

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-10-07

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); Zach Taillefer joins at 19:15.

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA)

Opening:

DH opened the meeting at 7:03 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 September Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, AL, DS in favor. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 56 River Street #2529 Withdrawn
- 62 Windsor Avenue #2531 Withdrawn
- Solar Guidelines PH scheduled for 10/14/2025; open 10/14 and cont. to 11/18.
- New Historic Districts
- Single Building Historic Districts
- Demolition by Neglect Bylaw
- Historic District Construction Funding Sources
- Informal discussion of electrical connection to Asa Parlin house.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2530 Public Hearing 285 Arlington Street (cont.). AR is recused due to a potential conflict of interest. Lisa Adamiak (LA), Architect, joins. BR reads the Public Notice for continuation. LA notes that we heard the engineer's assessment of the connector. Windows and doors were re-inspected; doors may be reusable, but the windows are in rough shape. Wishes to demo the connector; would save a reusable timber; will keep the slate for repairs on the roof and two ‘ells’. If any sashes appear reusable, they will be saved and

reused here or offered for reuse. When timely, the joists will be used for rafters in the Barn. No public comment. DH moves that we approve the demolition of the link building only, with the condition that the reusable materials be preserved. AL seconds. AL, ZT, DS, DH approve. A COA for this limited scope will be created for this. DH will write this up. Incidentally, a further COA will be needed for the landscaping. An extension for the application will be needed to include the full scope. The HDC then turns to the exterior elevations for the work on the remaining structures. LA runs over the plans for reuse of key elements. AL: likes the front façade as designed. ZT, DS, DH like these elevations. West elevation – AL: likes the new approach. ZT: Agrees. The Barn door could have a person-sized door which has a lot of light, but this is ok. DH: likes the example of the large all glass in the barn door, but fine as is; and the West barn façade feels a bit too symmetric. But fine. DH: Minimize the window framing. It feels good to keep the color scheme very simple. The house elevations, East and West, appear fine to all of the HDC members. DH makes a motion that we approve the elevations with the condition that hardware, lighting, etc. be resubmitted for approval as the project proceeds. Slate to re-used. Gutters should be half-rounds with round downspouts. The roof on the main door can be rolled roofing. Flashing, vent pipes, etc. lead coated copper or copper. The smaller chimney may be removed. Inform the committee if shutters are found. Any new clapboard will be cedar (or wood in any event). Jeld-Win windows will be used with traditional trim where new windows are needed. Most recent drawings to be sent to BR. AL seconds. AL, ZT, DS, DH all approve. AR rejoins.

- B. 8:00 82 River Street discussion (COA #2433) DH is recused as an abutter. AR takes the chair. Stephanie Dandeneau (architect) joins. Marcos and Silvya Desouza (Applicants) join. SD: had difficulty finding a solution. The center piece has the eave raised, and the roof between the left (new garage) and connector are pushed back, and this hides the most problematic conflicts. AR: everything looks larger relative to the original house, but this is a resolution that works functionally. ZT: The proposed changes are moving in the direction with what we approved. DS: It is ok. AL: Not perfect, but a very good approach to addressing the major concerns. AR: A noble effort. If this had been the initially proposed project, could have approved. Do try to minimize the blacktop – far too wide functionally. DS agrees. Some landscaping to soften some impressions. Critical that the drawings can be produced in reality. SD: Has yet to do the framing plans. AL: Wants to be sure that the ridge line is as rendered in the perspective drawing. No public comment. AR: need to have a framing plan to approve in some final manner. DS: Consensus that there is agreement that this works well enough that framing plan etc. could be undertaken. AL: Really need to vote on this large a change. Will take up again 18 November. DH rejoins.
- C. 8:30 612 Massachusetts Avenue fence discussion. DH: Refer to previous meeting's notes. BR did forensic research, and we now understand that the previous owner took all the actions and the current owners have no obligations. BR drafted a letter to the current owners asking for a collaboration on finding ways to mitigate the problems. AR: We should work more to communicate the appearance, and the precedent, are unfortunate, but not at all the fault of the current owners. Most important is to let them know that future changes must be discussed going forward. DS: thinks it should be possible to find a way to offer a positive collaboration

on any mitigation they wish to pursue. AR: Best by far to do something in person. Maybe a call, welcome to the town and the Historic District. Consensus to drop the issue. Want a procedure to only follow up on written complaints (or comments)

- D. 9:00 Outreach for new HDC Members update. BR asked the interested persons to complete the forms online. A few members note that the Town processes and committees have not been consistently welcoming to volunteers.
- E. 9:00 612 Massachusetts Avenue fence discussion. BR shares photographs. DH: An old fence was removed without approval, and a new PVC fence was installed without approval, by the previous owner, and then the house was sold. Refrigerant piping can also be seen on the West side. AL: Difficult to impose the cost on the current owner. DS: Could try to convince the owner that it would be best to recover the historic value of the house with some modest changes – plantings could help. HDC should establish the permit situation for the HVAC and see to if the fence involves a permit. Should see if our guidelines on fences are sufficiently clear. AL: The Design Guidelines, p. 14, provide that “[f]ences constructed of chainlink, metal wire, plastic or other synthetic materials should be avoided in any location where the fence would be visible from the public way as they are incompatible with the character of the districts.” DH: Probably no retroactive authority. Maybe ask the owners for clarification. ZT: Zillow listing includes the fence in January 2025. BR will take a look at permits.
- F. 9:10 Update on seminar “Developing a Strong Local Preservation Program” led by Barrett Planning Group. BR speaks to the issue. Aimed at towns that might just getting started. Acton seems to be on the right path. BR’s role in the town government is symptomatic of Acton’s good approach. BR did not hear of anything that we are not currently at best practices.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:20 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds, several times. DS, AR, DH, AL, all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare