

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes
2024-09-24
7:00 PM

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

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

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

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 – David Shoemaker and Virginie Landré– Cornice. Fir or pine for the ceiling. Could get it custom milled. DH: Color – good to ask the Cambridge Historic District Commission; Sally Zimmerman if available. DS joins the meeting.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes –10 September Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, ZT, DS AL approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- Application # 2433 82 River Street Public Hearing - 10/8/2024 (AR chairs)
- Application #2427 592 Massachusetts Avenue - re-roof addition CNA (ZT) Done
- Application #2428 Theater III Steeple Repair CNA (DH) Done
- Application # 2429 284 Arlington Street Re-roofing CNA (DH) Done
- Application # 2430 461 Main Street Repairs CNA (DH) Done
- Application # 2431 Erickson's Grain Re-roofing CNA (DH) Done
- Application # 2407 17 Woodbury Amendment COA (DH) Done
- Email from Concord DC looking to streamlining the process. DH: Amending HDC R&R to subject basic roof work to categorical approval is of real value. AR: NRC allows comments at opening, but with clear limits on the time available for the items not on the agenda. DS: Our documents on specific topics (e.g., Solar Panels) helps make a clear path for decisions and informs the public. Also having enough members on the committee helps! BR: Getting information up front on all town information – abutters – for different conditions helps, and then down-selecting when the meeting is determined.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2432 95 School Street window. Justin Thomas (JT), applicant, joins. BR shares application materials. AR: sees simulated divided lites, which is good. JT: One picture window, with no divisions in the lite. Replacements are planned, leaving trim in place. If rot is identified, a replacement in-kind would be undertaken. There are additional windows which show rot (for later action). AR: if replacement in kind, it is replacement and no permission. AL: if a permit is required, a CNA will be needed, but even if a permit is not required, if it is a reasonably sized undertaking, it is good to follow through with an application for a CNA. No fee, quick turnaround. DS: looks fine. AL: How many windows? JT: Side and rear facing windows plus the HDC-visible one are 10; 7 are visible. ZT: Windows are ones we approve. Looks good. AL moves approval of the application as set forth. ZT Seconds. AL, ZT, DS, AR. Approved. AL to write.

B. 7:45 Proposed Amendment to #2334 14 Newtown Road fencing for generator. DS, applicant, recuses himself. Virginie Landré (VL), applicant, joins. ZT invokes the rule of necessity; he is an abutter but will vote to complete the quorum. DS: In original application, no request screening for generator (located some 110 feet from Newtown Road), and none required in the CoA. Now wish to install a stockade fence similar to one located on boundary with neighbor, but smaller. This wood fence would be approximately four to five feet tall and some five feet by five feet in length, screening the generator from visibility from Newtown Road. DH: Member comments? AR: Fine with the shorter fence as described. AL: Fine. ZT: Fine. DH: Is the fence Code compliant for distances from the generator? DS: Yes. DH: Fine with it. No public comment. DH: Moves to approve the amendment to CoA #2334 as described in the application and attachments. AL: Seconds. Vote: AL, AR, ZT, DH approve. AL to write amendment. DS rejoins.

C 8:00 Seasonal Decoration Discussion. Scott Kutil joins. SK: 38 Windsor puts up very large inflatable holiday decorations. This year on September 14 quite significant decorations were put up, presumably for Halloween; it is anticipated that Winter Solstice decorations will follow, through a week into the New Year. The total time that there are decorations up for 2 ½ months. SK asks if the HDC would consider limiting the time that displays are up. AL: Reads from Section 9.1 of Bylaw P, which excludes seasonal decorations, among other things, from HDC jurisdiction but provides some authority for the HDC to limit their duration. Section 3.2.10 of HDC Regulations in turn specifies particular items over which the HDC can exercise such limitations but does not include seasonal decorations among them. Should the HDC do something ad-hoc or are we limited to what's specified in the current regulations? DH: To change the regulations, a public hearing would be needed. DS: Concerned taking action here could negatively impact the view of the HDC by the community and so think best not to engage. AR: Agree. AL: Agree; some hesitation is that the Bylaw mentions limiting the duration of seasonal decorations as within our scope. But not enthusiastic about changing the HDC regulations to exercise that authority. SK: This

neighbor seems to be an outlier. A letter seems like a reasonable, gentle reminder. DS: thinks best not to pursue. HDC members, while sympathetic to SK's concerns, agree.

D. 8:15 Acton Congregational Church Dumpster Violation. DH: nothing has been received in response to the HDC queries. How to proceed? BR: on Aug 21 the facilities person forwarded the information to the leadership. AL: Notes that writing a letter in the past has shown to be effective, the letter stating: 'This violation if not corrected by a date certain is subject to a daily fine of up to \$500'. DH: Two emails and contact to the facilities person so far, with no response. What deadline is appropriate? The Oct 22 meeting seems reasonable. AL to draft and circulate for comment.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 20:16 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. AR takes a roll call vote: DS, AL, ZT, AR, DH all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare