

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2024-02-13

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent:

Opening:

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

1. Regular Business.

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 23 January 2024: DS moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, ZT, DS approve; AL Abstains as not present. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD. Not yet written.
- 450 Main Street Appeal paperwork received. If the action is followed through, an executive session will likely be needed.
- HDC Agenda for 2/27/24: Gardner Playground; Ironwork Farm Grant is in process and the HDC will look into a supporting letter.
- BR: The Shed for the Farmer's market would also like to be in 27 Feb.
- AR: The Acton Women's club would like to have a discussion on windows to look into making the sash operable. A visit will be arranged.
- BR: 25-27 School St was for internal work that needs no approval.
- DH: Michaela Moran noted that windows at 25-27 School Street were being removed. To be discussed later in this meeting.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Public Hearing Application # 2401 544 Massachusetts Avenue Window Replacement. BR reads the notice of the meeting. Eric Kaye (EK) and Meghan Kaye (MK), Applicants, Steven Koerner (SK) and Jeremy Souther (JS), representatives of proposed vendor, join. EK: 1865 house. Roof was replaced last year. Would now like to

replace the windows due to comfort and energy cost considerations. 24 Street Facing windows. The current windows do not appear to be consistent with the epoch. New windows will have more visible window due to the storms. Appreciate the importance of the windows to the overall impact. DH and AR visited to look at the windows and offered input on possible windows. A vendor with a model has been identified. The current windows are not original and are in poor shape. AR: Noted that the frames, casings, and sills are original or likely so, and that sash replacement was undertaken. It would be ideal to do a couple of windows in the back where the HDC has no jurisdiction, and undertake the research to find out how to proceed. If indeed the frames are not original, it may be better to put in complete windows, or if the frames are not in good enough condition they may not be re-utilizable. SK: Won't know until a frame is unwrapped. AR: agree. If a full-frame window is needed it is a different undertaking. No criticism of the firm is intended – just want a process laid out the HDC understands. EK: worked through the range of possibilities with the vendor. JS: A full-frame window can be installed if needed, but for aesthetic and cost reasons wish to preserve whatever is possible. JS: The sample looks 'heavy' because the sample window is small; with the larger lites and overall size of the window the appearance will be lighter. The width is 2 1/4". AR: Indeed, but the absolute width of the 'screen box' is larger than in a traditional window. It does not look traditional. DH: In the images provided as examples by the vendor of the house with the blue trim, the screen box appears excessively large. AR: the screen box is half the width of the exterior trim. Want to flag also that the exterior muntin details are off – either rectangular and flat or rather complicated compared with a simple putty bar. Fully sympathetic to the desire to improve the windows, but do not think that the proposed windows serve the house well from the HDC perspective. DS: Not too much to add; saw the sample at town hall. The 45 degree miter is not consistent with the original style. AL: agree with DS. AR: have not approved a window with a miter joint. Is it possible to have the sash without the screen box as an alternative? JS: Removing the screen box would eliminate the possibility of a screen. Can ask about making a butt joint. Other Historic Districts have found these windows acceptable. AR: The objective is to have a traditional look. EK: Most antique windows are hidden behind storms. The proposed design looks like they will be energy efficient and this is important to us. AR: Windsor has an Aluminum-clad sash with composite sash that has worked out. JS: The photos indicate that the miter would be difficult to see from the street of reference. MK: Financial resources are limited and compromises will be needed. FA: Photos of the windows in an Historic District would be good to see. JS: A house in Somerville is shown. There is some original casing that adds to some windows some more texture to the screen box. EK: Again, it should be noted that other Historic Districts have approved these windows. MK: More flexibility in the HDC could lead to more houses with windows that are closer to authentic and in better condition. DH: A visit to an existing installation would be helpful. Ideally 2/2 and as similar as possible to the planned installation. SK: sharing addresses will require some approval process. AR: maybe sufficiently good photos would suffice. AL, DS: happy to visit and would find it very helpful. DH: Please send information to BR and the HDC will get to addresses.

B. 7:45 Application #2402 53 Windsor Avenue Mechanical Equipment. Renee Robbins (RR) and Brad Botkin (BB), Applicants, join. Looking for approval of an exterior

condenser/heat pump. No visible refrigerant lines will be used. A small inset on the North side is a good place for the units; visible but just barely. DH: The height of the condenser above the ground level is variable and can be problematic. DS: Orientation? RR: probably aligned perpendicular to the street. DH: the units would be visible from the street. AL: is screening possible? RR: some sort of trellis could be considered. ZT, DS, AR: Agree some screening would be good. DH: we would have to require screening. RR: There is a precedent across the street that no screening was required for an installation. Also, the condensers will be installed in steps and a trellis would be delayed until the project was completed. AL: Move to approve the proposed installation in the corner shown in the photographs with the application. The condenser to be shielded from view by trellis or screening at an appropriate time. AR, DS, AL, ZT, DH all approve. AL to write it up. RR: The HDC approved a window a little while ago. A single window, one-over-one. Casement or double hung – HDC has a consensus that either ok.

