



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2022-05-10

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Ron Regan (RR), David Shoemaker (DS), Fran Arsenault (FA) BOS liaison, Anita Rodgers, (AR, joined at 19:09), Art Leavens (AL), Barbara Rhines (BR) Cultural Resource Planner, Zach Taillefer (ZT).

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 – None.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DS makes a motion to approve the minutes from 26 April 2022; AR second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y. The motion passes.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – Up to date. One extension to wait a bit for closer to the expiration date.
- D. Chair Update:
 - 1. Window field visits: 12 Wright Terrace; 25 Windsor Avenue. DH and AR will seek a time. BR: No applications are in yet for these addresses.
 - 2. HDC Shell IT Updates for Member’s Emails – RR: IT has said that there will be individual email addresses which should address the problem. BR: there have been problems with some service providers. HDC members should ask the Town Clerk (or possibly the IT team) for a specific Town email address.
 - 3. David Shoemaker Elevated to Full HDC Member
 - 4. Next meeting 24 May will not have a quorum. Next meeting will be June 14.

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

- A. 7:15 53 River Street Public Hearing for Dam Removal: DH: Previous meetings gave approval for limited demolition. Has now been classified as unsafe. BR reads the public notice. David Martin and Andy MaGee join. Extensive modeling demonstrated the need to completely remove the dam from abutment to abutment, unfortunately. It is planned to use some of the stones removed to make a visual gesture to remind viewers of the original



dam. AL, DS like the plan. RR: are there replacement parts to be installed? AM: almost everything will be original or 'natural'. Work will be quick; the river will be diverted to the old mill race with coffer dams, the central dam work will be done, and the coffer dams will be removed. ZT, AR have no questions. DH: Quite a number of large granite blocks. They belong to the site. It is important that they remain here, and that this be clear to all those working on the project. Would like to have the blocks indicate the full width of the dam. AM: Most/all will be needed to realize the plan. Dennis Dale, landscape architect, is identifying from old maps and will try to identify at least the corners of the buildings. There will be a way to approach the water and interact with it. Kendra Wilson: What is the timing for the demolition of the current dam? Material to be removed? Any safety concerns during the work? AM: permitting this summer, and likely to need to wait for all activities until early-summer of 2023. We do plan to get a crane in soon to remove some of the debris and small trees out. About 300 cu yards of material will be removed to recreate the floodplain. There should be no increased risk at any time during the process. DS: Interaction with the First Peoples? AM: They have been notified, but with no response. Nothing was found in preparatory investigation. AL: The demolition guidelines requires the approval of the HDC except when required for safety. The presumption against demolition in fact no longer applies here. DH: The HDC is not the controlling agency here, but we feel it is appropriate to contribute to the design.

AR: makes a Motion to approve the removal of the Shoddy Mill Dam per the presentation on 10 May. AR will be liaison. DH takes a roll call vote: AL – Y, DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AR - Y; the motion passes. DH: granite blocks to be required to be retained on site and used where possible; and we recommend that there be a visual continuation of the dam using stones if possible. BR: 6 June is 60 days from the extension. AL: CoA is valid for one year; we can renew as needed.

- B. 8:01 282 Central Street Signage Application. Elizabeth Bejar-Benz joins. Wishes to have a sign for a business. Copied the basic design of the existing signs. Could be vinyl or wood base. DH: Recently approved 'wicked good'; ZT determines that the HDC approved painted letters, but the base can be wood or vinyl. It should be laminated to protect, with color and style to match. ZT, who will serve as liaison, moves to approve a surface-mount sign for Ames Art Studio and Gallery, painted letters, laminated, on vinyl or wood base, to match other signs. ZT will send to BR. Another 5 days for the abutters to respond. DH takes a roll call vote: AL – Y, DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AR - Y; the motion passes. RR will forward the application to ZT
- C. 8:15 Renew 78 Nagog Hill Road COA: DH and AR looked at this project. Relatively new house, with a goal of rebuilding the front porch. The house is quite set back. Approval was given for a collection of work. The owner did a lot of the work. The certificate is now expired. He will take out a new building permit. Modern materials were appropriate, given the date of construction of the original house. DH recommends that a new CoA be issued. DH Moves that we extend 1506a, same description of work. AR will look for the original word document. DH takes a roll call vote: AL – Y, DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AR - Y; the motion passes.
- D. 8:30 Request for Videos of 6/8/21, 7/3/21 and 7/27/21 HDC Meetings: DH: Jessica Donahue, working on 615 Mass Ave, asking for recordings of past HDC meetings. RR



sent them per the request.

- E. 8:45 HDC Demolition Decision Draft Guidelines: Anne Forbes joins. DH: what is the procedure for adopting these guidelines? AL: We need a public meeting, with a normal vote. If approved at this meeting, this could be a focus of the meeting on 14 June. No other approval is required. AL: Black font is extant, red font first pass, blue second pass, green 3rd pass. Purple is the most recent iteration; we focus on those changes. *Particular code provisions*: DH: 9309 for 1-2 family. AR will check on the International Building Code; ‘existing buildings’ chapter with categories for historic buildings. *Either individually or as an unlisted building...* AF: Does this refer to a non-contributing building? AL: Rather, the houses which serves for workers. 8 Concord was not individually listed. AF: A building contributing to a National Registered district. *What is your proposal...*: DH: Do we note anywhere that knowing the fate of the site is a pre-requisite for approval of demolition? We should make that clear. DS: Agree, and this should appear early in the document. AR also resonates. The proposal could be for a building or not, but we must have a proposal. *Why is demolition necessary?*: DH: Could be moved up. AL: Likes it as the capstone for the argument. DS likes it here. AL: Illuminated by the discussion of the dam and the fact that public safety required the demolition, should we note this possible situation? Note mentioned in our code. DH: It is really quite rare. We have to defer to the greater authority, but we may still vote if we wish. The laws for a safety-driven demolition are very clear. AL: Murky; they may be obligated to pass the project by the HDC. DH: prefer not to try to write it down. DS: Turn all the font black.
- Checklist: DH: We may have to do our own research to confirm that facts are confirmed. AL: we do want the applicants to carry the primary initial burden. DS: recommends that the abbreviations be expanded. BR: Do these need to be approved? DS, AL, AR: believe this will be useful for the applicants as well as for the HDC, and will show that the threshold is high. DH: Good to add a short introduction to say that the guidelines should be read and understood before using these guidelines. ZT: this is not an application form to be completed. DH: We will take this up, at a public meeting at 7:15 pm on the 14 June. BR: will follow through with the posting. DS/FA: there will be a vote on moving to an electronic posting at the Town Meeting.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 22:50 DH makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AL – Y, AR - Y; the motion passes.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Presentation on 53 River St
- Draft Demolition guidelines