



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2022-12-13

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), Barbara Rhines (Cultural Resource Planner), Fran Arsenault (Select Board Liaison)

Absent: Zachary Taillefer

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 – Patrick Hearn of the Agricultural Commission joins. Upcoming event of Agricultural preservation at the Morrison Farm property. Wish to protect the property. There is an effort to put a preservation restriction on the land, and the buildings. Weathertight but not accessible is the goal for the House, and to make the Barn serviceable. A non-profit is foreseen to achieve these goals; this facilitates the bureaucracy and also the contracting. There is also a small building. January 10 meeting is good. DH: The 1930's buildings are a difficult sell, but all are important to ‘tell the story’. Can put this on a future HDC Agenda for discussion and possible consensus vote and support letter. Miriam Lezak interested in the discussion of the Memorial library.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – November 9 meeting minutes; November 22 minutes. November 22 minutes: Page 2, item E – it should be referred to as the Memorial library rather than Main Library. DS makes a motion; AL Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates: None
Outstanding COA updates: None noted. DH to write a CNA for School St. Application Time Extensions (603 Mass Avenue/25 Windsor Avenue): BR will do these 14 December.
Town RFP responses for 3 and 13 School Street: DH: Civil defense building and a parking lot. The Town has sent an RFP for use of those properties. A small working group has been assembled including DH as HDC chair. A meeting on 12 December with two proposers. One is with John Perkins as a joint effort on 9 School; 20 Senior, commercial, non-profit. Second proposal is the Acton-Boxborough Islamic Society or close, and this could be a



congregation space, although it could be challenging to make 3 School an 'assembly space'. The Town will send out a refined RFP.

2. New/Special Business [for other agenda items]

- A. 7:19 Continuation of Public Hearing for 267 Central Street: Demolition of a house and garage to build a new 4-unit structure. DH: Open the public hearing. Marc Foster (MF) joins. Dan Barton (DB) joins. MF: Understands that a reuse of the garage elsewhere or disassembly may be acceptable, and reuse of the current structure was recommended. An inspection of the foundation found it to be possible although there is water infiltration. For the building, only the front section appears to be reusable if not ideal. Only half of the front section has a foundation, with the remainder over dirt. For reuse, it would be necessary to strip the exterior and sheathing. The concrete porch does not seem like a suitable design. After this rework, the result would resemble the proposed design, with some disadvantage. Demolition of current buildings with four units of new construction still appears best. Does not see the historic value in preserving the existing building(s). After two years and investment it seems this is the point for a decision. DH: Thanks, and we understand your position. AL: Thanks for the presentation. Under our guidelines, your position seems to be that it costs too much to rehabilitate; the process for that criterion requires a detailed analysis, from an outside expert. MF: The financial element is a challenge. The historic considerations must take into account the fact that all historic detail has been stripped. No notable events or persons are apparent. The historic provenance does not seem significant. The new design strives to maintain the current built space, and maintains the integrity of the District. The building is vacant, and has been for a number of years, and it will not be usable in its current form. AL: Appreciate the attention to the HDC criteria. It is in MACRIS as one of the oldest houses in that community. Your position is: 'this is not the same house'. I'm not convinced of that. Could it be restored? Of course, but you say it is too costly. In the demolition guidelines, it states that if the building is '...so deteriorated that rehabilitation is not practical, the HDC may require a new structure which is identical to the original.' Is your proposed structure a replication? MF: the level of detail is not present to enable a reconstruction. DS: could the current building be legally and safely used? MF: No economic case for this. DS: Can the new structures be smaller to leave more open green space? MF: it is economically not possible, and less so now than when the project was first proposed. AR: Have given up really on the historical value. The 'special' aspect is not there for this building. Thinks best for the Town to have a use for the building. The costs are clearly driving, but sees the drawback of the larger structure. Climate change argues for a new construction. The scale feels a bit too large compared to the scale of much of what is nearby. DH: The right hand 'Barn' unit feels it needs work to reduce the mass, but sees that a new construction may be appropriate. Proposes a January 10 agenda item, with a plan to draw the process to a close at that time. MF: that ok. AL: needs an extension. BR: will do. Emails to the HDC will be sent on to MF and DB. Emails are put into a folder in Docushare, and publicly available.
- B. 7:45 Application #2222: Memorial Library Signage. BR pulls up a drawing. Maria Palacio



(MP) joins. Sign company asked to conform to HDC considerations. DH: goes over the design. AL: looks great; where will it be placed? MP: A rendering should be conforming to HDC discussions. AR: Looks great. Would like to specify the size of the flat piece that links the sign to the post. On this drawing it looks too long. The flat stock should have a good balance, and should be a bit shorter. It should be designed deliberately. DH: two small brackets on each side would be better than a continuous strapping. AR: or an 'L'. DH: it is sticking out and should not, and should be wider than the 2.0" sign but smaller than the post 3.5". DS: Likes it modulo AR's comments on the hardware. DH: sign and post color should match. AR: having a full low-angle top of post with no flat spot – a very shallow pyramid would be best, coming to a point. AR moves accordingly, based on the current artwork and the HDC comments. It should be located at the intersection of the Main St sidewalk and the sidewalk to the library. Miriam Lezak, president of the Board of Trustees. Wishes to note that the gold leaf is attractive, it is expensive. Gold paint would be much more affordable. DS: may not be a high priority; AR notes gold is more attractive but willing to support, AL, DH as well. It should *look* like gold leaf if possible. AL Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor. DH to write up.

