



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

6/25/2020

7:00 PM

Online, Town Hall, 472 Main St, Acton, MA 01720

Present: David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Ron Regan (RR), Fran Arsenault (FA), Art Leavens (AL), Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison, Mathew Selby (MS) Director of Land Use.

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS).

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:06 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to covid 19.

2. Regular Business Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – none.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Minutes from June 2nd not ready for review.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – a couple of small applications came in, spreadsheet up to date.
- D. AL is having trouble getting in touch with the building department to know if abutters’ notices have gone out or if any responses came back for the roof at 8 Concord Rd. FA and RR also having issues. DH asked DC if we can assume “best effort” and grant the certificate. DC will work with the town manager to try to resolve the communication problems. DH said to send the certificate for 8 Concord Rd. and assume it’s okay. Michaela Moran, a public attendee, commented that after 60 days from the application date the applicant is entitled to a CNA or hardship certificate. DH noted that the governor has suspended the 60 day limit due to Covid-19.

3. New/Special Business [or other applicable agenda items]

- A. 104 Main St. Solar Panels on roof Public Hearing - Application 2004 – by Paul Eaton (for Margaret Menninno) - Kerry Mello representing Trinity Solar present.

AR Liaison. DH reads the public hearing notice and asks the applicant for an overview. Kerry gives an overview of the project – 21 solar panels in 2 arrays on 3 roofs. The panels are black. DH recognizes Michaela Moran of the public to speak – she can’t find any of the application documents in DocuShare on the website. MS brought up a copy of the application images. Kerry described the layout based on the images. On the garage south facing roof is array R2, there are 12 panels to be placed back as far as possible. On the south facing roof of the main house and the dormer roof are array R4 and R10 with 10 panels. DH explains the orientation of the photos with Main St. AR adds that the panels are on the dormer and behind the dormer. DH explains that we have not allowed solar



panels in view from the street on any residence. All have been placed hidden from view. We have allowed solar panels on a few commercial buildings. DH continues that the ones on the dormer and behind on the main roof are very visible. On the garage, which is back further from the street, are still somewhat visible. DH asks for comments from the members.

AR - commented that the ones on the dormer are far too visible, behind the dormer are also very visible and problematic. The ones on the garage would be okay.

RR – I agree with AR, the main south roof is very visible coming up Main St. from Maynard. The house is very close to the street. The garage south roof is back farther and shielded from view by the house until you get close to it.

FA – agrees with AR and RR, could you put more panels on the garage roof?

AL –the bylaw explicitly includes that we should encourage solar. I am also concerned with the visibility of panels on south main roof. Could you add panels on the back/west side of the house?

DH recognizes Michaela Moran of the public to speak – When I was on the HDC we did not allow visible panels on residences and she supports that policy.

DH recognizes Eric Ranvig of the public to speak – What if you removed one or two from the front? DH – they are still very visible on the main roof when coming from Maynard. Eric continued – What about solar that is integrated in the shingles? DH – Tesla has solar shingles, we'd need to see them installed somewhere for reference, but we would be open to that option.

DH – The consensus of the board is that we would be comfortable with the panels on the garage, but not the main house.

Kerry said she will go back to the design team to see if they want to continue.

Hearing continued to next meeting on July 14th.

B. 53 River St. Demolitions/Park Public Hearing - Application 2005 – Mathew Selby representing the Town of Acton

DH recuses as an abutter, AR becomes acting chair. AR reads the public hearing notice.

AR recognizes Ann Forbes of the public to speak – I wasn't able to find the application online. MS indicated that they are in a folder under permitting in a sub folder of the HDC in docushare. MS gives an overview of the project since 2016 from the purchase of the property, formation of the 53 River St commission, to the proposed project. MS introduces Andie Greene and Jim Murac of Milone and MacBroom, the engineering and design team.

Jim goes through a presentation of the history of the site and proposal. The dam and mill raceway were added in 1854 to power a mill. In 1951 the mill burned down. In 1957 the block building was added by a construction company; the dam fell out of maintenance; around 2005 the outlets were opened to draw down the impoundment. In 2018 the dam was inspected and found to have significant hazards and to be in unsafe condition. In 2019 the ODS (office of dam safety) ordered the town to repair or remove the dam by



November 2020. Jim shows a timeline of the current project from 2016 forward. MS added that the Mass Historic Commission and Acton Historic Commission also has jurisdiction over the project.

Jim goes over the current site and buildings, describing the dam as a mix of dry laid granite and concrete, mill race, control houses, primary channel piers, and stacked stone embankments.

To be in compliance with FEMA the channel must be widened to meet flood plain requirements.

In the new plan the stone walls and piers will be maintained, the abutment of the dam on the River St. side will be an outlook. Memorialize some of the stone in the mill race; the race will not contain water; part of it will be repurposed for storm water processing. The piers will be left.

AR asked what the goal of the hearing is tonight; you are waiting for a MHC 106 section determination letter. MS goes through where in the process he is now.

AR – As part of the demo, what could we learn that we would like to know now – could the block building be on the old mill foundation? AR asks the board for comments:

RR – The concrete building and shacks don't add to the character of the district. Saving parts of the dam and mill foundation and incorporating them into the park is good.

AL – I agree with RR about saving parts of the dam. ~~Are~~ there any potential safety issues?

FA – Why does the raceway need to be filled in? Jim – filling is part of the park layout and not for safety.

AR recognizes DH from the public to comment – DH -- there were three or four mill buildings. I think it would be good to do an archeological study to see if anything interesting is there, for example the foundation or machinery, that can be incorporated into the park. The dam has some nice granite blocks that we could reuse on site or in the park.

Andie notes that they did that for a project in Plymouth and showed example of the items they incorporated into the park; using granite blocks as benches for example.

AR recognizes Anne Forbes from the public to comment – Some of the historical information in the presentation is incorrect. The area is known as Shoddy mill, see the Area Form R. MHC has asked for more information relating to the site history.

MS asked to continue at the 2nd August meeting.

AR – the public hearing will be continued on August 25th.

DH rejoins the meeting as the chair.

C. 69 School St. Chimney Cap - Application 2009 – applicant not present

FA Liaison. DH went over the application – standard metal powder coated black. FA makes a motion for the installation of a chimney cap. AR seconds. DH calls for a vote:

DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y. motion approved 5-0 pending abutters' notices.



D. 25-27 School St. Blue Building Discussion - Application none – David and Laura Veo present

DH went over project – Move house back 10 feet to add a front porch. The building will be divided into six condos, egress stairs and elevator added to access parking underneath the building in the back. Remove existing back stairs. DH will visit the site with a professional photographer to document the blue building in the back.

David Veo commented that the plan is similar to what was proposed earlier but reduced to 6 units and no restaurant in the back. Laura Veo added that moving the building back allows adding more parking. DH offered that you may only need 1.5 parking spots per unit if you put in a bike rack.

DH - For the blue building in the back, remove the lean-to in the back leaving the simple square original part of the building with the basement. Maybe put a canopy over the basement.

David Veo asked what to do next. DH – write up a formal application. Put as much detail about the elevations as you can: include windows, corner boards, shingles etc. Everything that is visible. AR – include any product literature – spec sheet for doors etc.

DH - would like you to keep the School St. Garage sign and reuse if possible.

DH – look at the River St project by Flannery for examples of windows and details.

AR – you should be able to pull the detailed drawings and specifications from online.

DH asked the board for comments:

AR – likes the building being pushed back, the new plan looks modest in scale; looks consistent with surroundings.

RR – I agree with AR.

FA – looks great, the one-bedroom size apartments is a good idea and meets the need of Acton. DH added it meets the Acton House guidelines.

AL – nothing to add, looks good.

DH recognizes Michaela Moran of the public to speak – Is the building shifting axis or moving to either side of the lot? Laura Veo replied that it may move a foot or so as needed for parking to fit.

DH – the next meeting is July 14th, AR will we do a public hearing for this? DH – is there time to get an ad in for the hearing? FA – there should be. DH – David will confirm with the architect if the plans can be ready by the 14th. DH goes over the process.

AL asked if the next meeting will be in public or online. MS – meetings will be online for the foreseeable future.

4. Adjournment



At 9:20 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Application 2004;
- Application 2005;
- Presentation by Jim Murac for Application 2005;
- Drawings and Plan for 25-27 School St. presented by David and Laura Veo.