests of historic preservation throughout the Town of Westport, to preserve continuity of our cultural heritage and to ensure that existing historic districts and properties, including bridges, are preserved and provide a sense of place.

The study report has been completed and, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 147b, is being submitted to you for your comments and recommendations.

The following items are included for your review:

- 1. Statement of significance
- 2. A survey map of the proposed local historic property
- 3. Site map and current photographs of the property
- 4. Town Ordinance with boundary description

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Grayson Braun, Chair of the Historic District Commission Scott Springer, Vice Chair of the Historic District Commission Benjamin Levites, Chair of the Bridges Subcommittee William Ryan, Vice Chair of the Bridges Subcommittee

cc: First Selectwoman of Westport, Jennifer Tooker; Michelle Perillie, Planning and Zoning Director; Jeffrey Wieser, Representative Town Meeting Moderator; Nick Bamonte Esq., Town Attorney, Jeffrey M. Dunkerton, Westport Town Clerk; Peter A. Ratkiewich P.E., Public Works Department Director

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#### **APPENDICES**

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Appendix B: Memorandum Report, Historic Preservation Issues, Kings Highway North Bridge over Willow Brook (Bridge 158-021)

Appendix C: Memorandum Report, Historic Preservation Issues, Myrtle Avenue Bridge over Deadman Brook (Bridge 158-017)

Appendix D: Myrtle Avenue Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix E: Kings Highway North Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix F: Jesup Road Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix G: Beachside Avenue Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix H: Coleytown Road Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix I: Green Farm Road Bridge Historic Resources Inventory

Appendix J: Connecticut Department of Transportation Bridge Inspection Reports (2016)

Appendix K: 9 Stone Bridges, 06880 (Jan. 8, 2018), 06880danwoog.com/2018/01/08/9-stone-bridges/

Appendix L: Proposed Historical Documentation of Six Local Bridges

#### **Statement of Significance**

Town of Westport's 2017 Plan of Conservation and Development made specific findings concerning the unique historic character of the six bridges that are the subject of this proposed local historic property designation:

In the early 20th century, Westport undertook a program to upgrade a number of bridges in the community to accommodate the automobile. In all, some 19 matching Craftsman style stone bridges were built and eight remain. These bridges ... contribute to our distinctive character and help remind us how Westport evolved though time.

2017 Plan of Conservation and Development § 4.2, Protect Historic Buildings and Sites, at page 28. Of these eight bridges, the Kings Highway Bridge has been replaced, and the Saugatuck Avenue bridge is state-owned.

The bridges are concrete spans with rubble masonry abutments and wing or channel walls. All but the Jesup Road bridge have mortared rubble masonry parapets with two stepped sections and concrete coping and were constructed between 1910 and 1915, when Westport upgraded its first crossings, some of which may have served as timber crossings, to accommodate automobile traffic with rustic, Craftsman or Arts-and-Crafts-style stone works. These historic bridges were all part an early 20th-century bridge-building trend throughout Fairfield County and elsewhere along the Connecticut shore, featuring rustic stonework as a decorative element. This can be seen by several of the nearby Merritt Parkway bridges which share this rustic aesthetic, including the nearby Main Avenue bridge in Norwalk. Such use of rails or beams in concrete was common before World War One but rare thereafter.

All but the Jesup Road Bridge, constructed in the same style in 1950, were designed and constructed by engineer Merrick H. Cooley. Cooley also served as the Town of Westport's

Collector of Revenue and as Selectman along with prominent Westporters Lewis P. Wakeman and Robert H. Coley. Cooley was also the superintendent at the Atlantic Starch Works on Riverside Avenue in Westport. Although Cooley constructed 19 such bridges in Westport, together with the state-owned Saugatuck Avenue Bridge, these six bridges are the only remaining Westport structures with these characteristics.

The Evergreen Avenue Bridge is a protected part of the Evergreen Avenue Local Historic District. The existing historic stone parapets are nearly consistent with existing automobile barrier requirements. The Jesup Avenue Bridge is a contributing component, together with the Myrtle Avenue Bridge, of the Westport Center National Register District. Jesup Road was originally a nineteenth-century footpath with a wooden footbridge in the current bridge's location.

The Myrtle Avenue Bridge over Deadman Brook was most likely originally a wooden bridge visible on Westport maps dating back to 1876 and was constructed as a stone arch bridge from 1915. There is a fieldstone channel between the Jesup Road and Myrtle Avenue bridges made from the same fieldstone that constructed the balusters and posts. The Cross Highway bridge is notable for its proximity to Wakeman Town Farm and its location along Cross Highway, where numerous other historically significant structures are situated. Cross Highway, Evergreen, Myrtle, and Jesup form a series of crossings over Deadman Brook.

The Greens Farms Road Bridge has a notable long curvature along Greens Farms Road and the Nyala Farms open space.

#### **Site Maps and Current Photographs**

### **Evergreen Avenue**





Figure 1: Evergreen Avenue Bridge - South Parapet Wall Looking SW

Figure 2: Evergreen Avenue Bridge - North Parapet Wall Looking SW

The Evergreen Avenue Bridge is a circa 1920 Arts & Crafts style structure of cobblestone and reinforced concrete that crosses Deadman South Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 13.5' and overall structure length of 18'. The bridge width out-out is 29', and the curb-curb dimension is 26'. The total deck area is approximately 522 square feet.

The parapets are cobblestone with precast concrete caps. At the ends of the parapet walls are piers/end posts that are approximately 3" wider than the parapet wall thickness at each side, and 8" higher, capped with square precast caps.

The abutments and wing walls are also stone, and they support a reinforced concrete span with asphalt paving above.

The bridge is located within the boundary of the Evergreen Avenue Historic District.

#### References:

Evergreen Avenue Bridge HRI Form Prepared by ACRC – 01/05/08

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158006 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 06/30/16

#### Jesup Road







Figure 4: Jesup Road Bridge South Side Looking NW

The Jesup Road Avenue Bridge is a circa 1950 structure of cobblestone, precast concrete, and split-faced granite that crosses Deadman South Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 12.2' and overall structure width of 15'. The bridge length out-out is 32', and the curb-curb dimension is 25'. The total deck area is approximately 480 square feet.

The parapets are comprised of simple steel tube guardrails on top of a curb approximately 1' above the roadway. These curbs are concrete at the span, and cobblestone at the wing walls.

The abutments and wing walls are built-up, split-faced granite. The precast bridge deck is supported by steel beams that bear on the stone abutments. The roadway surface is asphalt paving.

At the north side of the bridge runs a concrete sidewalk.

The bridge is included in the National Register as a resource in the Westport Center Historic District.

References:

Jesup Road Bridge HRI Form Prepared by PAL – 12/13/11

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158013 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 06/30/16

#### **Greens Farms Road at Center Street**



Figure 5: Greens Farms Road Bridge – South Parapet Wall Looking NW



Figure 6: Greens Farms Road Bridge – View of Post at East Side Looking NW

The Greens Farms Road Bridge is a circa 1920 Arts & Crafts style structure of cobblestone and reinforced concrete that crosses Deadman South Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 12.8' and overall structure length of 17'. The bridge width out-out is 40.5', and the curb-curb dimension is 38'. The total deck area is approximately 689 square feet.

The parapets are cobblestone with precast concrete caps. At the ends of the parapet walls are piers/end posts that are approximately 2" wider than the parapet wall thickness at each side, and 10" higher, capped with square precast caps. The parapet walls extend well beyond the span on each side, and at the ends of these extensions are similar piers/end posts with precast caps. These parapet extensions follow the curve of the road.

The abutments and wing walls are also stone, and they support a reinforced concrete span with asphalt paving above.

#### References:

Greens Farms Road Bridge HRI Form Prepared by PAL – 06/2000

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158008 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 06/29/16

#### **Cross Highway Over Deadman Brook**





Figure 7: Cross Highway Bridge - View of North Parapet Wall Looking SW

Figure 8: Cross Highway Bridge - View of South Parapet Wall Looking SW

The Cross Highway Bridge is a circa 1920 Arts & Crafts style structure of cobblestone and reinforced concrete that crosses Deadman South Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 9.5' and overall structure length of 12'. The bridge width out-out is 29', and the curb-curb dimension is 26'. The total deck area is approximately 348 square feet.

The parapets are cobblestone with precast concrete caps. At the ends of the parapet walls are piers/end posts that are approximately 3" wider than the parapet wall thickness at each side, and 8" higher, capped with square precast caps."

The abutments and wing walls are also stone, and they support a reinforced concrete span with asphalt paving above.

#### References:

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158005 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 07/16/16

### **Long Lots Road Over Muddy Brook**





Figure 9 - Long Lots Road - View of South Parapet Wall Looking NW

Figure 10 – Long Lots Road - View of South Parapet Wall Looking W

The Long Lots Road Bridge over Muddy Brook is a circa 1920 Arts & Crafts style structure of cobblestone and reinforced concrete that crosses Muddy Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 10.3' and overall structure length of 14'. The bridge width outout is 30', and the curb-curb dimension is 27'. The total deck area is approximately 420 square feet.

