



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

8/11/2020

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).

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

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:03 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 – AL and DH had some updates. AR made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the meetings of July 14th, AL seconded. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y; motion approved 5-0.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – spreadsheet up to date including 9 School St. new construction and 69 River St. enclosing bottom of back porch. AL offered to do abutters notices for 69 River St.

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

- A. 25-27 School St. – Application 2014 Public Hearing by David Veo, present.

AR Liaison. DH reads the public hearing notice and gives overview of project history. We had a preliminary review at last meeting. David Veo summarizes last meeting feedback and changes to plan: eliminate double and triple windows on east and west elevations, some replaced with pairs of single windows and shutters (wall between) and others on the east elevation replaced with bay windows replicated from west elevation. Bare foundation wall will be covered with thin brick. Wing wall on rear next to parking. The HVAC on the east side hidden by wooden fence. Retaining wall on east side is raised and covered with stone veneer. The updated drawings are reviewed. In general, the details match or are better than the River St. new construction: beefy corner boards, historic sills, etc. The School St. Garage sign will be “restored” and put back up.

RR has two concerns on the west elevation: from the second bay window back, the stretch of brick is high; will it be covered? David Veo responds that there will be landscaping in front of that area. Second, there is a long expanse of clapboard where the garage is that looks big and empty. FA and AL prefer that to fake windows.



AR – the light fixtures over the cars seems out of scale.

DH - The small windows in the back stairs are appropriate.

DH – what are the roofs of the bay windows? Not specified on drawings, standing seam metal would be appropriate. AR – porch roof should be asphalt and not metal.

David Hale of 12 School St. asks what is the purpose of keeping the School Street Garage sign? DH – part of the character of the building, David Hale – the garage is gone, the sign doesn't belong with the house part. DH – maybe the sign should be where the garage is?

DH – we will take a vote for the current direction and leave the hearing open after the vote for further details still missing. DH and AR will go over detail specifications before writing up certificate. There are still some open items: ramp and porch details that can be submitted in the future.

DH makes a motion to approve plans as shown with notes as documented in the minutes, FA seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y; motion approved 5-0.

B. HDC Discussion: CPC Funded Tree Replacements

DH asked FA if she heard back about tree placement requirements. We should ask the CPC for direction on where we can place them. At about \$1200 per tree to install we can place about 12 trees. FA will follow up with the CPC about requirements.

No motion was made.

C. 9 School St. New Development - Application 2017 by John Perkins, present.

DH gives an intro: 12k sq. ft. between civil defense building and parking lot. This will require a public hearing. This meeting is a review to familiarize us with the project. There is a special town meeting Sept. 8th, which would be our regular meeting so we will need to have the public hearing the week before. DH goes over the situation – the application was submitted July 23rd but we didn't get it until August 4th and missed the 14 day review of materials to determine if we have enough information. The information submitted is more oriented towards the building department and getting a building permit versus what we need to see for the HDC. For example, detailed elevations and product spec sheets. We would like to see historical background of the site, what was there before. Information about the buildings in the area. It would be helpful to have a macro plan of the neighborhood. We want to know if your building fits into the context of the district.

DH asks for comments:

AR – Symmetrical portico on unsymmetrical door and sidelight. The buildings are each two units in a mirror image of itself. It lacks richness in relation to the buildings around it. There are inconsistencies in the details, different period features not compatible thrown together.

DH – before we get too deep, is there enough detail in the design to make a determination if these are the right houses for the district? The earlier discussions were for putting a larger building in this location.



FA – Based on what I see I am not able to make a decision. What I see doesn't seem right for the site.

AL – To reference the bylaws: Encourage incorporating neighborhood compatibility with massing, style, and scale in that location without faking or making a “Disneyland” replication.

RR – I agree with AR that the style doesn't match anything around it in the district and some of the details don't seem appropriate to the style, like casement windows.

DH – Multiple small buildings are not in scale with Exchange Hall across the street.

John Perkins – Greek Revival is mostly what I do. I oriented the houses with the gables on the sides for better solar orientation.

DH – we can write up a list of things we want to see. Maybe take a shot a single large building as this is at the commercial end of School St across from Exchange Hall. An example is the condos in West Acton next to Gardener field across from True West Brewing, or the Bueno Y Sano across from the old K-Mart site on the corner of Main St. and Mass Ave. These are good examples of scale to consider. Put all the units together with a three-sided porch to make it look bigger. AR – the Colonial Inn in Concord is a good example of scale and presence.

DH makes a motion to deny the application to get more information and reset the clock. AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, RR – Y; motion approved 5-0, the application is rejected.

D. HDC Discussion: Solar Panel Guidelines

Discussion about guidelines drafted by AL. Should we consider the new solar shingles versus panels? Commercial versus residential. In the proposed guidelines we have minimum of 2 feet back from the edge, but we recently approved 1 foot back; DH suggested we should take out the exact measurement and let us consider on a case by case basis. AL will update draft.

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 from 07/28;
- Application 2014;
- Application 2017;
- Draft HDC Guidelines re Solar Panels for Residential Buildings.