



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

7/14/2020

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), Mathew Selby (MS) Director of Land Use.

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS), Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison.

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:04 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 – RR made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the meetings of June 2nd, AL seconded. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, RR – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, FA – Y; motion approved 5-0. DH had comments for June 25th minutes: the date in the minutes section should have been June 2nd, there should be an explanation for DH’s recusal for the 53 River St hearing that DH is an abutter. RR makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes for June 25th, FA seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y; motion approved 5-0.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – spreadsheet up to date except for an application from Mike Gowing for a historic plaque.

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

A. 69 River St. Replace Fence – Application 2011 by Kendra Wilson, present.

AL Liaison. DH goes over the application to replace existing short picket fence with 6’ privacy fence around front and sides of back yard, the fence at the back of the yard will stay as is. RR shows provided images of existing and examples of new. DH asks about color and materials, Kendra says wood and maybe match the house color, black or gray. DH asks for comments:

AR – would prefer 5’ versus 6’, but because it is set back would still approve 6’.

FA – no comments, would approve.

AL –But even if that were not so, having approved the similar fence in this vicinity, at 81 River Street, I see no way to disapprove this one. I was against the 6’ fence at 81 River St because it was so close to the street, but this one is set back so I’m okay with it. But with the precedent set by our approval of the similar fence in this vicinity, at 81 River Street, it



seems we are obligated to approve this one.

RR – nothing to add.

DH – I am second guessing 81 River St. fence now that I see it. I would prefer to be able to see through the fence, for example solid 4' with '8" top lattice to see through which will lighten the top. Look at the style at 81 River St. as an example if you want to keep a neighborhood theme.

AL makes a motion to approve a 6' privacy fence to replace the existing fence at the front and sides. FA seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y; motion approved 5-0.

B. 508 Main St. Fence - Application 2010 by Jennifer and Peter Stephens, present

FA Liaison. Jen goes over the project: create an enclosure in back yard with various fence styles. A picket fence using existing granite posts along front, keep existing picket fence along border with Acton Women's club, use black mesh fence with wooden posts along back and side that connect to existing picket fence and new picket fence along front. Where the plan indicates mesh fence and gate on side of barn, which may not be visible from Main St., may use picket fence. RR displays the supplied photos and plans. DH asks for comments:

AR – Why is the picket fence along Main St. forward of the house? Jen – that is where the existing granite posts are. DH also added that the fence will be in line with the front edge of the porch. I like the mesh with wood posts along the side and back. What will be the height? Jen – the existing posts are 42".

AL – do the granite posts have no fence now and you want to put the new fence there? Jen – No fence now, want to use existing granite posts with new fence. Fine with what is proposed.

FA – I like the black mesh and wooden posts, overall looks good.

RR – I like the proposed fencing.

DH – will it connect to the barn? Jen – The fence will turn the corner and go to the side of the barn with a gate. May use mesh or white pickets.

FA makes a motion to approve the proposed fencing. AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y; motion approved 5-0.

C. 35 School St. Wall Vents - Application 2012 by South Acton Congregational Church, Steve Hadden present

No liaison assigned. DH is having video issues, so RR reads the application description and displays the supplied photos and plans. Steve adds that the building inspector is requiring ventilation for one small area of the roof being insulated and two vents will be the only visible change. There is no soffit in the area as the wall runs up to the edge of the roof and there is a gutter along the edge. This area has ice dam problems.

There is a discussion about the structure and if the vents in this location will be effective at ventilating under the roof. The rafter butt into that wall, the top clapboard is basically



the fascia to the rafters. The two vents will only support 2-4 bays of the roof. Steve added that the floor of the room under the bell is insulated and heat bleeds from the front foyer into the attic room and melts snow that runs onto the roof in question and freezes.