The parapets are cobblestone with precast concrete caps. At the ends of the parapet walls are piers/end posts that are approximately 12" higher than the parapets, capped with square precast caps.

The abutments and wing walls are also stone, and they support a reinforced concrete span with asphalt paving above.

Outboard from the parapet on the south side is an independent reinforced concrete deck with asphalt paving and wood railings that serve as a sidewalk. This appears to be much later construction than the stone bridge itself.

#### References:

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158015 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 07/07/16

#### Myrtle Avenue at Violet Lane





Figure 11 - Myrtle Avenue Bridge North Parapet Wall Looking SW

Figure 12 - Myrtle Avenue Bridge South Parapet Wall Detail

The Myrtle Avenue Bridge is a circa 1915 Arts & Crafts style structure of cobblestone and reinforced concrete that crosses Deadman South Brook. It is a single span, two lane bridge with an NBIS length of 10.7' and overall structure length of 15'. The bridge width out-out is 43', and the curb-curb dimension is 28.5'. The total deck area is approximately 645 square feet.

The parapets are cobblestone with precast concrete caps. At the ends of the parapet walls are piers/end posts that are approximately 6" wider than the parapet wall thickness at each side, and 8" higher, capped with square precast caps. Three posts/piers are at the north side, where a section of the parapet closer to Post Road is slightly higher than the parapet at the span. At the south side are two posts/piers—located at either side of the span—and an extension of the parapet that runs in the direction of Post Road. The cap on this extension is approximately 6" lower than the main cap.

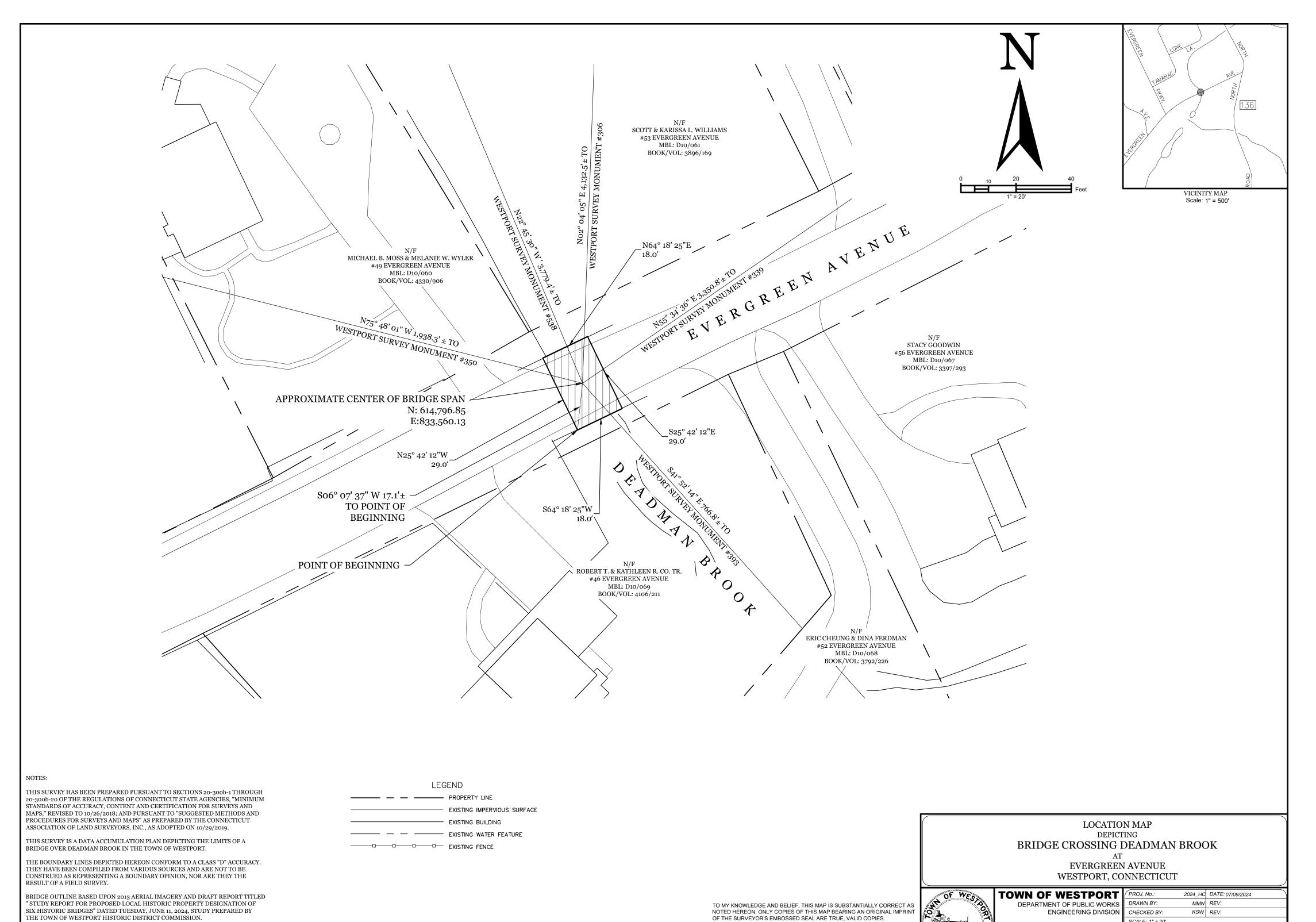
The abutments and wing walls are also stone, and they support a reinforced concrete span with asphalt paving above.

The bridge is included in the National Register as a resource in the Westport Center Historic District.

References:

Myrtle Avenue Bridge HRI Form Prepared by PAL – 10/11

Screening Report for Bridge No. 158017 Prepared by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. – 06/30/16



BRIDGE OUTLINE BASED UPON 2013 AERIAL IMAGERY AND DRAFT REPORT TITLED " STUDY REPORT FOR PROPOSED LOCAL HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION OF

SIX HISTORIC BRIDGES" DATED TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024, STUDY PREPARED BY

THE TOWN OF WESTPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT.

DATA FOR WESTPORT SURVEY MONUMENTS IS AVAILABLE FROM THE

KEITH S. WILBERG, CT PE & LS No. 23182

DATE

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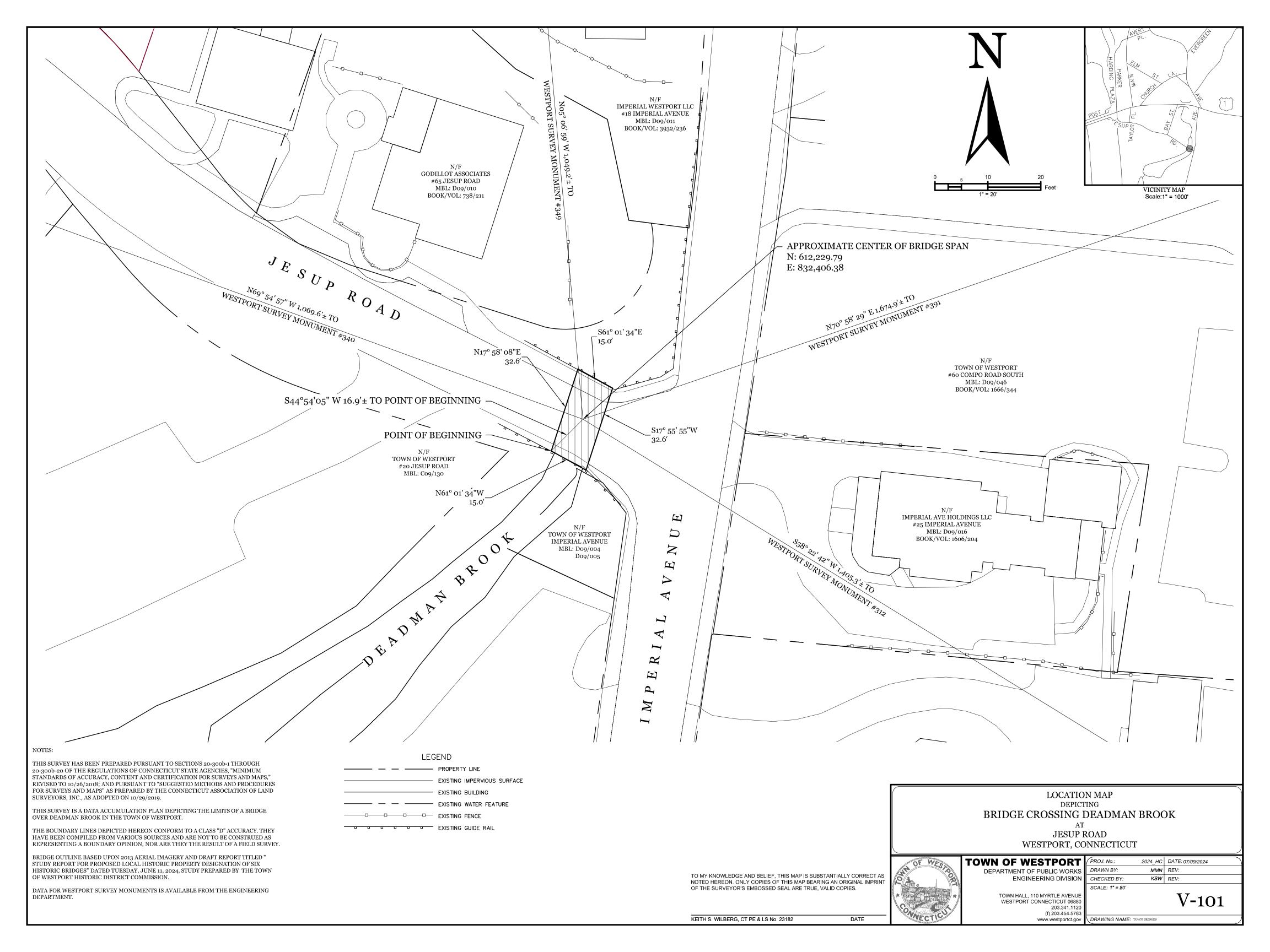
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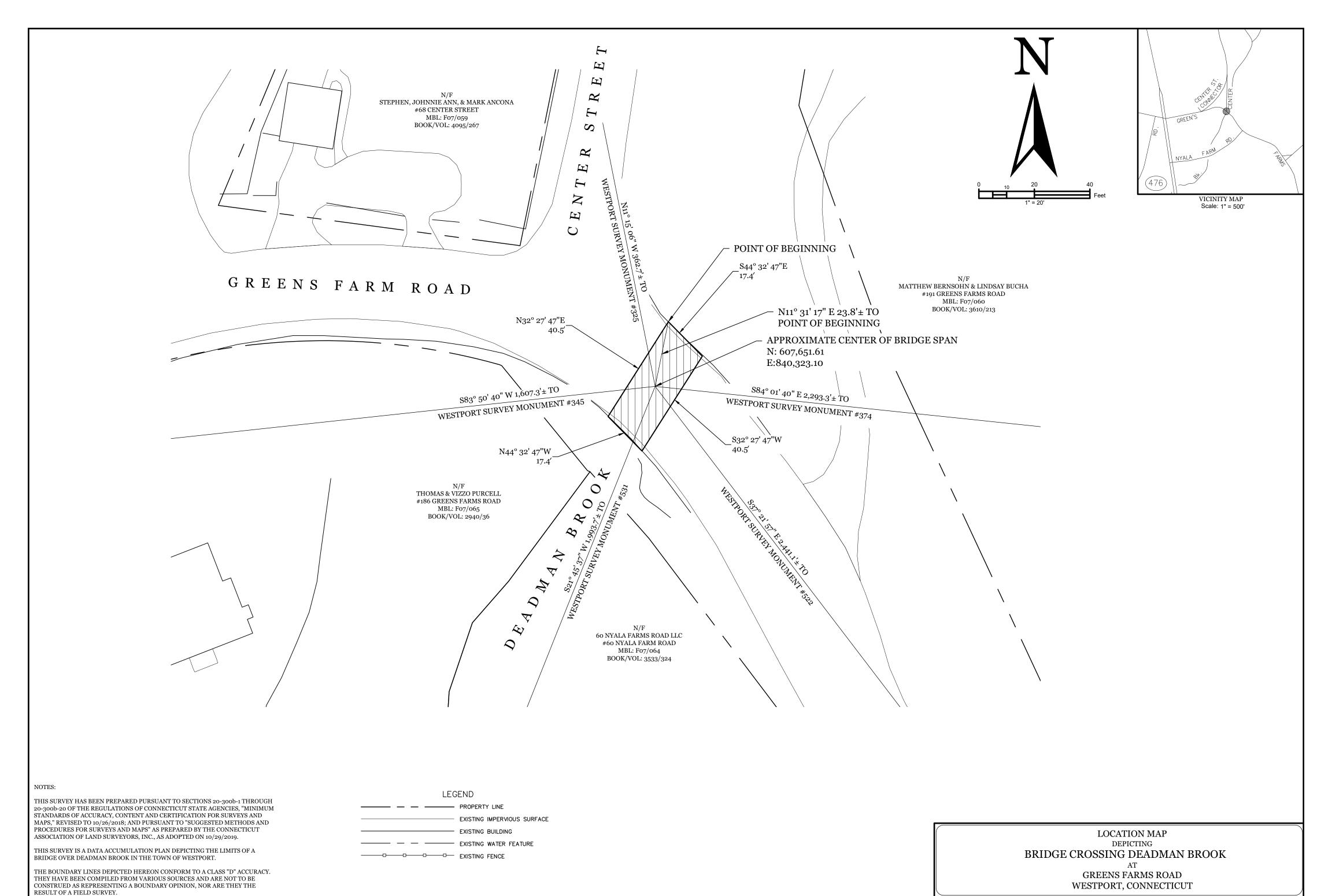
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DRAWING NAME: TOWN BRIDGES

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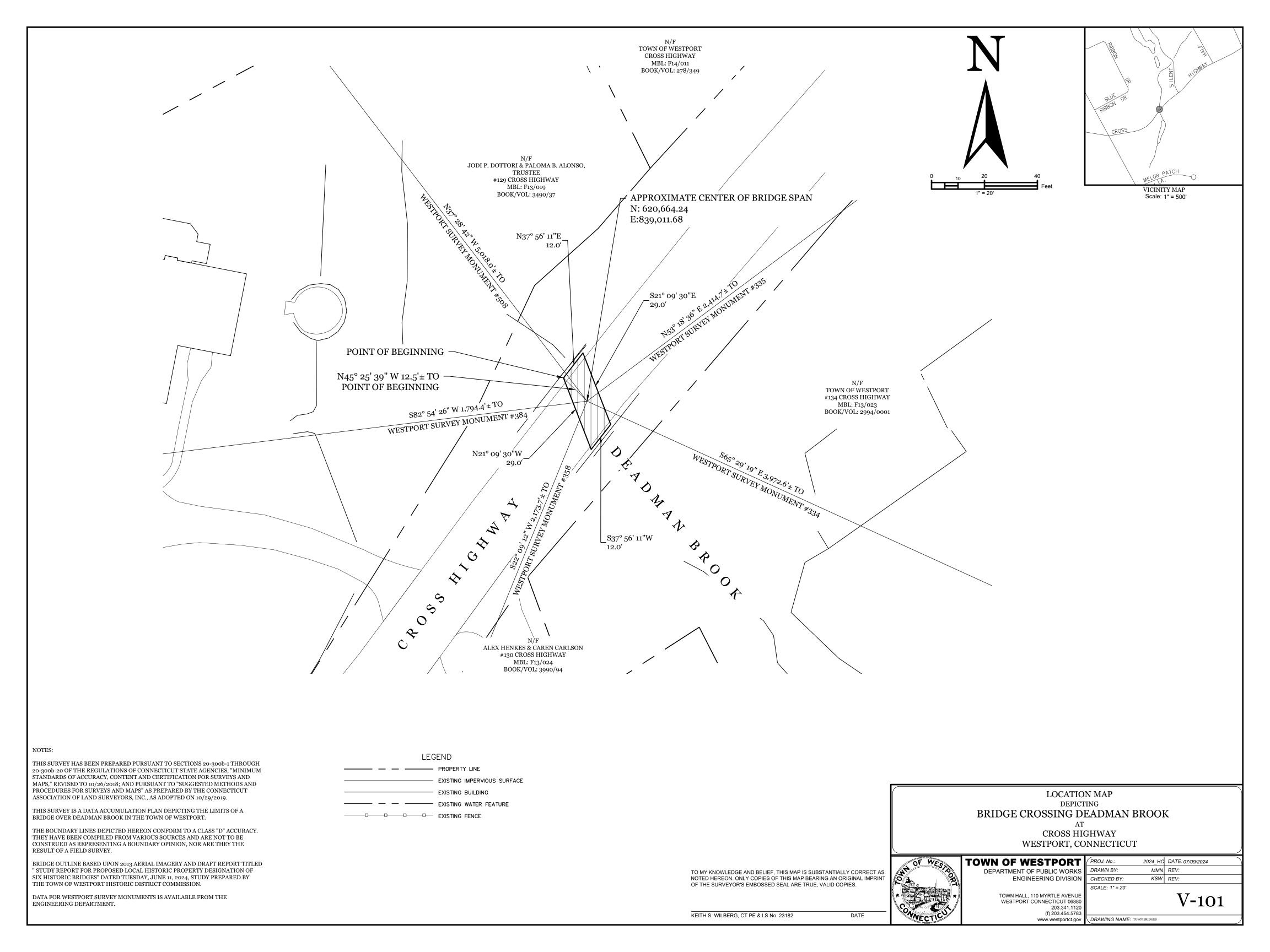
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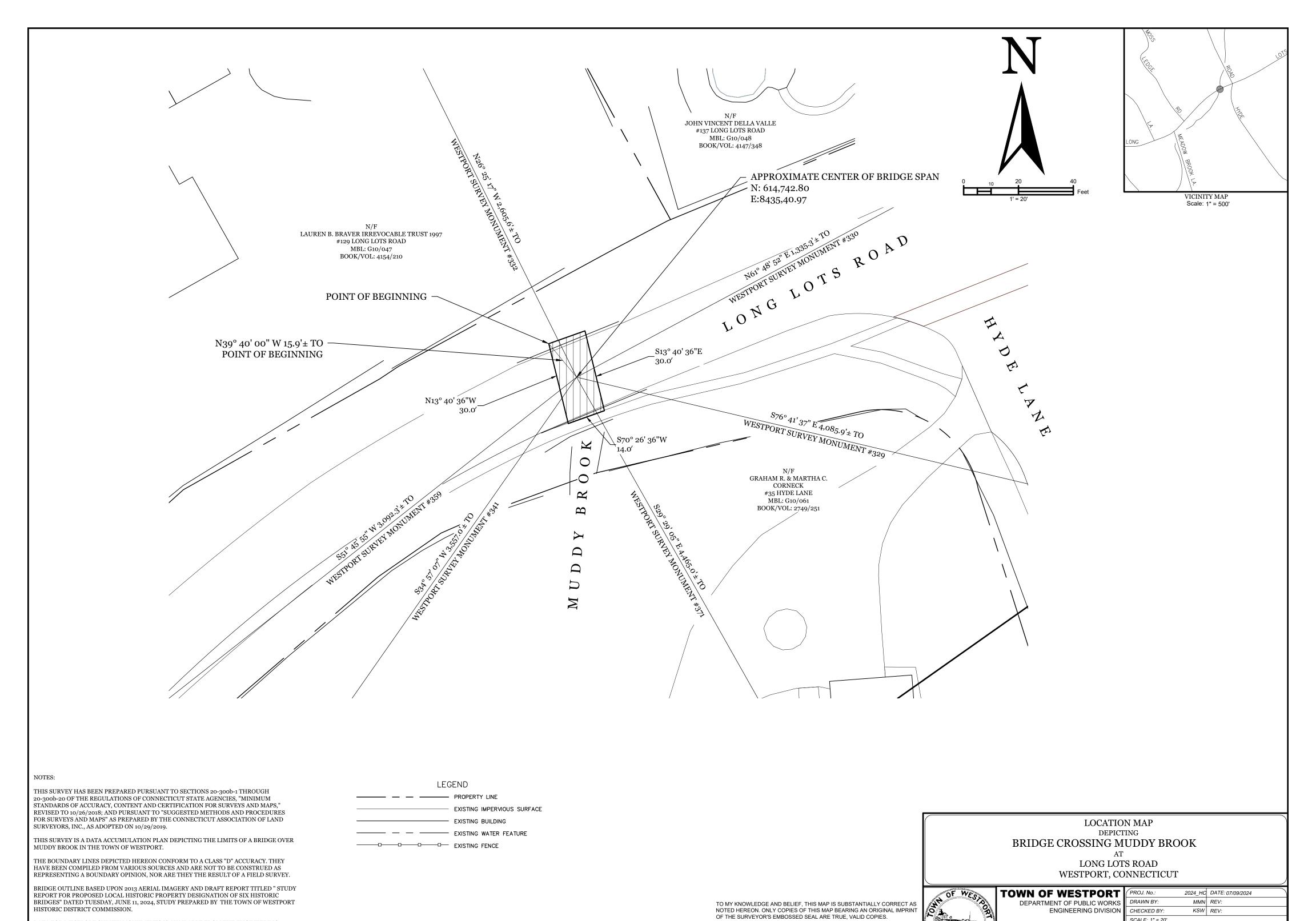
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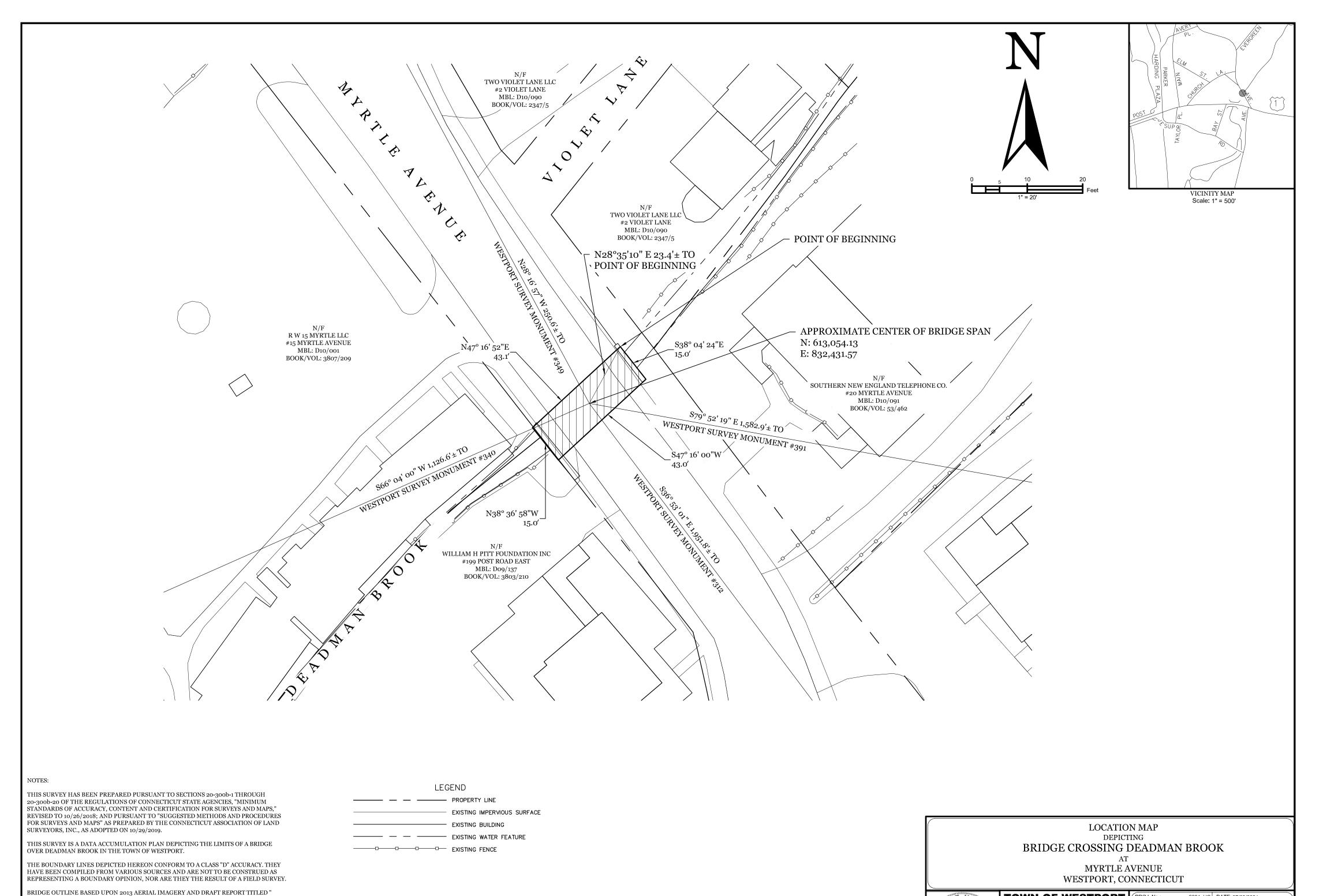
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HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION.

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DRAWING NAME: TOWN BRIDGES

## **Town Ordinance with Boundary Description**

The Cross Highway Bridge over Deadman Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-005) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Deadman Brook at Cross Highway Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, Evergreen Avenue Bridge over Deadman Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-006) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Deadman Brook at Evergreen Avenue Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, Green Farms Road Bridge over Muddy Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-008) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Deadman Brook at Greens Farms Road Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, Long Lots Road Bridge over Muddy Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-015) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Muddy Brook at Long Lots Road Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, Myrtle Avenue Bridge over Deadman South Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-017) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Deadman Brook at Myrtle Avenue Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, and the Jesup Road Bridge over Deadman South Brook, (State Bridge No. 158-013) as shown on a map entitled "Location Map Depicting Bridge Crossing Deadman Brook at Jesup Road Westport, Connecticut", on file in the Westport Town Clerk's office, situated in the Town of Westport, County of Fairfield, State of Connecticut, shall be designated as historic properties under Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-147q.