

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2024-12-10

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator). Zach Taillefer (ZT) joins at 19:10

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 – Sarah Bradbury. South Acton Congregational Church closing and selling the building. Stained glass windows and bell which could be sold with the church, or not. DH: should be maintained with the building. SB: those in the back could be removed? DH: Indeed; if not visible from the street of reference, there is no jurisdiction. DH: Encourages the current and future owners to get in touch. AR: DH as chair can offer opinions and some decisions in between meetings, and a place on the agenda is always available. Jim Willis: Is there a utility in sharing an outline of those things which are in HDC scope? Want to be very clear on the stained glass. DH: A view from anywhere on School St. is the criterion.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes –12 November Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, DS, ZT, AL approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 250 Central Street COA DONE
- 554 Massachusetts Avenue #2441 re-roofing CNA (DH) All set
- 49 Windsor Avenue #2443 clapboards CNA (DH) All set

New Applications:

- 49 Windsor Avenue #2442 windows on workshop (meeting Jan. 14) – DH suggests that it would be good to see the current windows in person.
- 468 Main St. (Red House) #2444 educational elements (meeting or PH Jan. 14) . BR: Grant conditions provide time pressure to use funding by 15 January.

Follow-up:

- 111-113 School Street railing - Violation not corrected. BR emailed owner Dan Schiappa 11/13/2024. BR Send owner a reminder on November 13th, with no response. AL: Offers to draft a reminder letter.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application # 2433 Public Hearing (cont. from 11/12) 82 River Street garage & accessory apartment. Stephanie Dedeneau (SD) (architect) joins. BR Reads the Public Hearing text. DH recuses himself as an abutter; AR will chair the discussion. BH shares drawings.

SD goes over changes to conform to HDC recommendations. AR: On the garage doors, the muntins should be on the exterior of the true (or simulated) divided lites. AR shows images of JB Sash surrounds that work well with the proposed Marvin Elevated sash. The extended rakes should be pulled back; AR would mark it up in the drawings. DS: thanks the architect for helping meet the HDC requirements. AL: Looks good. ZT: Our requirements are met; thanks. AR: Moves that we approve the 82 River St addition as drawn with the exception of a Garage door cutsheet that indicates a simulated divided lite and not a removable grille. If no lites, that would be ok. DS, ZT, AL, AR all in favor. AR to write it up.

DH rejoins and retakes the Chair.

B. 7:45 Application #2440 590 Massachusetts Avenue mural on warehouse. BR brings up the application. Grant from the economic development department funded the mural, and now a home is needed. The mural is 12'x7', a bit larger than the walled-up window surfaces that are targeted. DS: could it be trimmed a bit to fit? AR: Or into two sections? DH: how about straddling the right two bays as a way to handle the fit. Frame or some blocking to cause it to float would be good. BR: or on the red building, perhaps free standing on posts to avoid placing holes in siding. AL: I think the mural is painted on 6 pieces of Masonite. All: support needed to make it ready for outdoor life. DH: Gardner field? BR: practical constraints with it to be free standing. DH/DS: West Acton Library or Annex? Consensus seems to be free standing in front of the adjacent red building as first choice, and over the window openings as second choice. DH asks BR to see if posts in front of the Red Building are acceptable to the Town and the building owner. AL: Wouldn't need a new application; the red building and adjacent warehouse are owned by the same person. An Amendment would suffice. BR checks; no public comment. AR: want some good measurements of both the mural and the apertures under consideration. Will revisit Jan 14.

C. 8:12. Application #2438 12 Concord Road dumpster. Sherry Ryder (SR) and Allen Warner (AW), representing the ACC, join. AW: the dumpster is outside of the historic district; the district subdivides the current property in two, half in, half out. BR confirms with a map showing the district line and position of the dumpster. AW: Asks if the problem is paint or a basic design problem. SR: Agrees not attractive. AR: Looks like a temporary construction site element; it seems a shame in the context of the rest of the property. A stockade fence, naturally weathered, would be really preferable. AL: If not in our district,

then not in our jurisdiction. Cannot consider it as an application. DS, ZT: As an ~~West~~ Acton resident, would like to see a solution to make it consistent with the built environment. AL: notes that a CNA is the bylaw-approved approach to step away from this application.

D. 8:28. Pre-application discussion 101 Main Street adding woodstove in barn. Russel Desclos (RD), Owner, joins. Wishes to add a woodstove to heat the space. Shares images. A propane heater was there in the 60s or 70s, with a cylindrical metal stack, rather high. DH: The HDC prefers that these elements should be black. AR: Ok with the basic notion, and ok if not painted. DS: want it to not be shiny aluminum but some other approach for the Stack would be ok. ZT, AL: agree. DS: Brick? RD: Too costly. DH: Invites an application. BR: Two weeks before the meeting is best.

E. 8:37. Pre-application discussion 48 School Street barn. Matthew Killam (MK) and Tim Hess TH (Architects) join. Proposal is the renovation of the barn located behind the house at 48 School Street. TH: Collecting information on the site and the project to frame the solution. Representing Brian and Anne Berkowitz, owners of the property. House (~1860) and Barn (a bit newer). AR: Happy personally to see new elements in the older frame. Flat roofs are tough. AL: Interested in what needs to be removed. Demolition Guidelines should be followed, which set forth a strong presumption against demolition and require very strong alternative arguments to overcome that presumption. DS: Likes new ideas; need to follow our rules. ZT: No jurisdiction over color, but like the suggestion. Modern elements – as indicated in sketches – could work. DH: Demolition work needs to be treated carefully. Dismantling and reusing is a different perspective; but the arguments need to be very clear and compelling. On modern elements: no need to hide the modernity from the view and see if it can work. Best to bring informal sketches to not waste effort on paths that can't work. Happy to collaborate.

F. 9:14. Technical Assistance Grant South Acton Design Guidelines: BR: in earlier discussion with Kristen Guichard (KG), Town Planning Director, KG notes that there are resources for which one could apply to help with realizing the guidelines of the South Acton development plan. BR shares text from KG; the experts may be able to distill the HDC perspective and expertise into a set of HDC guidelines that could be used by a wider range of interested parties. AR: Zoning bylaw changes and evolution demonstrates this notion – one finds illustrations, diagrams, and text which are clear. DH: the MAPC folks are planners and zoning experts, not architects, and this expertise would likely not be applicable. South Acton does not seem to require a different set of expertise than the other districts. BR: Mill Buildings in South Acton should feel different than Central or West Districts. DH: Developers want to tweak their existing designs rather than hire an architect with training and experience to address the issues. AR: We would like to dispel the vision of rigidity and constraints that many may have of the Districts and the Commissions. DH: Hiring a qualified architectural consultant experienced in historical preservation and development to develop a set of design guidelines, from all around New England, would be great. DS: would be work for the HDC to 'feed' the consultant and help set the course, but then there would be good help for work in the districts. And this could help to stimulate good design work beyond the districts. AR: The demolition guidelines are a good example of a package of information that could help make things happen. AL: We

do have guidelines, which could be refined; and others inside and outside of the HDC document sets, e.g., the MHC guidelines and those promulgated through the Secretary of the Interior. DH: Could update and package – integrate – the current documents to make most useful. Critical that the person who would take this on have extensive experience in the historic preservation field. The HDC is certainly open to finding a path to getting additional help to communicate our mission to developers and the public!

- G. 9:35. Vote to correct address for Certificate #2347 -- DH Recuses himself. This is an amendment to the denial. AL Moves that we make that technical amendment. AR, DS, AR, ZT approves.
DH Rejoins.
- H. 9:38. Review 2025 LHD Homeowner Letter and Flyer Insert. DH asks that we displace the discussion to the 14 January 2025.
- I. 9:45. Informal discussion to add language for the role of foliage in visibility of work on HDC properties to our guidelines. Also noted that some Certificates require renewal.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:49 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. DH 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