



ACTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes January 12, 2022, 7:30 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Bill Dickinson (BD) - Chair, Bob Ferrara (BF), Bill Klauer (BK), Alissa Nicol (AN) - Clerk, Barb Rhines (BR) - Planning Division, Victoria Beyer

Guests: Anne Forbes (AF), Andy Magee - 53 River Street Project Manager, Michael and Meredith Bergmann, John Upton, Joe Will, Stephanie Krantz - 53 River Street Committee

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA) - Select Board Liaison

Opening

Chair Bill Dickinson called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM, and read the procedures and agreed-on policies the Town developed for these web-based Zoom meetings. Now that the Mass. Legislature has extended the open meeting pandemic rules about using Zoom vs. in-person meetings, the AHC will continue with Zoom meetings indefinitely until there is consensus about returning to in-person meetings.

I. Regular Business

1) Approval of December Minutes – Meeting minutes from the AHC's December meeting were reviewed; BF moved and BK seconded a motion to approve the minutes; the minutes were approved unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

2) Citizen Concerns: AF alerted the commission via email (which was not received by all members) and again during the meeting to the upcoming discussion in town regarding a zoning change (a zone within 1/2 mile of the commuter rail station allowing a minimum of 15 units/acre by right) to bring Acton into compliance with the Housing Choice legislation recently passed by the state legislature - this is of special concern to the commission given the significant historic/cultural resources in this section of town; AN alerted the commission to an upcoming scenic road hearing for 62-64 Pope Road, the applicant is seeking a permit for work already completed, the reconstruction of a stone wall, the commission looked at photos from the application, and agreed to submit

comments to the Planning Board asking for the applicant to be required to remove the mortar from the stone wall; commission members also discussed the need to have requests for comment emailed from Planning Dept to the HC (the question of whether the email shell is functioning properly will be investigated by BD reaching out to FA)

3) Any ZBA/Planning Board projects on the CRL: BK reports nothing noted on agendas of the ZBA or PB, but of interest is that 115 River St has been sold, as has the adjacent parcel

4) Bridge Project between Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and TTT: BD reports no update except the surveyor has begun work

5) Archaeological By-Law Update: BF reports that he met with Strong Bear (of the Massachusetts nation and Nashoba band) and Dan Boudillion from the Littleton Historical Society as part of community outreach efforts, both were supportive; Duncan Ritchie (PAL archaeologist who conducted 2008 surveys in town) has agreed to speak, perhaps at the next public forum, BR has drafted a survey aimed to gauge the public's awareness of the proposed bylaw and pre/post contact maps; outreach will continue leading up to the 5/16/22 Town Meeting where the bylaw will be on the Town Meeting Warrant

6) 53 River Street Update - please see agenda item II. 2 below

7) Status of Converting CRL to MACRIS: BR is migrating typed list to word document and finding/addressing discrepancies between CRL and MACRIS

8) Discuss Open Space and Recreation Plan: AN reports that Melissa Rier (Recreation Department Director), leading the OSRP update effort, has asked commission to comment on the drafted list of goals; commission members suggest asking that historic and cultural resource preservation be highlighted as a goal, and that the presence of such be an explicitly stated factor in determining priorities for parcels (stone walls, Isaac Davis Trail, foundations and other structures/buildings), also add note that plans can be in conflict with preservation of buildings (ex public access/trails etc can make it harder to use a building), also add note need to consult MACRIS

II. New/Special Business

1) 84 Piper Road renovation review & applicability discussion - John Upton, architect for Michael and Meredith Bergmann, presented proposed renovations to barn at 84 Piper Road, BK asks commission members to determine whether the demo delay bylaw applies; work will create studio space for Meredith (sculptor) inside the barn; former plans were permitted, but owners are seeking to replace proposed windows with more traditional style, to serve and celebrate the historical aspects of property (1817 Federal period house and red barn c 1850s), plans update interior for safety, introduce 4 windows (hayloft level) above 4 existing windows (new windows mimic existing), install glass

doors behind existing sliding barn door, exterior barn clapboards to be repainted existing color; commission members are in consensus that this is an appropriate adaptive reuse, and that demo delay bylaw is not applicable as the work does not replace >25% of any facade; BD moved and VB seconds a motion that the project is not governed by HC bylaw; motion passes unanimously 5-0

- 2) **53 River Street Report** - Andy Magee provided an update on the progress made to the Shoddy Mill Historic Area design and to the MOA being developed; in addition to the water features to be preserved, there has been progress on defining the land features to be preserved; the land considerations driving the project are building removal, site grading, development of open space, the parking lot location and size, and stormwater management; the HDC has permitted the removal of the salt bins, storage garage and machine shop; the existing pavement will be removed and significant grading work is to be done to create a new 100 year flood plain, substantial amount of fill exists the site; Dennis Dale's (landscape architect) design shows a level park environment near the street, a field environment near the river, and a 13 space parking lot; the 53 River Street Committee suggests a lot half the size to possibly be expanded later or rely on grass for overflow parking; the MOA will accomplish mitigation of the adverse effect on the historic resources, MHC recommends archaeological monitoring, pre and post construction documentation of the project impact area, and development/installation of interpretive panels in the historic park; MOA has been drafted and is being reviewed by Town Counsel and Project manager; the HC will be asked to review and comment on planned /proposed 1) Construction period monitoring to provide oversight during all ground disturbing activities, 2) Historic Documentation - photos and reports that MHC will need to sign off on, preserved elements to be incorporated into historic park, 3) Data Recovery - Gray and Pape to submit to MHC for approval, artifacts recovered to be submitted to certified lab facility for analysis and curation, and 4) Interpretation - MHC recommends exhibit panel, brass plaque to commemorate both Native American and Industrial resources; 3-4 weeks expected for MOA to be ready for HC's review (waiting on MHC)
- 3) **Woodlawn Cemetery Chapel accessibility project** - BD reports meeting with Andy Brockway, Tom Tidman (Natural Resources Director) and BR to discuss proposed changes and CPA application with goal to enable use by public for funerals, weddings, and other events; renovation of chapel, accessible ramp to entrance, and accessible bathrooms proposed (plans include new doors, heat/AC, lighting) noting that the design is very preliminary; commission members discussed inadvisability of moving organ, AF asked about status of effort to add to NR as building code exemption is possible, BK reports that Cemetery Commissioners have not yet voted on this proposal; BD will request that the architect make a presentation to the HC at a future meeting

VB requests that commission approve a replacement plaque for 237 Newtown Road, application submitted by Amanda Bulette (Coakley), BD moves to approve and BF seconds, motion passes unanimously 5-0

III. Consent Items - None

Adjournment

VB moved and BK seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:43 PM.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Meeting minutes of December 2021
- Application to Planning Board for work already completed at 62-64 Pope Road <http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-79783/6464.WALL&DRIVEAB.pdf>
- AHC Presentation - Shoddy Mill Historic Area Preliminary Design Considerations and Draft MOA Review
- Plans for 84 Piper Road barn renovation (screen shared by John Upton)
- 2021-2028 OSRP Goals - MAIN Revised TT 11-18-2021.docx