



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

07/13/2021

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Ron Regan (RR), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT, via Zoom), David Shoemaker (DS).

Absent: Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison.

1. Opening;

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:02 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19. Clerk sent an email that it was acceptable to undertake a ‘hybrid’ meeting. The Chair read the announcement regarding meetings in the time of COVID. It was noted that to form a quorum, physical presence of HDC members is required; however, remote HDC members (in excess of a quorum) may vote. A quorum was physically present.

2. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – none.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – AL makes a motion to approve the minutes from June 8th, DS second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, AL – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y; the motion passes 5-0.
- C. Site Visit minutes AL moves to accept DS second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, AL – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y; the motion passes 5-0.
- D. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – Up to date. No mail of importance.

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

- A. 7:15 Public Hearing: 615 Mass Avenue Porch and Partial Barn Demolition. Chair reads the announcement of the public meeting, and introduces the HDC members. AR recused and left the room.

Porch Demolition: Owner/Applicant and Lisa Adamiak (LA), Architects, present via Zoom. LA: Will undertake restorative work; addresses the drawings and photos supplied. DH: saving any components? LA: Unsure how much will be dismantled at this time; proposes to save components for re-use. DH: 1861 Italianate; unsure if the porch was original. LA: Shallow pitch; 1.5/12. Simple crown, 1x1 under and might be a later addition. 1x8 trim covering the beam; Column of 2 1/8 square mahogany, net 3 1/2" wide. Recommending resistant woods for the reconstruction. Curl at ends can be reproduced. DH: Soffit? LA: not much left, and not something to re-use. DH:



Bead board a good replacement. The Acton HDC does not have authority over colors. Roof: how about rolled roofing instead of EPDM, for appearance? Please consider. LA: Rolled vinyl to consider. DS: Pleased to see woods called out. AL: Likes the approach. ZT: Any structural concerns? LA: no discussion yet with the structural engineer; there may be code/support issues further down the line. RR: nothing to add. DH: Decking? LA: looks like it is in ok shape. Not yet discussed in detail. Daphne Schneider (Owner): Contractor planned to remove the roof but leave a structure to protect the columns and other elements – wanted something workable for 1+ years until work is finished. Flooring is recent. DH: Probably will recommend you may remove the roof and then you can proceed as you think best so that flexibility remains.

DH makes a Motion: To accept the drawings dated 7/13/21 for the porch reconstruction at 615 Mass Ave to remove the existing porch roofing and components following the procedure recommended by the construction contractor(s). Recommendation to remove the decorative elements and store them. Return to the HDC when ready to move forward with the reconstruction. AL, DH, DS, RR, ZT all in favor. RR to write up the COA with recommendation and serve as Liaison.

Garage Demolition: DH recapitulates the history: In 2013 an application #1355 for the demolition of the wooden portion of the garage was requested and a Certificate of Appropriateness was granted in 2014. The COA stipulated that all of the one-story high granite foundation would remain. The one-year life of the COA has expired. We have a new application from the owner of 615 Mass Ave with effectively the same scope. In 2014 the certificate stated that safety issues were the responsibility of the owner and Building Department; window sashes were to be preserved if possible. DS: Believes the 2014 certificate was appropriate. Members of the HDC in small, non-quorum groups recently visited the site. DH: may want to be more specific on wooden structure. AL: not about to collapse, but good to remove. The lower granite story should remain. RR: nothing to add. ZT: Not structurally sound and unsafe. Retain the granite. DH: The granite ties to the landscape, and is integral to the house. It should remain. DSchneider: The wooden structure is unsafe, and we would like to see it removed. Mark Gallagher (MG) acquiring property adjacent: Gave the HDC a site plan for the 16 Mead Terrace, proposing new house. In favor of removing the structure. One part of the granite wall is no longer on the 615 Mass Ave property; to create a 50-foot lot width, the engineer drew a subdividing property line that cuts through the building about 3 feet into the northwest corner of the building, leaving those three feet on the Mead Terrace lot. Proposed septic is adjacent to the granite wall, and in conflict with the granite wall. It was suggested by MG that it may be possible to leave the half-height, existing granite wall of the garage first story, perhaps increasing its height to contain the septic field; The 45 degree wall retaining protruding northwest onto the 16 Mead Terrace lot is in conflict with the proposed septic system design. Mark Gallagher suggested disassembling the retaining wall and re-using the material to increase the height of the half-wall. Should look attractive to house and from Mass Ave. DH: How about



