

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-05-27

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent: Zach Taillefer (ZT); Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison) attending but not participating.

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:07 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 13 Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, DS AL in favor. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 450 Main Street Solar Application #2516. Public hearing to be scheduled; June 24 or July 8. DS is recused; need to ensure a quorum.
- 472 Main Street Gutter Repair (CNA) work scheduled for 6/27 – DH to do
- Letter to Architects DONE (BR) – no responses yet seen
- 565 Massachusetts Avenue #2502 Mural Installation completed. Yay!
- 111-113 School Street Violation – AR: all set. BR to write a note to the Applicant that this issue is resolved.
- 583 Massachusetts Avenue sign application coming, to discuss 6/10/25.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2511 Public Hearing continued, 48 School Street barn. BR reads the public notice. Tim Hess, Architect, (TH) joins. TH shares screen. After a recap of the current building and its problems, TH gave a tour of the exterior façades, roof/exterior features, and the cut sheets. AL: Cladding for outbuildings is indicated as freer for choice in the Design

Guidelines. DS: Finds the stove pipe somehow is not so well integrated into the overall design, but likes the overall solution and its difference from the surrounding. AR: Agrees. DH: Asks about colors. Rough-sawn pine board siding to weather. Glass: We assume energy code applies. Can the glass look 'clear'? TH: has not pursued this question; typically a low-e coating is the usual spec. DH: Should explore options (type of coating, inner surface) to approach the appearance of a clear glass. The juxtaposition to the house glass suggests this. AR notes we have a responsibility to be energy efficient. DH asks about the West elevation – the very large door/window seems big and black in the rendering. TH: want to set the interior volume and the exterior view to be in the fore. The rendering did not allow the mullions to be seen; a second drawing made the intent clearer. AL: Finds the West façade would be challenging on a more visible face, but given the view this should be ok (and interesting). AR will be the lead on the certificate, with some careful language about the Demolition from AL. AL notes that any changes will require a visit to the HDC. DH moves to approve application 2511 for a Barn at 48 School St. with the drawings as presented. AL Seconds. AL, AR, DH, DS approve.

- B. 8:05 Application #2512 (Continued) 562 Massachusetts Ave. sign. Vy, Applicant, (VY) joins. Adjustments were made according to our comments. AL: Painted sign? VY: Yes. 2x6 is the current size (so shorter). AR: thanks for the changes. DS: Could ask for a slightly smaller font to provide a bit more space, but fine with it as is. DH: Is the letter 'Q' of the same font set? Not quite. Suggest to make the font for 'Nails' a little bit lighter (to better match 'Q'). DH moves to approve the sign as proposed with the observation on fonts font. AL seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all approve. DH will write it up.
- C. 8:12 Application #2515 592 Massachusetts Avenue, West Acton Baptist Church Repairs. Nancy Lombardo, Applicant, (NL) and Bud Killam, Contractor, (BK) joins. Photos of the current state are shared. BK shows the base of pilasters; a composite material is planned for elements close to the ground. DH recommends 5/4 to give it greater weight. Drip edges should be painted same as trim color – not mill-finish aluminum. All flashing visible from the street of reference requires this treatment. NL: Second portico dates from around 1950. Most surfaces are aluminum clad. Cleaning of the aluminum, and possibly painting of siding. Cleanup of doors, and replacement of polycarbonate lites. One wood gutter remains on the portico; they may want to replace the wood with a K gutter. AR: Curious how the roof is pitched. If a change to aluminum, it should be half-round gutters with round downspouts. If the pitch is right to left, the current gutter arrangement seems fine. A rolled roof product would be good for the main roof. Discussion in the HDC suggests that a CNA will do. Any PVC should be painted. DS to communicate the rolled roofing product: Generically it's known as modified bitumen ("mod-bit"). A specific one used elsewhere in the Historic Districts is Certainteed Flintlastic SA (for 'self adhered'). DH to write CNA.
- D. 8:45 Notion of following up on Projects. AR: A 'sticker' on the building permit will ask the Building Department to inform the HDC when the permit is closed would be good. It could trigger a request to the applicant for documentation or for the HDC to follow up. BR discussed this with Kristen G., and this sounded like an appropriate approach. BR could be automatically alerted when the building permit closes. HDC would put the language into the CNAs and COA. DH proposes a two-sentence email; AR would imply that it is mandatory.

Concerns are expressed that we don't want it to be punishing or burdensome for application. AL: Asks if there are enough examples of noncompliance with COAs to make this worthwhile. DS: Seems it can be a way to record the evolution of the built environment; a chance to show off improvements. BR: there are some 50 projects per year. DH: we have budget to take photos. Could offer the opportunity to e.g., a student with interest in architecture and/or photography. BR: When the permit closes, the applicants may be excited about sharing the result. BR will draft a statement to add to the bottom of the CNA or CoA, and look into receiving notice when the Planning/Building department closes an application.

- E. 9:01 13 School St Civil Defense building and parking lot. DH says Alex Mota wants to develop this section of School St. AM would like to make it a condominium. DH suggested looking at the plans for 9 School St.
- F. 9:05 Solar Energy law update. AL: New legislation is intended to lower emissions significantly, on 10-year increments. One target is solar energy system – it has negative emissions (after some time and in some sense). Impacts on the HDC are a change in Section 7, 'the (HDC) shall give consideration to...'. Thus, we must amend our rules and regulations to be consistent with the new Law. AL has brought the language of the law into the HDC guidelines. DS expresses a concern that the HDC guidelines may not be consistent with the new law. AL and DH note that the number of roofs in the Historic Districts that are eligible for solar panels is small, and there are many roofs in Acton which could carry solar panels is large. AL notes that the statute allows that non-economic benefits play a role in the decision-making. With respect to the Guidelines, DS asks if it is possible to document the arguments for maintaining the rule forbidding installations visible from the governing way; DH proposes a policy document that would explain the reasoning behind the Guidelines and AL cautions that this is not a trivial matter to do well. AR notes that the installations are reversible and this is important. BR notes how antennas and satellite dishes have come and gone. DH asks if we should limit the absolute prohibition to solar panels on slate or wood roofs. In this regard, DH asks if we could select a distance beyond which the panels would be permitted. AL noted that we have asked for black shingles to reduce the contrast with the solar panels. AL says he will draft a revision to the Solar Guidelines for consideration at its next meeting. BR shares the Rules and Regulations with AL's markup. It appears to be straightforward and necessary to adopt the changes; we will present, discuss, and vote at a public hearing as Bylaw P and HDC Rules and Regulations require.
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3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:40 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS, AR, DH, AL all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in DocuShare