



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2022-03-08

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent: Anita Rodgers

Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:01 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DS makes a motion to approve the minutes from 22 Feb 2022; AL second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y AL – Y; the motion passes.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – Up to date. New application for demolition for 8 Concord Road.
- D. Chair Update:
 - 1. 29 Windsor: COA Status - Completed
 - 2. 74 Nagog Hill: COA Status – Completed
 - 3. River St Solar panels – the email did not get to the Chair. AL to send guidelines and invite to a meeting
 - 4. DH: Town meeting report was submitted. Goes over the statistics for the year.

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

- A. 7:15 Public Hearing: Acton Town Common Improvements (Continuance). Corey York present for the Town. DH: this is a continuation of the previous meeting’s public hearing. CY goes over the top-level plan and circulation of traffic. The change requires that the historic horse trough be moved to the side, remaining in the common triangle. An electrical service pole will be moved to increase visibility; it will probably remain on the common, however. The trough is the only monument being moved. DH: N.B.: only objects over 1 foot are in the HDC jurisdiction. Any new signage? Is it a county road? CY: no longer. On Concord there may be an indication of one-way movement. DH: Please place the signage NOT on the common triangle, but rather on the land elsewhere. DS: We would prefer to have the pole removed from the Common. ZT: is there a sign across from



the Town Hall? CY: It is on the trough. AL: should we request final drawings? DH: The HDC has limited authority over public safety issues, and we can be confident that the Town is now informed of the HDC preferences and will act in the measure possible to address them. Public Comment: Kathy Fochman. What is the time frame for construction? The Garden Club would like to have a plan for planting. CY: Out to bid in the coming weeks, with a month turnaround. Goal would be to complete by September. AL: Motion made to approve the plan as submitted with the trough to be moved to the North as depicted on the plans seen last meeting. Signage as needed by DPW. RR Seconds. ZT to write it up.

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

- B. 7:30: 8 Concord Road, Acton Congregational Church, Concord Road House Discussion. Robert Heaney, Mac Reid, Linda VanEmburch. DH: The application came in a bit too late for this to be a discussion that can lead to a decision. This application is of a nature that will require a Public Meeting. BR: A meeting must be published 14 days prior to the hearing. A deadline of the 10th would run in the edition of the 17th, so the HDC meeting on 12 April would be the earliest Public Meeting date. MR: Shows slides. Two paths: Sell the house and property, or demolish house and keep the property. Would be expensive to make an up-to-date, secure building. Additional documents and plans will be placed in Docushare. One-foot wide strip would be to the right of the garage to make the zone conforming. House to the left is privately owned. The plot is not large enough for a septic system. The lot will be altered to conform shortly. DH: Our job is preservation, and this is the perspective we are legally obligated to take in consideration of the situation. LV: Do not know what offer would be acceptable to the congregation, but equally important, want a good neighbor who will follow through. Was occupied until 18 months ago. The professional inspection report indicates it as uninhabitable, but no legal judgment has been offered. DH: The costs for updates may have been with a different perspective of making the house ‘like new’ – this is not necessary to make the house livable. Happy to have the group come to as many meetings as you wish. FA: Livable, habitable, safe are good criteria. RR: Can see the termite damage, but unclear the real risk. DS: Hope to see the building remain. Consider an intermediate path where the house is not livable, but would be stable, retain the exterior aspect and history, and perhaps be useful for storage. AL: Demolition is rare. The presumption is that the building will be preserved. ZT: A lot of background work has been done and the decision will be taken soberly. Our priority is preservation. Echo that an intermediate state of renovation may be worth considering. LV: In the recent work (~\$45,000), the heating system was replaced; insulation in the basement; remove raccoons; replace floor at entry. DH: Trustees of Reservations or a State Park has a program of renovation. They find a tenant who is qualified; in exchange for living accommodation, the tenant undertakes repairs in a carefully monitored program. We look forward to a visit, and reviewing materials in Docushare. AL: May need an extension from the applicant if the Public Meeting were on the 26th. BR will act as the liaison for arrangements, and we should have a document to confirm the extension that the applicants and DH will sign.
- C. 8:23 452 Main Street Roofing. DH: A roof was put on without an application, and so this is a retroactive action to correctly follow through with the required process. Kris Ellicks and Michele Ellicks join. DH: what was the shingle type? RR: we ask that the drip edge



match the color of the trim. Kris: it matches the windows. No work on the chimney. No gutter work. Addressing leaks. DS: no opinion. AL: Should apply for a CoA not a CNA, and in principle there is a \$10 fee; BR will correct it for the file. DH: happy to see ridge vent end to end as preferred. ZT: any vents? Kris: No – only a chimney. Kris: the instructions did not seem to indicate that there was a fee for repair. DH: the change in the roofing material is what makes it a CNA. ZT: happy to talk about any future work in advance. AL makes a Motion that the application for the re-roofing, with the usual conditions for re-roofing, be approved. DH Seconds. AL offers to write it up and file it. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y; AL - Y; the motion passes.

- D. 8:30 West Acton Bike Share Storage. Andrea Becerra joins. Town is looking to replace the ‘Baxter program’ which was in front of the Gardner program. The new bikes will be e-bikes, 15 MPH limitation. Same concrete pad. DH: 4 years ago an approval was given for simpler bikes. We are swapping for a different bike supplier. AL: could use the old approval for the principle, but a new CoA will be needed; it could be fashioned as an amendment to the old CoA. RR: How is electricity delivered to the station? AB: believe it is underground wiring. Will double check. AL: Where is the site? DH: Gardner playground, near the crosswalk to the commercial center. DS: I like it. Did the previous system work well? AB: Bikes did well, but the company went bankrupt. These bikes have locks, but need to be returned to the dock. ZT: No additional comments.

Motion that the application be approved for the MetroMobility bike rack, according to the documents supplied AL Seconds. DH offers to write it up and file it. AL: 1803a as an amended form of the previous application. DS: we should reach out to abutters, and this sets the clock for approval. DH as liaison.

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

- E. 8:50 HDC Demolition Decision Draft Guidelines Discussion (continued). DH: We have been discussing demolition requests and seeking to find a more rigorous decision making process established. AL: This will be an amendment to the existing Design Guidelines. It should make it easier for applicants to prepare a for a discussion. In the previous discussion, the HDC found Concord’s rules rather too strict. We noted that not only Colonial buildings have historic value. Our mission guides the path we should take. A series of questions help elicit the arguments relevant to the mission to help a wise decision. DH: In identifying cases in which there is no presumption against demolition, should it be renovation not practical and/or structure of no historic value? We prefer the and/or construction. Also: a building houses something. A structure is other than a building. Want to make sure this is clear also for laypersons. The structural integrity of a building should be specifically called out to distinguish from this odd use of structure. RR: The words could be Capitalized to make sure that the technical meeting is intended. AL: a paragraph of definitions could precede the discussions. DS: haggles over a couple of words. RR: There are houses in MACRIS which are not in the Historic Districts. AL: MACRIS is over-inclusive, but still a useful reference for those buildings which are in the Districts. Pertinent information from MACRIS and other suitable sources is a better wording. ZT: in defining “significant” qualify ‘important’ – who is the judge of this? Significant is probably a better word. But consistency and hewing to standard use of the language takes precedence. Or ‘notable’ – some sort of record may be a pre-requisite. Tangible. Documented. DH: “Distinctive characteristics and architecture”: a District has a



collective value, and together form a whole. Important to communicate this. BR: The vernacular is important and often more important than the exceptional items. DH: Location: the relationship to adjacent buildings. The spaces in between the buildings is crucial for the Acton districts. Relocation: The three Acton districts have particular characters. Wanted to highlight this. DS: Either explain the 3rd bullet is for relocation to Historic Districts or remove as redundant. DS: What particular efforts have been taken to maintain the building over time? – what can we do with this information? Does it allow us to make a better decision about what to do with the request? Secure: taking action to prevent degradation of the building. DH: these are key points for the discussion. AL: If we want to amend the guidelines, we would need a public meeting. AL does not think that these amendments change the standard for demolition; they only provide more detail concerning the application of the standard to assist the applicant in preparing for the hearing and the Commission in judging the application. They thus could be used in judging applications even before they are finally adopted. DS: should we expect to write a response to all of these points when making a decision? AL/DH: no – we may include any of these in helping to form our written response to a request for demolition.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 9:44 pm, DH makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, RR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AL - Y; the motion passes.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Public Works drawings for the Acton Town Common Improvements.
- 8 Concord Road Demolition presentation
- Gardner bike rack previous application and photos of the planned rack
- Draft revised guidelines for how to approach a request for demolition