



ACTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes November 12, 2025, 7:30 pm

Town Hall, Room 126

Present: Bill Dickinson - Chair (BD), Ken Dow (KD), Bob Ferrara (BF), Bill Klauer (BK), Victoria Beyer (VB), Caroline Hamilton (CH), Barb Rhines - Cultural Resources Planner (BR), Fran Arsenault - Select Board Liaison (FA)

Guests: Anne Forbes (AF), Thom Begin (TB)—53 River Street Park Signage, Shikha Malhotra (SM)—54 Great Road Renovation Presentation

Absent: None

Chair BD called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

I. Regular Business

1. Review of meeting minutes October 8th - BD moved to approve the minutes of the October 8th meeting. BF seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Residents' concerns - None

3. Any ZBA/Planning Board projects on the CRL? - None

4. Projects Under demo delay:

457 Mass Ave: No updates, assigned to KD for follow-up. BD will provide KD with contact information. Wait until December before reaching out.

54 Great Rd: Assigned to BF for follow-up.

Paths under consideration: Wait out demolition delay 1-1/2 years and tear down, Re-use structure OR better drawings for reproduction.

SM encouraged to come back next month with renewed drawings for review.

5. Historical Plaque Applications : Application for 542 Mass Ave is expected in December.

6. Archeological Review Applications -- None

7. Bridge project between Rail Trail and TTT at old Davis Road - No update.

8. Status of reconciling CRL to MACRIS (barn captures) : Barn inventory needs to be reviewed in MACRIS for accuracy—No update.

9. Consultant for National Register Application for Woodlawn Cemetery: BD reviewed RFQ and is OK with it being issued. AF requested and the commission agreed that Grey and Pape be removed from the RFQ list and Diane Sergait be added if she can be found in inventory. BR to follow up.

10. Acton 250 Committee update : The Acton 250 Committee will be offering events less frequently, likely just one talk per quarter through July of next year.

-Northeastern Professor Bill Fowler presentation of “British Naval Power in the Revolution” has been cancelled.

Upcoming events:

-1/28/2026 Alexander Cain will present “I Screamed with All My Might” - The Civilians Trapped Behind the Boston Siege Lines. Depiction of the civilian experience.

-2/28/2026 John Bell will present the Lifting of the Boston Siege.

-4/17/2026 Dirigible Brewing Company Party

-6/14/2026 “Declaring Independence”, a play written by Mary Fuhrer will have Minutemen as actors.

-7/1/2026 Discovery Museum Party

Refer to <https://www.actonma.gov/250>.

11. Underground Railroad Site Outreach. 4 responses of interest have since been received: 162 Great Road, 144 Great Road, 15 Barker Road and 41 Estabrook Road.

CH researched all properties in an attempt to validate Underground Railroad Site status. There is not enough evidence for any of the properties except for the South Acton Railroad Station. CH will follow up on remaining leads.

The commission will respond to the listed properties once research has been finalized. CH will email her research to date to AHC.

II. New/Special Business :

1. 53 River St Historical Park Signage Text : Four 3’x3’ signs have been proposed.

Sign 1- 53 River Street: Century of Manufacturing

Sign 2- From Wool Scraps to Soldiers’ Blankets

Sign 3- Fort Pond Brook: Powering a Village

Sign 4- The People of the Mill

TB presented sign edits along with inputs from AHC. TB will resubmit to AHC the updated text for the signs. TB also requested AHC’s opinion for the naming of the park. Some names suggested were Shoddy Mill Park, Textile Park and 53 River Street Park.

BD moved to suggest to the town the naming of the park as “Shoddy Mill Park”. VB seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

2. **Project Presentation of 54 Great Road:** Review of Front and Left side elevations done by SM, property owner. Plan depicts the existing structures (house and barn) are torn down and a new structure with an attempt at a similar facade put in its place. The owner reported that the architect/ engineer feels the existing building is unsafe and would have problems 10 years out. BD strongly disagreed and understood it would be more expensive to fix structural issues of the existing house, notably the back wall; but is doable and preferable to the commission.

Highlights: No barn remains, ell extended 15', door moved to the ell, roof heightened, designed for 6 units—1 unit affordable, Italianate architectural features missing.

Commission urges re-use vs reproduction, however the commission agreed to possibly lifting the demolition delay if SM presented a building that accurately and tastefully represented the existing buildings character, massing and details. This building is part of a group of four antique residential structures located on Great Road.

BD offered to zoom with SM and her architect prior to the December meeting.

3. **Historic Commission Website Update Regarding Demo Delay Process :** BR provided updates to the AHC Website which contains CH suggested edits. It would also be good to add a Flow Chart.
4. **New AHC Member Process:** CH appointed to AHC by the Select Board effective 10/27/2025.
5. **Discussion of HC Jurisdiction Over Solar Panel Installation :** AHC agrees that the commission does not have jurisdiction over Solar Panel Installation location.

III. Consent Items - None

Adjournment: BF moved, and BK seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously at 9:45PM.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- Minutes of October 8, 2025, meeting of the Acton Historical Commission
- 53 River Street proposed signs