



## Historic District Commission

### Meeting Minutes

2023-03-14

7:00 PM

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

**Present:** David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

**Absent:**

**Opening:**

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:04 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

### 1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 14, 2023 and February 28, 2023: DH moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve. Minutes approved.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
  1. COA/CNA – discussion of certificates in work – AR has taken care of one outstanding COA. BR: one new application from Mark Foster, 582 Mass Ave. Will pick up at an upcoming meeting. Notices to abutters will be made.
  2. 615 Massachusetts Avenue Barn Demolition Update – DH: Barn/garage was taken down; photos show that the HDC’s recommendations were followed. The barn door was preserved. Consensus is positive.
  3. 53 River Street Historic Park Update – DH: Ongoing. Cost estimates from designers and an estimating firm are being reconciled and assessed.
  4. FA: The town is looking for an architect for Asa Parlin!

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

- A. 7:15 Application # 2305: 96 Main Street Solar Array – Applicant Bob Trombly (BP) joins. DH: Owner is well informed, and aware and following general HDC guidance. The application photos are reviewed. One of the target surfaces, not part of the historic



footprint, but ‘scarcely visible’ from the street, is in question. DH: The HDC has allowed a number of solar installations with some visibility from the street of reference, consistent with the updated HDC guidance. AL: Has difficulty with this application. It differs from others recently approved, which were on houses that were neither old nor of particular architectural significance. The roof in question is visible, and is like a roof we denied due to its high visibility (and were able to choose an alternative surface). DS: does not know the property or the situation well enough to offer an opinion. AR: Inclined to allow it, due to the detailed alignment of the house. The panels would not be very visible if not looking for them. Adding the solar panels will be forward looking. We have in the past said that we could allow solar panels for the life of the roof, and this could follow that approach. The panels are removable. BT: asked about Tesla roof tiles; they are not ready for use. Could also change the roof shingle color surface by surface if that helps give comfort. The roofing will be changed in any event. AR: The color change would help. ZT: If the installation conforms to the rules and regulations, conduit path, the installation feels ok. Consistent with maintaining a living built environment. DH: Can panels be focused to the rear of the roof? BT: Vents make it difficult. DH: Inclined to approve. We ask ourselves if it is detrimental to the district. The fact that it is on a contemporary addition is a positive factor. Black roofing is an important mitigating factor to the visibility of the panels. The position on the street reduces its visibility. Unfortunately, there are few pedestrians. AR: the pitch is pretty low which helps; and ‘low in the landscape’. DS: More inclined after discussion. A precedent would be set for greater visibility of panels if we do approve. AL: An incremental step of which we must be aware. It is visible as one drives along, if you are looking for it. AL moves that the project described in the application of applying solar panels as shown in the diagram be approved. The panels must be flat to the roof as in the application, no more than 3” above the surface. Conduit must be invisible from the street. The installation must be reversible. Roof color must match the solar panel color. The desire is to make them as inconspicuous as possible. DH: discussion of roof color (which is not in HDC purview); good if all one color, or if there is logic to what color is where. Prefer all the same color, as a recommendation. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve. DH: The COA should use careful language to make it quite clear why this one is approved.

- B. 7:45 450 Main Street: Review of HDC Record/Slate Roofs within the Districts – DH: Want to reconstruct how it came to be that the slate roof was removed. HDC members contributed to the list of buildings in the town. In the Districts, there ~10 structures, and perhaps another 10 broadly in-areas not within a District. Only 446 Main in the Central district. We declined removing the slate roof on Exchange hall, and discouraged Rosenthal’s Church to remove slate. For 450 Main, the application had some discussion, and then there was a gap with no discussion until after the 60 day ‘hardship’ limit. FA recalls that there was pushback on recommendations. The HDC regrets that it did not engage in a timely way, as the loss of a slate roof is significant given the small number in the Districts and the Town. DH found a Policy Statement from the City of Newport RI on roofing that could be a reference for a more detailed policy for Acton HDC.
- C. 8:00 94 Main Street Window Research Update – DH: At our last meeting, in discussing this application, we tentatively decided that due to the generally poor and varied condition of the windows in question it makes sense to replace all of them, even though



some could be restored. In issuing a denial of the application, due in large part to the imminent expiration of the 60-day limit and the applicant's absence, we agreed to encourage the applicant to meet with us and then to re-apply. In the meantime, we said we would do a bit of research to help find the best solution. AR did some research with photos, and took photos of neighboring houses. We wish to set a direction for the owner. AR: The windows at 96 Main, which the applicant wished to replicate, are from the '90's and are replacement windows. A full-window panel as an energy conserving device was installed, but is no longer available. Now when insulated glazing is installed, it is in general not true divided light, with imposed grills to give the impression of muntins. HDC is allowing this now. Jeld-Win makes wood windows of this sort. Wood windows do require a fair amount of maintenance. On Main St., we approved 'insert windows', where the frames were left in place. One loses about 2" of 'visible glass' due to the second frame that is introduced. A tilt-pack is another possibility where the tracks are removed, with new sash in the old frame. We look at Windsor Legend (PVC, has an annoying 'putty' line) and Legend HBR (metal clad). Mimics a wood window. Putty glazing is emulated, and there is minimal glass reduction. Can be durable. Plain wood windows that are inexpensive have unfortunate details (copy of vinyl windows) and don't hold up well (and/or are not well enough maintained to be attractive). Marvin makes attractive but expensive windows. Brosco windows may be lower cost, with some design consequences. A visit to a window showroom would be of value for the HDC. Seeing the detail is important. Disinclined from the 'insert' due to the loss of glass surface. DH: Wish to avoid vinyl windows for use in the HDC. The aluminum clad approach, with more or less of the frame included, appears to be close enough to wood windows to be attractive and appropriate for the historic districts. If we can offer 3 choices it should be helpful. As usual it is important that the HDC see the quote to help ensure the right window is chosen, and a COA from the HDC will also be necessary before proceeding. DH will collect the information and send it on to the applicant. Discussion of a window tutorial for the HDC, a visit to a window shop and a repair place, would help increase expertise in the HDC.

- D. 8:15 HDC Discussion: Proposed Concord Road Historic District – DH: discussed at the last meeting the formation of the committee. BR checked with MHC on allowed membership. BR: The HDC should serve as the committee for a new District. One may not form a hybrid committee of HDC members and non-members. Forming a subcommittee of mixed membership must follow the process outlined in section 4 of 40C; the Select Board would choose the committee. It will have advantages to distribute the burden and to generate buy-in. If a district is expanded, the HDC *must* be the membership of the committee. As discussed, there is no protection for a building on the National Register; an Historic District is faster and more effective. AL: The approach of creating a larger Historic District to protect just Morrison Farm seems rather awkward. BR: could make a one-building Historic Building. Applying for CPC funds would come with protection; the threshold for that is not known to the committee. The next task for the HDC members is to become more familiar with the properties by driving, walking, looking at GIS, etc.
- E. 8:45 HDC Discussion: HDC Violation Procedures – AL: Discussion of fines. Town Counsel says that fining outside of the General Bylaw, would need to find a violation of



40C. HDC Chapter P and 40C are very similar; any letter of violation would have to quote 40C. 40C requires a COA for any change, consistent with our practice. HDC could recommend a fine consistent with that. Our letter appears to be consistent with this. DH: We will discuss and agree on a letter at the next meeting.

### **3. Consent Items**

None

#### **1. Adjournment**

At 8:56 AL moves to adjourn the meeting, DH seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS, ZT all approve.

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- #2305 application and photos
- Window samples – photographs and specifications
- Draft letters on violations