the wall on the right side of the driveway? MG: should remain. DH: Finds that the surveyor was presumptuous by assuming the granite and wood structure would be demolished; and did not think about the historical consequences. Why must the septic field be where it is? MG: Testing and design was done before MG acquired the property. Water table is not advantageous. DH: our job is historical preservation. We see modular concrete block walls in the design, which are not historically acceptable. Would like to see the septic further down the hill. MG: There are concerns of breakout (escape of material) of the septic system, and difficulties in finding an acceptable alternative functionally. The wall in common with the granite wall would use the granite in fact. DH: We would want the other wall to be granite as well; if it is visible from the street it is in the purview of the HDC. MG: does not believe it would be visible. DH: note that the HDC can choose Mass Ave or Mead Terrace as the reference street. Town Counsel was queried, and said that if the HDC determines that no demolition of the granite is allowed, then the HDC decision applies to both 615 Mass Ave and 16 Mead Terrace. MG: asks for the legal basis for that decision. Erica Mastrangelo (attorney for MG): Believes that the reconstruction of the half-wall with the removed granite would be appropriate and attractive. Trying to find a good marriage of engineering and aesthetic considerations. Terra Friedrichs (TF): what are the criteria? AL: Thinks that Town Counsel means to communicate that this is an historical structure and the HDC has the authority to treat the historical structure as a whole even if on two properties. Under the Bylaw, we have authority to make that decision on a hardship basis in appropriate circumstances. Robena Reid: I was the applicant for the 2013 application; DS walked the property in 2013. Originally there was a barn in that area, that apparently burned down, at the place of the garage. The wall has uncertain provenance; it might have been reused from the barn in constructing the garage in the mid-1900's. Maintenance of the retaining wall did not necessarily respect the historical record. DH: We believed that the barn at the top of the hill was that barn; but RR heard from the Historical Society that it was not the case. DH: How does one maintain the 50-foot lot width? MG: if permission is given to remove the structure, the Town Hall has determined that no setback is needed for a stone wall not serving a building. TF: why not rebuild the garage? MG: it does not meet current code setbacks. DH: This is an ongoing problem with the Zoning bylaws, often preventing reconstruction of buildings on their original site if in conflict with current zoning. We can discuss further the granite wall but do not have time now. AL: For a consideration of hardship, there must be hardship to the applicant. If MG wants us to consider hardship in this matter, he might consider joining the application. MG: could just proceed with the design and cover most of the wall, being consistent in principle with the HDC sentiment, but don't want to do that. Happy to join the application with the owner of 615. DH: make an application. Please ask Stamski to make some site elevation cross sections for clarity; MG concurred.

DH: First application for the porch was completed, but this second action will require an extension to the 27 July HDC Meeting. Will ask Town Counsel for



clarification of the decision on the HDC authority. DH asks that the septic design be revisited to see if there is any flexibility in the solution there.

B. 8:20pm, 16 Mead Terrace New Dwelling: AR joins. MG: Frontage on Massachusetts Avenue, but access will be off Mead Terrace. Package of photos of Mead and Wright Terrace for context distributed to the HDC members. Eclectic collection of buildings. Moved the proposed house a bit to accommodate constraints. Three beautiful trees; hoping to preserve the one tree closest to Mead. Found a duplex on Pearl St which has some common constraints and context. Tried to pull in details from the surrounding houses and previously approved materials and approaches. DH: note that the HDC does not have authority over interiors. A drawing that is needed is how the new dwelling interacts with 615 Mass Ave., so need a site plan with the two buildings to allow the relation of the two. 615 is a mansion on a hill; we don't want to lose that sense for 615 Mass Ave. Need a view also from the East looking West. DH: the podium above and behind 615 Mass Ave looks like it should be preserved in its function; DH believes the new dwelling is sited inappropriately; the extreme northwest corner of the site would be more appropriate using the trees as a guide for the driveway. River St. houses approved by the HDC have the garages hidden from view. Typically, the HDC has denied applications with garage doors facing the street. MG: It will be difficult given the site configuration to hide the garage doors. DH: Very volumetric design. AR: A lot of gables, unlike nearby houses. A street rendering would be very valuable. Vertical dimensions should be on drawings. AR: Every side is a tall wall; very volumetric in the impression it gives. AL: The HDC design guidelines indicate that new construction should not detract from the existing historical buildings. The HDC will schedule more time for discussion at the next meeting. DH: Don't you think the house is huge volumetrically? They need to try to cut it down; makes a perfect mansard house. AR: yes; too much wall, not enough roof. Only 35 ft high, measured to the center line (not to the ridge).

C. 8:40pm, 60 School Street Re-roof House and Barn: No one present for the applicants. Appears to be a straightforward case. AL will be liaison and handoff to AR. Will recommend the normal conditions and preferences. AL makes a Motion: To approve the application at 60 School, per the application; GAF shingles, not high def; ridge vent if any gable to gable; vent boot if any black, and drip edge if any to match color of trim. Recommendation to paint the plumbing vent a color that minimizes its appearance. AR: second; ZT, AR, RR, AL, DS, DH in favor.

D. 8:53pm , 491 Main Street Renovations: AR is liaison; AL will follow through with the Abutters. Victoria Morville: The window is barely visible; changes are to accommodate interior work. Will go in the existing opening, shrinking the opening. DH: The HDC has approved similar windows. AR: is this a permanently applied grill to form the appearance of divided light? DS: online documentation indicates a permanent grill. AR: Note that it is a half screen – this is different than the other windows. VM: Yes, this is desired. AR Moves that we approve the removal of the existing window to be replaced with the double hung window. Jam and head casings similar in dimensions to the other windows in the house, also sill. RR Seconds; RR DH DS RR AL ZT in favor.



E. 9:12pm, 603 Mass Ave Roof: Owner Robert Paro present: DH: Standard conditions. If there is a ridge vent, it must run gable-end to gable-end. Drip edges should be painted or delivered to match the trim color. All flashing should be lead (not mill aluminum in any event). Vent boots should be rubber, preferably dark. No jurisdiction over color. Abutters list will be informed, introducing 10 days of delay. AR moves to approve; RR DH DS RR AL ZT in favor.

AL to write it up, and send to AR for completion.

F. 9:24pm, 525 Mass Ave Signage: ZT will serve as Liaison. Dawn (Eve) attends. DH: feels the sign's size is proportional to the scale of the building. Light fixtures are the same as others on the building, already approved. Members like it. Keith DuBois, representing the sign company: 24 sq ft is the maximum size the building department would allow.

ZT: Motion to approve Eve and Murray's sign per the drawing and application, with its date. No recommendations. AL: Seconds; DS, AL, RR, AR, ZT, DH in favor.

Abutter's notices to be sent. In 2-3 weeks the certificate should appear. AL offers to do the Abutters's notice.

4. Miscellaneous HDC Business

A. House Proposed Outdoor Space at Town Hall; Asa Parlin. DH: No new input on the designs. Chair will invite proponents to attend a meeting.

B. DH: Suggests that the 16 Mead Terrace applicant should procure an architect and notes that the plans are from a New Hampshire firm that sells house plans; reiterates that the house is too large volumetrically and would not be inclined to approve the submission. Explains that there is no FAR requirement in the R-2 district; that per the bylaw, the square footage cannot not be reduced but larger setbacks can be imposed and reiterates that the dwelling should be pushed into the site as far as possible. AR: The applicant noted the quality of the new houses on Pearl Street.

5. Adjournment

At 21:41, AL makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, RR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, AL – Y, ZT – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 5-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Application #2112 for 615 Mass Ave Removal of front porch
- Application #2113 for 615 Mass Ave Demolition of Garage
- Photos of 615 Mass Ave Garage and stone foundation/story
- Plot plan for house and septic system for 16 Meade Terrace
- Application #2116 for 16 Meade Terrace



- Photos of antique houses in Acton which are said to have informed the design for 16 Meade Terrace
- Elevations for 16 Mead Terrace plan
- Application #2114 for 60 School Street Reroof House and Barn
- Application #2115 for 491 Main Street Renovations
- Application #2117 for 603 Mass Ave Roof
- Application #2118 525 Mass Ave Signage