- C. 8:00 Application #2232: 278-280 Arlington Street Roof. DH: Reroofing project. DH reviews the application text. AR: The first roof, which is over the porch, has a bit the appearance of shingle. DH: The slope is less than 2/12 where asphalt shingles no longer function correctly. Standing seam, painted may be proposed. Gib Smith (GB) (applicant) joins. GB: Roofer's claim is that metal is not possible due to too many seams, and rubber is proposed. GB states that the roof cannot be seen from the street. The second smaller roof currently is metal, and wishes to use rubber there as well. AR: the pitch of this second, bay-window roof does not seem to require EDPM. An asphalt shingle could be used. AL: the small roof is quite visible and metal. DS: An asphalt rolled-roof product could be used, and may be less expensive. Metal for the small bay window on the right of the building. AR: move we approve the installation of black EDPM on the large nearly-flat roof, and metal or asphalt shingle for the bay. If asphalt both the bay windows may be redone. Drip edge to match the trim. AL Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor. AL volunteers write it up.
- D. 8:20 Application #2220: 53 Windsor Avenue Kitchen Window. Renee Robins (RR) joins. Side-opening casement is preferred. Double-hung would put the sash-divider at eye height, and difficult to open and close due to the intervening counter. Andersen series 'A' was recommended by the dealer. AR: The 'A' series is colored on arrival; it is important to get an appropriate color. A paintable window should be selected. Try to have the head-height match the door due to the juxtaposition. RR: the side door is something modern, apparently. Wishes also to replace the side door; DH suggests we address that at a future meeting. AR: Moves the approval of the casement window at 53 Windsor. Paintable on the outside. DH Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor. AR to write up.
- E. 8:40 Application #2234: 34 School Street Chimney Removal. Michaela Moran joins. Elapsed application renewal request. DH: A back flue is to be removed, and other chimneys re-pointed. FA will check for the original document to save effort. AL moves that we approve the 2234 as per the prior COA. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor. AL to write up.
- F. 9:00 Application # 2235: 76 School Street EV. Scott Nicol (SN) (applicant) joins. SN:



Two possible placements for an EV charger. A ‘Chargepoint’ unit is planned; it is low profile, and grey in color. A conduit will run up from the ground. DS: The conduit should be made as unobtrusive as possible, say in the corner. DS moved to approve, per the notes. AL, AR, DS, DH all in favor. DH will write up.

- G. 9:20 HDC Discussion: Seasonal Decorations. Scott Kutil joins. A photo is shown of the house facing that of SK. This issue was raised last year, and this year, an additional figure of ‘Frosty the Snowman’ was added. All are illuminated, at least until 9:30 pm. We are referred the ByLaws 9.1.1. This leaves some discretion to the Commission to adjust the appropriateness of temporary structures. SK suggests the height of the decorations is unreasonable. AL: Another bylaw, Section 3.2.10 of the HDC Rules and Regulations may be relevant; this states actions that are within the HDC discretion concerning temporary structures and seasonal decorations. The one that here applies limits illumination after 10pm. But it does not seem to offer authority to go further; the examples could be exhaustive, but the rule appears to limit the authority rather than to invite more exceptions. AR and DS do not have substantive opinions. SK: Seems the Committee has its scope to make recommendations. There is a tendency also for Halloween to become ever more garish. At least on the duration of such displays. DH: to cover this we would be required to amend our bylaws to cover this particular case. This may not lead to giving the public a sense of confidence and good will in the HDC. Duration and size might be something that could be added, but carefully to maintain the right perspective from the HDC. The HDC won’t take any action on this particular request.
- H. 9:40 Public Hearing: Categorical Re-Roofing Approvals. DH opens the public hearing, reading the text. No members of the public are present. AL: Reads from the Draft Amendment. Some repetition on drip edges; consensus is to leave it in place. DS: Concerned that ‘high definition’ etc. may not be long-lived and precise technical names; AR to look for the nomenclature that will be durable. DS: We should indicate ‘not *mill* finish aluminum’. DH: 1. *Asphalt* shingle. Allow 3-tab shingle also. We will continue the meeting into our first January meeting. An email from Terra Friedrichs was shared.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 10:05 DH makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- 267 Central materials
- #2222 Drawings
- #2220 Photos

Additional materials can be found here: [Docushare HDC Folder](#)