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Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Final Meeting Minutes, October 1, 2013

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR) and Ron Regan (RR). Mike Gowing (MG) as BoS liaison.

7:30 PM Citizens' Questions: None

7:35 PM Minutes: September 10, 2013 minutes approved by consent.

7:40 PM Citizen's Question: Acton Residents Peter and Charlotte Ott, 61 Windsor Ave., Requesting Guidance on Historically Appropriate Fencing

Ron Regan recused himself as a possible abutter.

KAB explained the HDC's purview and the process for answering questions from applicants.

Peter showed photos from his phone and shared his concern about the opening at the bottom of the existing back fence, their desire to install new fencing in the back and to fix the side "stockade" fence. A portion of the new fence would be close to the house with a small section visible at the end of the driveway. On one side it would be behind bushes and on the other side about 1.5 feet of fence would be visible.

Establishing that the house was built in 1892 and looking at a Jerith pamphlet of fencing styles, the group considered the appropriateness of one the aluminum models.

KAB clarified that repairs do not require an application.

Ron Regan returned to the meeting.

8:00 PM 537-541 Massachusetts Avenue: Discussion about Windows and Process. (This property is formerly known as the West Acton Village Ecology Project).

Town Counsel had suggested that HDC consider having only one liaison to the project. MG offered support for the current arrangement of two liaisons. HDC will continue with the two liaisons one of whom will be taking notes to bring back to HDC. They will not be deliberating and will make no decisions.

The HDC reiterated its determination that a richer façade created by a change in sill height is needed. KAB reviewed the process delineated in the COA which was shared with town counsel who explained the HDC's options. If the HDC determines that a change is required and the change is not adopted by the project a stop work order could be requested of the Building Inspector or the project could be allowed to go forward and then a fine would be levied after the fact. KAB would prefer neither of these options. KAB explained the Metropolitan Planning Council could hear an appeal at a fee of \$1200. On the other hand DH explained how easy it would be to change the shop drawings.

KAB clarified that there are two issues, the sills and the process. The former issue reflects the HDC concern to preserve the aesthetic of the district. The issue will be taken to the project by the HDC liaisons.

8:20 PM Discussion of Use of High Definition Shingles

Roger Hilbert of 497 Main St. and Thomas Daniel, both interested in roof repairs, joined a conversation about Timberlane HD shingles focusing on samples like those used recently at 503 Main St. AR explained there is a broader range of color in HD which seek to emphasize the shadow line. This effect becomes more obvious as the color lightens. Apparently the low definition is sold almost exclusively at Home Depot whereas the HD is used increasingly as the standard by commercial roofers.

KAB thinks the difference between natural shadow and HD is not as clear with charcoal. The premise is that the roof should disappear so the elements of the house stand out. On the other hand, the HDC has previously approved shingles similar to the HD samples.

The guests shared sample boards by Landmark Design, and contributed expertise (a professional roofer was present).

8:30 PM 49 School Street: Discussion of Shingles

Anita explained the difference between the three tab shingles on the CNA and the architectural shingles inadvertently used by the roofer in the absence of the property owner.

AR moved and it was seconded that the HDC approve, after the fact, the pewter wood Landmark Design architectural shingle roof at 49 School St.

KAB explained that the current roof represents a violation; plus there needs to be a clear paper trail to explain its installation. DS questioned the precedent. KAB explained that consideration should focus on whether the change has a detrimental effect on the district. DH suggests a clear statement of the HDC's concern about how this error could have happened.

KAB suggests a Finding that a CNA was originally approved, shingles were installed in error, not reported by the homeowner but were found by members of the HDC. The COA was approved after the fact and AR will compose the letter that will accompany the COA.

8:35 PM 17 Woodbury Lane: Discussion of Next Steps

KAB explained the Selectman's decision to declare the Asa Parlin House at 17 Woodbury Lane as surplus. KAB has contacted town counsel and her opinion was shared with the Town Manager who further shared it with the Director of Municipal Properties.

It was thereby clarified that there will need to be a public hearing and that the town cannot demolish the existing structure without the HDC's approval. If it were to be voted to demolish it, then the HDC must accept an alternative plan for the space as it is in a historic district.

When a public hearing is held, the HDC will need to be very careful about process. The Historical Commission has an 18th month demolition delay where as the HDC can vote against demolition. The central task of the HDC is to generate input into what should replace the building.

Dean Charter will attend the next meeting to discuss options. It is within his right to submit a request for a permit for demolition.

DH emphasized that the HDC has always tied a demolition to the issue of what will replace the structure. The idea needs to be presented as a viable project. The two are linked, not separate.

RR asked about whether the structure currently is a public danger. As a structural report has already been done, it is known that it is not a danger. Moving the structure could be an option or partial demolition akin to Battle Rd in Concord. The setting is a critical consideration

9:00 PM 108 School St.:

David Honn as a direct abutter recused himself.

In preparation for putting in a development on Lilac Court there is a need to break through an existing stone wall for an access driveway. This stone wall is on a curve around which drivers are known to speed. The question will be where to make the break and how it should look. MG suggested it would be wise to check with Cory York to establish the required 150' sight line.

David Honn returned to the meeting.

9:15 Review of Liaison Assignments

Review of notification of abutters procedures including D's recommendation to mail a letter both to the HDC and to the liaison himself/herself.

The next two meetings will begin at 7pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn

Secretary