- C. 8:00 25-27 School Street (Pre-application consultation) 25-27 School Street (Pre-application consultation) Alexandre Miranda (AM), Applicant joins. Windows will need repair and reframing. Photo shared. An Awning with 45 degree braces on the front facade is in very rough shape. The Jeld-Win windows currently in place are no longer available. Plan to use Anderson Woodright series for replacements. Some sketches. Wish to remove the front porch and awning and the bay window and to scale down the entry. On the right side, wish to replace the small window with a larger window and remove the shack at ground level. No changes on the left side. No application in for this work at this time. AR: should look at the Windsor window made of composite with Aluminum clad sill. Marvin Elevate is also likely to work. AR: A separate application for the windows may help in scheduling. DS: Historic photos would be very helpful in thinking about the right approach. The front of the house did have key visual elements. School Street has become wider and that motivates rethinking the façade. A separate discussion on the front of the house will be needed, and we would like to separate the applications to allow the project to move forward. AL: We need to be sure that the shed is not of historic interest before approving demolition. DH: the sign has historic value – should not be lost (and will need approval to remove in any event). AM: Cannot afford to put wood siding. Would it be best to make the entire house new vinyl? DH: will require discussion. Is there a way to make the façade more interesting given the vinyl siding? DS: Shutters? DH: maybe a water table board. The stair structure on the back of the will need siding. A Hardy panel at the bottom. A brick veneer at the base of the stair structure could work. DH: Do put in an application for the window, and plan discussion for the additional work.
- D. 8:15 17 Woodbury Lane (Update from Town Manager) John Mangiaratti (JM) joins. Presentation slides are shown. DS: the quasi-triangular edge of the added roof is interesting. AR: the contrast is useful to signal the change from old to new. DH: Great when it works, but may not be quite there yet. A public hearing will be scheduled (given the addition) once an application is submitted. A visit from the architect for the meeting would be good. JM: would like to have things settled by March. ZT, DS: like the concept a lot.
- E. 8:30 Red House (Pre-application consultation) ZT, an abutter, recuses himself. Nora

Masler (NM), Andrea Beccara (AB), Ian (Land Stewardship Coordinator), Lauren West (Environmental Analyst) all join. NM goes over the bigger plan esp. Landscape. DH: goes over HDC purview. NM gives a presentation. Ian shows a possible model for signs, found on hiking trails. 4-5 such signs would be planned. The Episcopal church sign may merit some discussion (and maybe reuse of the location for other signage). AB talks about the climate library, and the possibility for art, and rain barrel – in the line of sight from Main St although with some vegetation. AR: Looks good! AL: The rules and regulations indicate no HDC authority over movable garden elements such as birdbaths and maybe the rain barrels, and temporary signs. Please take a look for guidance; but we are happy to just have a list that the HDC can dismiss or address. DS: Good to clean up the rock wall on Newtown, remove the largely-collapsed fencing, and maintain the vegetation on both sides of the rock wall (beware of poison ivy). DH: We see no bike racks or fencing in the project. Will the inside of the house be used? AB: some public meetings and greater public use. DH: the full use should be coherent, and the circulation in the fullness of time considered. Would be great to remove the pavement and entry from Main St. and make it green. For signage, need to choose the overall aesthetic – rustic, or ‘old meeting house’ style. Should be coherent. AB: Discussing removal of the driveway, but need to check parking traffic circulation, and the phasing in time. NM: Circulation will be part of the ‘charrette’ planned with Northeastern. Discussion of the interfaces with the neighboring properties – don’t want to remove visual barriers.

- F. 8:45 Discussion of Gardner Playground proposed shed (Pre-application consultation) postponed at Applicants’ request.
- G. 9:00 Review Town Report draft: BR: found some minor typos and clarifications. Shared marked-up Word document. AL, AR: Wish to ensure that all persons come to the HDC for most exterior work to check if under the HDC domain, so would like wording to encourage that. No objections to the corrected version. BR to submit to the Clerk.
- H. 9:15 Aligning Charter with Bylaw re: number of HDC Members. BR: The Town Charter provides that the membership of the HDC is six persons; Town Bylaw P provides that the membership is seven. They need to be reconciled. Changing the Charter requires a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting which, if successful, must be approved by a majority vote at the next Town election. Changing the Bylaw requires only a $\frac{2}{3}$ Town Meeting vote. Which do you want? DS: advocates more members for generational change, recusals, absences. AL: more would also be better to make the voting process function better. DH: Additional members. Needs to go to Town meeting. AR: in favor of more members. ZT: more members better, so long as it does not also increase the number of persons for a quorum. DH: Moves informing the Select Board that the Commission believes that 7 members is appropriate, and the Charter should be so changed. AL Seconds. DS, AL, ZT, AR, DH all approve.
- I. 9:30 Edits/Updates to HDC page on Town website: BR: suggests a link to the GIS for the maps. AL: the time of the meetings is not correct. The website says 7:30, not 7:00 p.m. HDC likes keeping the PDF with the link.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 22:23 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AR, DS, DH, AL, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare