



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

10/12/2021

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), Anita Rogers (AR), Ron Regan (RR), Zach Taillefer (ZT), David Shoemaker (DS). Fran Arsenault (FA) BOS liaison, Anita Rogers (AR), Barbara Rhines (BR).

Absent:

Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:02 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – David Martin Present.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DS makes a motion to approve the minutes from September 28; RR second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, AL – Y; DH – Y, AR – Y; ZT – Y; the motion passes.
 - 1.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – Up to date.

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

- A. 7:15 #2124 Public Hearing: 53 River Street Building Demolitions. DH: Abutters notices did not go out; it will be opened and then continued to the next meeting. The Planning Department will take care of this, at least for this case. AR: For procedural requirements, it would be reasonable that the Town take on the responsibility. Public notice of Hearings, and the Abutter notices, would be good candidates. AL: One can draw a fair distinction between abutters notices of a hearing which the Town can take on, vs the routine assembly of abutters notices for the mailing of Notices of Hearing Waivers, which could remain in the committee (and AL offers to take on this responsibility for the HDC). This allows COA/CNA to be handled with a minimum of bureaucracy. DH: We adopt this approach. BR joins, and is brought up to date. DH: don't need to run the announcement again. FA: For Public Notice, 300 Ft is the limit, and there are many properties impacted – order of 80 addresses. FA thinks we should send out announcements of continuation. Many: we believe we will open the Hearing this evening, and thus the meeting in two weeks will be a simple continuation. No comments this meeting on the topic. FA Reads the official statement of the Public Hearing. DH: We intended to carry out the meeting today, but there was a procedural error.



We will continue the meeting to our next meeting, October 26 at 19:15. No comments from members; Andrew Magee will rejoin at the next meeting. FA: advice to BR on generating, and checking, abutter notices.

- B. 7:45 #2125 542 Mass Avenue Fence. AL: Abutters Notices went out, probably Sept 30. DS, AR: we may choose to change our approach to provide an order of visits, but not specific times. Emily Jordan joins. Installers have visited. A vendor has been chosen. 4' basic picket fence. Circular handles may not be available; a simple latch is most likely to be chosen. Wood. DH: caps? EJ: happy with any cap style. DH asks if there are comments from the members. AL: no comment. AR: Preference is for a flat stockade rather than a stockade (rounded on one side, flat on the other), but either acceptable. Pressure treated fencing may need some airing before painting for it to 'stick'; cedar will be paintable immediately. RR: fine. DS, ZT: no preference, no comment. DH: lower cap, prefer flat pickets. AR: larger spacing is nice.
- AR will be liaison and will prepare the COA. Motion: Move we approve 4' high white/cream painted wood picket fence. 4x4 fence post with a pyramidal cap. Spaced pickets, with a preference for flat pickets. Black hardware. Alternative cap, milled cap. Preference for cedar components; if there are pressure treated, adequate preparation is needed for painting.
- EJ: asks about walkway. DH: anything that is less than a foot tall is outside of the HDC jurisdiction.
- DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, AL – Y; DH – Y, AR – Y ZT – Y; the motion passes.
- C. 8:00 #2126 85 School Street Shed. Nonu Bajaj joins. The old shed was rotting. The contractor did not know about the HDC constraints. Documents sent to RR. DH: Has looked at the roof; the approach is ok, and the rake boards are ok. Windows are vinyl, grilles between the glass; we would not normally approve. Doors TBD. AL: concerns about the siding and the window, but also the siting. Free-standing buildings should be well behind the main building according to the HDC Design Guidelines. DH: will the other shed be demolished? NB: Yes. AL: better if the other comes down. AR: Concerns about the street elevation if it has a nice window. Could be best to remove windows around the door and put a window near the street-side door. A Casement pair could work. Vinyl windows are not acceptable. Not a traditional house; best that the shed be compatible with the house. It is not a traditional house. Divided lites may not be appropriate. Double hung may not be best. ZT: Resonates with AR. T-111 milled 4x8' sheet to give the impression of a siding material. RR: Vinyl siding is not appropriate; the house has stucco siding. DH: the flat boards on the house would be fine. Re-use the existing shed materials? The old shed meets many of our requirements. DS: Would have liked to see it further back – as a reconstruction of the old shed, to make it less visible. We should require that the old shed be removed. DH: not really portable. We would not recommend the current windows remain. The lites have an incorrect aspect ratio, or replace with a appropriate aspect-ratio lites. AR: Color anticipated? DS: need to see doors and windows before we can go ahead. We do not approve vinyl siding or windows. DH: another appointment at the next meeting. Siding can be vertical boards, T-111 siding;



wood or aluminum clad windows; door choice, plain and simple. If fiberglass, not imitation wood. Placement ok. Ok to re-install windows on the back if wished. AL: offers to do abutters notice in advance. AR: can offer advice – NB should send emails and HDC will try to help move things along. Contractor just did not know of HDC restrictions.

D. 8:15 #2127 111-113 School Street Re-roofing

DH Recuses himself because he is an abutter. AR will chair. Dan Schiappa joins. AR: do we need a roof vent? Ridge vents not good on hips. We approve this shingle type is frequently used and approved in the Districts. If you put in a ridge vent, ask that it runs to gable ends. Preference is no vents on dormers. DSch: some leaks. Will move to grey roof color. AL: Flashing with copper or lead. Pipes to have black rubber boots. Drip edge color to match the trim. ZT: Nothing to add. DSch: Vents best to be a color which disappears. DH as 'citizen': weird color! Darker – not pale grey – feels good. [HDC has no authority over color.] AR: We send abutters notices; 10 days to call for a hearing, but unlikely. AL offers to send the notices. Will be a couple of weeks. COA AL: move that we approve the replacement shingles, with the standard conditions for a re-roof. No ridge vents on hip roof dormers.

AR takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, AL – Y; AR – Y ZT – Y; AR - Y; the motion passes.

E. 8:30 Christian Science Building Preliminary Discussions. Dan Barton joins. Mark Foster also. 260 Central St, continuing the discussion. Shares Locus Plan and a handful of other sketches. Seeking to retain the garage and to find the best way to use it. Various ideas explored for its placement in the site plan. DH: A, B, and C don't seem workable. Leave where it is, or remove it entirely. The site needs to mediate between the commercial and residential texture of the neighborhood. The 'T' layout may work. The Upper-right building could add a turret or equivalent to add some character. DB: If the garage remains, it is for bikes, packaging, etc.; the septic cannot handle water in that space, perhaps. DH: Could use flat-roof buildings to echo the commercial buildings. Would the principal entry be the back? How does one animate Pearl St.? DB: would hope the front door would be used. DH: need to work to make that happen. Draw in the new houses on Pearl to provide the proper context. Add in the existing Christian Science Building to give the sense of scale – to show that the plans are appropriate to the space. AR: Is it feasible to give away the garage? That can be a better solution to make the best use of the Pearl St frontage. MF: no good candidates at present. Park renovation on Mass Ave? Library? It is 20x20 and may be easy to move. RR: Likes the 2nd option, resembling the original roof line. ZT: Nice to retain the garage, or pieces. Could be abandoned; more important to create a coherent Pearl street frontage. AL: Uncomfortable with the demolition of the principal building, and retain the garage if possible. DS: Resonate with ZT. DH: The four rowhouse scheme feels most coherent. Renee Robins: Is it decided to allow the house to be demolished? DB: Existing structure has structure and age, but all original pieces and character are gone. It is all reconstructed, in structure and façade. Stone foundation is of value and some timberframing. Confirmed by DH and AR. RRobins: Why is this not all part of the historic value? AR: Vinyl sided box with Vinyl windows presently. RRobins: Row houses – DB: no garage doors on Pearl. Not yet an application. RR: Parking lot – DB: current



parking lot. It is shared with the commercial property. MF: owns the red building that surrounds the lot on 2 sides. Satisfies Acton's zoning requirements for parking/paving ratios. Terra Friedrichs: Is the greenspace preserved? DB: different layout. There is greenspace. TF: Would prefer to preserve the house. Wants a smaller presence on the site. RRobins: Agrees with TF. DH: eager to hear from you when you are ready for further discussion.

- F. 9:00 Asa Parlin House Preliminary Discussions. Karle Packard. Site plan from landscape architect. Remove curb cut to left of AP House – removing the driveway. Path to the center of the Town campus. 5 parking places allocated to Asa Parlin.
- AI.1A plan – remove the 1976 addition; provides lobby with handicapped access, toilets, refreshment/coffee pot. Program is providing meeting spaces, WC, maintenance, storage. DH: Basement? KP: Storage, and mechanicals. Heat pump. Existing fieldstone basement; new basement under new construction, currently not communicating. DH: 15 sq ft/person; doors maybe overdone. Roof plan: hip roof in back, and low-slope membrane. KP: to separate. DH: HDC does not usually approve membrane roof. KP: not visible.
- A1.1B plan – Awkward to leave the 1976 elements in place. An elevator would be needed.
- A1.2 Repairs – the 1976 addition is in particularly difficult condition.
- A31A Elevations – no continuing plans for solar panels. 1976 dominates. Some heavy timbers brought to the 1976 addition from elsewhere that may be preserved in the effort. Front door cannot be made handicap-accessible, so side entry via the porch is seen as serving this purpose. Would like to strive for fossil-fuel-neutral construction. DH/DS: not a good candidate for solar panels. Make other efforts to render the building energy efficient. DH: key question is what to do with the 1976 space. Not cost efficient, or historically interesting, to maintain the 1976 space.
- AR: Very supportive of the Town recognizing that preservation is necessary. Finding a good balance is important. Outdoor space is of value. Why do we need storage space? Make any new space is slab on grade. Two meeting spaces would be useful. DS: Make it a demonstration space for Geothermal. RR: Simpler is better. AL: Question of the 1976 structure: of little or no historic value. Smaller is better. ZT: Best to restore the house to authentic and original look. Can mean demolition of 1976 addition. DS: nothing to add. DH: recommend not to make a basement. 38 persons; 2 bathrooms, kitchenette, and a bit of storage, but make the addition a subservient element to the original house. One cathedral-character room. KP: chimney would remain on the roof, but be truncated in the roof. DH: consider a porch with more character, related to a garden, and with a book reading outdoor nook. A pavilion or gazebo would be nice. Terra Friedrichs: feels that the program is moving in a good direction.

3. 9:30 Miscellaneous HDC Business

- A. Cultural Resource Planner Introduction. Barbara Rhines (BR) introduces her role and aspirations. BR: Cultural Resource Planner for Acton. Based in Lincoln; served



as Deputy Town Clerk. Goal is to help the HDC to shepherd activities. In Weds and Thursdays. DH: DS and DH had a discussion with BR and Kristen. DS: The activities, research and administrative, were reviewed. DH: The notes from the last HDC retreat were shared with BR; DS will share with the HDC.

- B. Meeting with Town Planner. Meeting on 14 October, less than a quorum, of DH with AL and BR. FA will join.
- C. Preservation Conference Summary. BR and DH Attended. DH: attended a seminar on a building in Cambridge, a group home, gutted and rehabbed as a zero energy building. Changes were not consistent with historic preservation, but a very good job. BR attended keynote talks. Announcements of irreversible changes, National Register Nominations, Demolition Delay with no limit in Stockbridge, MACRIS program.
- D. AL: where are the regulations for the distance to which Abutters must be alerted? FA: Assessor is the expert. May have a chance to research it.
- E. FA: Select Board is voting on ARPA funding, and Asa Parlin is receiving a range of funds for the work.

4. Adjournment

At 22:16, AL makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, ZT – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y, AL - Y; the motion passes.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Application 2124
- Application 2125
- Application 2126
- Application 2127
- Christian Science -- drawings
- Asa Parlin -- drawings