



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2023-05-23

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), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Absent: David Shoemaker

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 – Terra Friedrichs asked if it is possible to revisit the approved project for 9 School Street regarding Ch. 40B issues. DH: No one brought it up. It is not on the agenda for tonight, but it will be on the agenda for the June 13 meeting to review details.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 16, 2023 minutes approved, DH, AR, AL and ZT voting to approve.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
 1. Outstanding COAs/CNAs/Denials –
 - App. # 2306, 446 Main Street Certificate of Hardship for replacement of slate roof signed and distributed;
 - CNA issued for historic marker on 95 Main Street;
 - CNA issued for roof on 542 Mass. Ave. with condition that drip edge match the trim color and admonishment that in the future application must precede changes to exterior features of any building in an historic district.
 2. Review of COA # 2109, 9 School Street new 6-family building will be on agenda for June 13 Meeting.
 3. HDC members will visit 37 Windsor to inspect windows in need of repair/replacement.

2. New/Special Business



- A. 7:15. Public Hearing (Continued): Application # 2218, 267 Central Street: Partial Demolition/Renovation and New Building. Marc Foster (MF) Applicant, Dan Barton (DB) Architect, Nicole Kirouac (NK) Architect, present. DH: Gives introduction concerning project, converting former Christian Science church to residential building with four rental units. The HDC has already approved demolition of the building's back ell due to its lack of historic value and dismantlement of the garage, with its materials to be salvaged for use, by sale or otherwise, in suitable projects. The front part of the building will be retained and renovated. MF: Hopes they can move forward on the project. Has enough sense of what the HDC requires and wants to get started. DB: Starting now to look at details. Last meeting the parties seemed in agreement in principle for the plan, and the current plan has been revised to reflect that agreement. Hopes that tonight can discuss the revised plan and that HDC will approve. Anticipates that once final drawings are completed for the permit application, can bring them back to the HDC for final approval. Shows revised application, with more detailed drawings and specifications to follow. DH: Before moving from macro to micro, solicits HDC members on massing of building. AR: Comfortable with the massing. ZT: Looks good. AL: Loves this plan. Very good. DH: Zoning compliant? Set backs, Building Height. etc? DB: Yes. DH: What's happening to the stone foundation from back ell? DB: Looking into it. Not inexpensive, but would love to incorporate. MF: Not sure how much of the stone we can get. DH: Even little stone foot pads would be good. Although not within HDC jurisdiction, comfortable with the landscaping, separating street and sidewalk from the yard. The massing has come a long way. Comfortable with massing. Shed addition to the barn is a creative way to increase space. Public comment: Terra Friedrichs (TF): On the elevation from Pearl Street, the roof line of connector is dramatically different than the existing roof line of the ell. Appears out of place. DH: Current ell way too flat. Dropped the eve line, breaking the plane. Current proposed roof line is a matter of geometry. DB: We have to use because we need the space. You won't see it. TF: Feel like it needs more difference from front roof line. This is an important element of design. No other comments re: massing or roof lines. DH: Move on to proposed materials. DB: Propose smooth concrete Hardie board siding on front building; all trim and columns to remain same; vertical v-groove or Dutch siding on connector and shingles on barn. Vertical wood doors. Windows to be flat casing with historical sills 1 ¾ inch with horns. Roofing to be architectural asphalt shingles. Haven't picked out the decking. Hope to remove concrete and build an appropriate porch. Not picked out light fixtures yet, but something simple, minimalist. DH: We've done COAs without final details, with applicant to come back when decided. Generally not approved down lights. Back to material board. AR: Not approved Hardie lap siding. Looks different than wood clapboard because not beveled. DB: It's angled lap siding. AR: Can tell the difference in long runs, but maybe not here. DB: Want smooth. DH: DB did the houses on River Street, which have cedar siding. AR: If direct glazed and smooth, I would consider fiber-glass doors. DH: Are proposed windows Marvin clad? DB: Composite cladding – Fibrex or aluminum clad. Not vinyl. Has mat finish. DH: Comments? AL: No comments. ZT: If the architects are happy, I'm happy. Assume cedar shingles on barn? DB: Yes. ZT: Color? DB: Not yet decided. Trying for contrast



with houses across Pearl Street. ZT: Are you sure cedar is worth the cost? DB: Not that big of a building. DH: OK with windows. AR: I would use clad sash in a wood frame. DH: I have a problem with Hardie plank. We usually require cedar siding. To me, Hardie plank is too perfect, even years later. Would prefer wood siding. AR: DB, do you know of a house with Hardie plank we can go look at? DH: On School Street, there is one with smooth side out. Almost across from Fire Station. Beige/cream colored. DB: I'll defer to MF on Hardie plank vs. wood siding. DH: I'd only approve if wood plank. AL: I agree. DH: We have approved boral. DB: I'll look at boral. Public Comment: TF: First, feels like the porch is small. Materials: Relative to River Street, this is right in the middle of West Acton. Hope you approve wood siding. This is a showcase building; don't cave to maintenance issues. DH: What depth is the porch? Big enough for chairs? DB: Yes. DH: This porch feels like what we've done in other cases. DB: It's scaled to the house. DH: Next meeting we can finally wrap up. We're missing a member tonight. OK? MF: Prefer not another meeting. I don't think another member would make a difference on the vote. Prefer a decision tonight, wrapping up loose ends in future if you are okay with the style. AR: Noticed the pitch of the hip valleys. Is there a difference between them? Some of the porch roofs need some adjustment. Maybe just the renderings? DB: Some difference between line drawings and 3D renderings. DH: Public Comment: TF: Bothered by renderings; they are not equivalent to architectural drawings. In the past, HDC required detailed architectural drawings before deciding an application regarding a showcase building. AR: Moves that the HDC approve App. 2218 at 267 Central Street as presented in plans submitted for today's meeting, subject to changes required by HDC during discussion, requiring wood for shingles, clapboards and vertical siding. COA to exclude light fixtures, approval of which is postponed to a date later. Colors by Owner. Second by AL. Vote: AL (aye), AR (aye), ZT (aye), DH (aye). AR to write up.

- B. 8:22 Public Hearing (Continued) Application #2313 615 Massachusetts Avenue Addition and Renovation. Daphne Schneider (DS), Applicant, Lisa Adamiak (LA) Architect present. DH: Why don't you pick up where you left off at the last meeting. LA: Shows drawing of floor plan from above, with different colors contrasting the current footprint with the proposed footprint. Back to renderings. Changes from last meeting: Front elevation shows first-floor front windows on main building are full height from floor up, with shutters to match. Third-floor window in gable extended to trim board because half-circle added. Windows with black sash and shutters. Second-floor windows on connector adjusted to break up the facade. Put a black faux hay door in barn gable. LA then went through materials listed on construction checklist. Included new/used cedar clapboards. Displayed a photo showing charred third-floor ridge boards. Will do inside structural repairs. Photo showing existing ell tying into back of the house. DH: HDC has no jurisdiction over inside work. LA: We would like a decision on demolition of the ell, and this photo shows that it is not original. DH: Will we see the back ell? Have to hold off on decision re: demolition until we have a quorum at the next meeting. But like suggested changes. Comment? AL: Like the improvements, particularly the windows on the connector and the longer windows on the main-building front. Helps restore the



verticality. ZT: Like the changes. DH: Likes the materials, including the re-use of the sun windows. Can talk about details later. AL: No comment on the materials. ZT: Likes the list of the materials, the re-use of materials. Public Comment: Terra Friedrichs (TF): Where are the construction documents/drawings? The porch is smaller. Connector roof is larger and without the raised portion on the original. Prefer the east porch to go all the way around the east facade of the proposed ell. Sun room is smaller and porches need to be bigger. DH: Sun porch now 4 windows by 2 windows vs. 5 by 3. DS: That is because at some point, the owners moved the barn up the hill; they added the sun room to the porch in the 1920s, completely enclosing the two exterior windows on the connector. There are photos documenting this change. LA: With the two windows “restored” by moving the sun room to the west end of the new, longer connector, we didn’t want the sun room so large that it impinged on the sunlight coming through the two windows. TF: This is a big improvement, though not yet thrilled. DH: Going good. Next meeting we’ll have a quorum. There’s still a ways to go. We can give OK for massing, etc., but want to see more details. Paint and color are owner’s choice. You have front porch pieces, and you can duplicate those that are missing. LA: Need more structural support for the porch. DH: Gutters? Downspouts? LA: If do, half-round. DH: Next time probably at the point we can vote on application. Want to see sectional drawings. See you in two weeks.