AR – I do not think the louvered vents are attractive, but they will probably be temporary, and it may be a good experiment to see if they will provide enough venting, but I don't think they will. DH – maybe something that is larger like a dryer vent would work better. AR – would we be willing to allow a bigger vent as the proposed does not seem like it would be enough. Steve said his contractor proposed these vents and he would be open to other options. AR thinks filling the rafters with foam may work on such a small roof and that the building inspector may allow it to be unvented as it is such a small area. Steve does not think such a small area would be economical to spray foam. AR said he could try using R7 rigid foam panels in the bays and use canned foam to seal around the edges. Both DH and AR do not think the proposed venting is enough but filling the rafters with 4-5 inches of rigid foam might be enough. FA asked if it will still need to be vented, and AR said that it would not. AR suggested that Steve talk to the building commissioner Frank Ramsbottom to see if for this one small problem area could be unvented. Steve will talk to Frank and if what is suggested is acceptable then no vents will be needed, and the rest of the insulation work will not have any visible impact and he will not have to come back. Steve will reach out to DH if he needs to come back for more options.

No motion was made.

D. 79 River St. Screened area of side porch – Application 2013 – by David and Stephanie Krantz, present

No liaison assigned. RR reads the application description and displays the supplied photos. Stephanie goes over the project details: the porch is an L shape wrap around; we want to screen the area from the corner of the house back on the side with a door in the front. We will add a 1" frame flush with the roof along the edge to mount the screens and align them to the bottom of the column base. The screens will be on the outside. DH asked if the round columns were tapered – Yes. DH – I don't like to see screens on the outside of the porch as it makes the roof look like it is floating. You could mount the screens on the inside of the column base and run them to the ceiling. This enhances the look of the porch from the outside as the columns are more visible. AR – Typically historical homes have the frame on the inside of the column and railings. You should end the screened area at a column and not have a corner between the columns. Stephanie said that the columns aren't aligned with the corner of the house so having the screen run from the corner of the house on a diagonal to meet a column would look terrible. DH suggested that having the screen terminate on the wall side between the corner and window makes more architectural sense than having the floating corner between the columns. DH asks for comments:

AL – I agree moving the screens inside will look better. Not sure if it is in our jurisdiction to get into the details of the aesthetic as it is a new house not a historic house; can we impose our aesthetic judgement on the history of this new building? DH believes yes as this house is made in a specific architectural style of an L-shaped Greek revival with



wrap around porch.

FA – I defer to DH and AR for architectural details and impact to aesthetic of building. In general, I like that the houses are taking on their own distinctiveness.

RR – I like the idea of the closed in porch, I understand the issue with having the corner of the screen in between columns may look strange. To build on AL's questioning of jurisdiction, as these are screens and storm doors and windows are out of jurisdiction, would this be something similar? DH – As these are fixed screens and not removable it is in our jurisdiction.

More discussion on the positioning of the screens and color to make them blend in more. The commission would like more detail on positioning, materials, and details like size of screens and frames: are they 2x2 or 2x4? Will there be horizontal members? What is the style of door? We would like to see a plan view and elevation views from front and side. AR adds that things that seem subtle in theory may not be in reality and the details are important to the aesthetic. DH says to get a copy of plans from the building department.

The applicants feel that this is a small project and that the commission is overreaching in requirements and aesthetic control over their house.

E. 104 Main St. Solar Panels on roof Public Hearing – Application 2004 – by Paul Eaton (for Margaret Menninno) - not present.

AR Liaison. Applicant is not ready and requested postponement until next meeting.

F. 66 School St. new location for barn – Application 1925 – by Sandra Mika and Peter Lukacic, not present

AR Liaison. DH given an intro – the ZBA rejected keeping the new barn in the old location within the setback as there is no legal reason for it to remain there for historic purpose. DH – let's re-vote on the location being 10' in on the side and back. AR – I will amend the existing certificate if amenable to group.

DH makes a motion to approve the new location. AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y; motion approved 5-0. AR will file update with clerk and send a copy to the ZBA, DH thinks the next meeting is on August 4th.

4. Adjournment

At 9:24 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Minutes for 6/2 and 6/25;
- Application 2010;



- Application 2011;
- Application 2012;
- Application 2013; and
- Application 1925, with plans for new location.