

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes
2024-03-26
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), Kristen Guichard (KG) (Acton Planning)

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:02 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – Terra Friedrichs (TF). Questions/comments: wanted to know about the re-roofing of the Congregational Church. DH: Just reroofing. TF: 615 Mass Ave: about windows? DH: did not have a quorum. Will vote this evening. Nothing about the wall. TF: About proposed Zoning. Has the HDC commented? DH: no official comment. TF: opportunity to be careful – the density could grow. The economic incentive to destroy old buildings is problematic. KG: DH on the panel is a useful voice. TF: Important to conclude what else you might want to have; and also important to have HDC comments *next* to the districts.

Michaela Moran: Asked at the planning board about the Historic Commission (not HDC). Houses on Main St at jeopardy, not an HDC issue. Comments from the HDC on project near the HDC districts are very welcome.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 12 March 2024: AL moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, ZT, AL DS approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 68 River Street EV Charger #2410 discussion will be 4/9/2024. May have difficulty forming a quorum. Need to plan in advance.
- 49 Windsor Avenue clapboard & post replacement Application in process, aiming for 4/9/2024 meeting
- 111-113 School Street railing – status. DH recapitulates the unfortunate situation. KG looks at application; had discussion with building commissioner. As built is not consistent with the text of the proposal. Additional workflow has been added to avoid this problem in the future. KG will pursue. AL: The Denial includes a Recommendation that they

return to discuss an appropriate metal railing. Discussion at the previous meeting did not indicate interest in finding a mutually acceptable solution. AR: The homeowner has not participated.

- 12 Concord Road (Acton Congregational Church) CNA? Reroofing and skylight replacement. (Church with new solar panels; will enquire)
- 28-30 School Street CNA request for copper gutters, no application received yet (BR reminded).
- 592 Massachusetts Avenue (West Acton Baptist Church) ~~CAN~~CNA. Reroofing addition
- Theatre III request CNA for door replacement (BR sent application & reminded, not yet returned)
- HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD
- KG: Draft Article to expand the membership. Makes the quorum harder. Associate members may be a good technique. AL: If there were 5, we still would need to have 4 votes to have a quorum with the current bylaws.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2408 Public Hearing 25-27 School Street, remove bay window, remove front porch & renovate stair tower. Alexandre Mota (AM), Applicant, joins. KG reads the public notice. AM: Shares images, describes the plan. Would prefer to put new vinyl siding everywhere; cannot afford wood siding. AR: Eve return would remain? AM: yes. Unchanged windows. AR: would not like to lose the first floor roof and the bay. Finds the proposed solution is excessively symmetric. Feels the proposed portico over the door is unsatisfying. Siding is tricky – hoping to find a good inexpensive non-wood option. Corner boards are planned and appropriate. DH: The roof is short of the sidewalk? AM: yes. AR: nice to walk out onto a porch, and use that to provide a place to carry the load of the roof. AL: Asking to demolish the awning roof and bay window. Those are parts of the building since 1880s or so. The MACRIS notes it is an important historic building. HDC has a strong presumption against demolition. So, could not approve the demolition of these elements. On Hardy board, there is a movement toward permitting the use of these materials. On 267 Central it was not approved, but open to discussion. AR: note not bay in the Historical photo. DS: Likes the roof, and believes it should be preserved both for aesthetics and for the historical value. A simple porch would be very welcome. The Bay can go, based on the historical photo. ZT: Supports thinking about other options to preserve the porch roof (which is said to be unsafe – needs to be rebuilt). A porch should be investigated. Stairs on the side per the historical photo. AM: The '80s bay windows need to be replaced, although the framing is ok. But the framing is marginal. ZT: could be persuaded to remove the bay, with a more complete porch design. AM: Any full-width porch would be shallow. DH: Agree on the roof – it should stay. A bit more pitch would be fine to help with roofing. This would give a street presence. Need a platform and 4 columns, and this is a good place to put resources. Ok to remove the bay window, and the door to a window. We should admit that this is currently a 'vinyl building'. AR: the historic photo shows a roof which is just 4 courses below the upper floor windows. DH: School Street is much higher – a challenge. AR: a scale drawing would be good to have. DH: Porch at 615 Mass Ave is similar and may be a good reference. The rest of the building can be as simple as you wish, although the corner

boards and water table. AM: Siding is in rough shape. Would really like to replace the siding with new vinyl siding. AR: Everlast siding might be a nice choice for vinyl. Would vote in favor of a higher-quality vinyl siding. There is currently no wood to preserve. DS: need to be careful about the precedent we are setting. AL: We are replacing vinyl with vinyl, so it falls in the 'ordinary replacement with like materials'. AR: Has some new siding materials on order that may show an appearance with which we would be comfortable. Need to learn about pricing. AM: The platform under the roof would only be around 3' deep. KG: can build out to the current roof extension. DH: just 16-18" high will help define the transition from public to private. Public Comment:

Michaela Moran: thinks the historic photo is not correct. Has what are believed to be the correct photo, from around 1880. A proper photo in a book on Mill Corner, but not this building. Will email it in a few days.

Bill Klauer: The building depicted in the historic photo burned in 1989 – barn burned in 1936. So the building at 25 School Street is a different building. Moved in 1872 to its current location. Only known photos show something resembling the current building. AM: needs to get things weathertight. Would like to do siding.

DH: need to see the photos to make some decisions. AR: Siding decision would help move things along. DH asks about bay windows. AR: The porch roof is important, does not feel so strongly about the bay. AL: Described in the MACRIS inventory. Now reluctant to vote to destroy front bay window if of historic interest. DS: Need to wait for the photo to understand the value of the bay window. ZT, DH: agree. AM: For the vinyl, expect to have slightly off-white -- Herringbone. AR: White and monochromatic for lifetime and aesthetics. KG: Reads from Macris Inventory Form F-499, which states that the building was moved to its current location in 1873 and then updated with addition of polygonal bay windows. DH: The Committee has a consensus on approving replacement of the vinyl siding. We will probably ask for a platform and an overhanging roof. AL: Instead of a CoA, should use a CNA for the siding. Corner boards and water table also approved. AR to craft language.

- B. 8:20 Application #2401 Public Hearing continued at Applicant's request. 544 Massachusetts Avenue, window replacement. Public Hearing continued until a later time.
- C. 8:25 Application #2407 Public Hearing continued. 17 Woodbury Lane, renovate 1860s structure, demo 1970s addition. Thomas Begin (TB), Assistant Town Manager, joins. TB: Hoping for feedback on windows, a site visit, etc., and to come back later on for approval. KG shares images from the last meeting. DH and AR visited to look at the windows. DH: The 6 façade windows and one on the left side are original. The 6 sash and frames on front facade could be rehabilitated. The windows may be from around 1830 or a reproduction. For the remainder of the windows duplication is recommended. Those out of sight could be as the owner prefers. A recommendation to remove the visible chimney on the ground floor – some approach to maintain the external roof chimney should be adopted, but recommend to remove the chimney in the meeting room. For the post in the room recommend eliminating in a manner that keeps the other roof structure. Exposing the foundation, which we believe to be granite, sounds attractive. AL: The photo in MACRIS shows shutters on the front windows. DH: last meeting we expressed enthusiasm for shutters on the front, and possibly also on the side. John Mangiaratti (JM), Town Manager, joins. JM: Will try to restore windows in view from

the street, and to find and hang shutters from pintles. Will replicate the exterior of chimney. Looking at the new section: AR: happy except that the bathroom door should have some decoration. AL: Remain concerned that it may not harmonizes with the older building, but support approval. DS, ZT echo AR's approval. DH: Likes it. Normally give two approvals: initially to get it off the ground, and then ask the architects to return with detailed drawings for further detailed discussion. Don't want to drive up costs with the further comments. Detailing here is very important for a small building. AL: The retaining wall in the landscaping – want to see how this is treated. DH: would like to talk with the landscape architect for a discussion. Want to recommend that the toilet door for inside toilet not open to the meeting space; want to move it to where the janitor closet is located in the current plan. Swap them. Consensus that we will write a COA (DH to draft); approval to the general discussion, notes of things that we will want to discuss. Mention the post, bathroom, chimney. ZT: could document the window restoration. Q: Did we vote to continue the PH to a date certain?

- D. 9:30 615 Massachusetts Avenue vote to amend #2313. AR is recused. DH: This request to amend the CoA to permit changing windows on barn front facade to 2/2 vice 6/6 and changing the west facade of the barn to permit windows across the second story and a door on the first story was presented and discussed at March 12 meeting, but could not be voted upon because only three members were present. It was continued to March 26th for a vote. AL: the question of permitting a stone veneer on the lower retaining wall for the septic field was also discussed. DS: Although not present at this part of the March 12 meeting, I have reviewed the tape of that discussion. DH: Vote to approve the amendments as discussed on March 12. AL, DS, ZT, DH all vote in favor. DH to amend the Application accordingly.
AR returns.
- E. 20:37 Gardner Field update. DH: needs to be a public hearing. May 14th seems to be best for a vote (and a quorum).
- F. KG: Regarding the question of amending the Town Charter, which currently provides that the HDC have 6 members (as opposed to Bylaw P, which provides for 7 members), at the upcoming Town Meeting, notes that having 5 members, with 2 associates, may be the most flexible. Would be pleased to discuss at the 5 April meeting. Shares draft Town Warrant language. A change to 5 members requires also a change to the town bylaw. DH: 4 should remain the threshold for votes, so changing the Charter to 7 members is better. Need some more architects! KG: Associates may offer more flexibility. AL: Bylaws speak of Alternate Members – probably same; up to 4 may be appointed, and may only vote if called upon to do so because of a lack of quorum.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:27 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