- C. 9:06 Concord Road Historic District Discussion. Bill Dickenson (BD) Chair, Historical Commission, Bill Klauer (BK) Vice-Chair, Historical Commission, Anne Forbes (AF) Founding Member of Acton HDC. Concerned about the preservation of Morrison Farm (MF), owned by the Town and located on a 32-acre parcel at 116 Concord Road between Ice House Pond and Woodlawn Cemetery, BD asked to meet with the HDC to consider formation of a Local Historic District of which Morrison Farm would be a part. DH: What do you think? BD: Question is, how best to protect Morrison Farm. Thought about seeking a preservation restriction, but pulled back. Thought about a Local Historic District (LHD) extending from the Chapel to East Acton Green. Another possibility is putting MF on the National Register. How to do this? We’re at the beginning. DH: Asks AF for her advice. AF: First question re: LHD is whether to enlarge the Central Historic District or create a new LHD. Doesn’t seem to be enough connection between the existing Central LHD and MF. If new LHD, only on one side of Concord Road. As between LHD and National Register, if in a LHD, it’s easier to get on the National Register, which is a long haul to approval. Already have the inventory sheets for the proposed properties necessary for proposing a LHD. BR: According to the Mass. Historic Commission (MHC), if extending an existing LHD, the study committee can be either the HDC or a separate study committee appointed by the Select Board and composed by various members of the community representing different interests. BD: LHD would better protect MF, but the Historic Commission (HC) felt like it was throwing the task on the HDC. Is this the best way to go? DH: Want your input. HDC doesn’t know the full history of the area. BR: Exemption for cemeteries? DH: May need legal opinion from Town counsel on that. BK: If considering expansion of Central LHD, should go down Nagog Hill, not Concord Road. That was the original historic



connection between the Center Village and East Acton Village. There is a large piece of privately owned vacant land along Nagog Hill Road. When we first looked at this issue, we thought about the National Registry, not LHD. Don't know which makes more sense. The Select Board seems opposed to any protection of MF. DH: The Select Board is critical to any success. We can do a single-property LHD. Somerville has several. BK: There is a plot of empty land between MF and the cemetery. DH: Nagog Hill Road from Main Street to MF is historically more important than Concord Road? BK: Yes. Its history dates back earlier than the Concord Road area. BD: Both have several non-historic buildings between Main Street and MF. AL: Under GL ch. 40C, if enlarging an existing LHD, the HDC serves as the study committee. If creating a new LHD, the HDC presumptively serves as the study committee, but the HDC "may recommend otherwise," in which case presumably the Select Board would appoint a study committee as described by BR. AF: Served as Chair of the original study committee. It's important to get a sense of potentially affected property owners. Sounds like only a couple of private owners might be affected, with the Town owning the major part. DH: It will be easier if we keep proposed LHD running from the Chapel to Great Road, maybe including the house a part of which was the old saw mill constructed over the stream on the other side of Concord Road. AF: The suggested boundaries make sense. DH: Recommend HDC as the study committee or a separate committee? AF: The usual way is for the HDC to serve. DH: There is no obvious historic house in any expanded LHD. AF: Not easy to extend existing LHD in that circumstance. Ask MHC for advice. BD: Our Commission (HC) is very interested. Can help out, but HDC has more power than the HC, and HDC will have to do most of the work. DH: Could get people from the Agriculture Commission and HC to help HDC with paper work, but the study committee requires consensus. AL: HDC currently has only five members, and has plenty of work just dealing with HDC business. BD: Not have to happen immediately, but should get started. When we do have time and folks available, we can get going. DH: How much work? AF: Getting the original LHD up and going was 30 years ago. Steps are those prescribed; not recall workload of individual members. BR: We do have the property inventories already. AF: Make sure they are up to date. Then, follow the prescribed steps, seeking the advice of the MHC. Public Comment: Terra Friedrichs (TF): Probably easier to get Town Meeting vote. People are eying area for a sewer. Do it as quickly as you can. Ask AF how long to get on National Register. AF: Done through MHC. Needs to be approved by majority of property owners in the proposed district. For LHD, need two-thirds vote at Town Meeting. For National Register, Select Board approval needed, not Town Meeting. National Register provides no protection, but grants may be available. Could put questions on MHC list serve. BD: HC can look over inventory forms and then come back in a month. AF: Sounds like five or six properties. Should be inventory forms for all that were mentioned. BD: We can gather the forms. BK: From the Chapel to the rail trail. AF: If you do that, it should include the Ice Pond, the causeway and property where the RR station used to be. TF: Be aware that there were folks who wanted to develop a theme park on the Ice Pond. DH: Plan on returning on June 27, the second HDC meeting in June.



3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 9:53 pm DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications, in Docushare