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Historic District Commission  
Town Hall, Room 126  
Meeting Minutes, October 22, 2013 Final

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), David Shoemaker (DS), Ron Regan (RR) Anita Rogers (AR). Mike Gowing (MG) as BoS liaison. Aaron Goff attended as a potential member.

7:00 PM Citizens' Questions:

MG shared CPC applications presented to the BoS the previous evening. He asked that each member read through the application proposing a study of the Historic Districts. DS asked what had been the trigger. MG indicated the conclusions of Acton 2020 were the catalyst. It was noted that Roland Bartl has not come before the HDC to discuss this prior to its proposal.

KAB indicated that some surrounding towns have very clear design guidelines. In the case of Acton, she indicated that such detailed guidelines may be less useful as each house tends to be unique. Due to the short timeline KAB requested that the HDC send her input from their reading of the note and that KAB would prepare a response.

7:07 PM Approve Minutes by Consent: October 9, 2013 accepted unanimously.

7:10 PM Appl. 1335: 260 Arlington St., Discussion and Vote on Sign

AR explained that one element of the design was taller than the allowance of 24", specifically the bubble with a comment. AR suggested accepting the design contingent upon a final drawing to scale. Again concern was expressed again about the size of the text LaBelle Roofing.

KAB suggested several options including allowing AR to be the final sign off person or denying the application unless the applicant is willing to sign an extension. KAB remained concerned about the propriety of this design as a flat sign in the district.

AR would prefer to vote on it tonight. She feels that a request to redo is unlikely to produce a significantly better design.

KAB explained that a blade or projecting sign traditionally allows somewhat comical elements.

DS feels that shrinking the proportions would improve the impact. Upon further consideration AR is not in favor of letting the phone number continue to appear. DH agrees a blade or projecting sign would be a better approach especially for visibility. He believes the font is much too large and is likely to seem even more compacted in a smaller sign.

RR found an explanation in the Guidelines of the previous determination that signs should not include business logos. Even of more concern to members is the continuing presence of the phone number. MG pointed out that the illustration in the Guidelines shows a logo. Discussion to be continued.

7:30 PM Appl. 1345: 59-61 Windsor Ave., Discussion of Fencing

Ron Regan recused himself as an abutter.

The applicants, Peter and Charlotte Ott joined the discussion and DH updated the Commission concerning the application. Using pictures he had taken DH explained a metal mesh fence currently exists to be replaced with a chain linked black fence which will be behind the trees. The purpose is to keep the dogs in the backyard. There is also a wood fence in the back of the property which needs to be filled in on the bottom to keep the dog in. A third segment has been proposed which will run close to the house.

The one segment that will show from the public way will be metal. DH indicated that wrought iron was used at the time the house was built. DH believes that the visible portion of the fence will, in fact, be fairly visible.

DH is comfortable voting on the proposal pending abutter notification.

AR asked about gates. DH explained the gates will be of the same material and a continuation of the main fence Kensington with Imperial Finials and Ball Caps

DH moved to approve fencing for 61 Windsor Ave.

Type 1: Type 1 fencing to be metal chain link fencing approximately four feet high. Posts, mesh and all fittings shall be painted black. The fencing shall be located along the property line between 59-61 Windsor Avenue and 63 Windsor Avenue behind the existing tree line in approximately the same location as the existing metal mesh fencing. The existing metal mesh fencing shall be removed in its entirety.

Type 2 : Type 2 fencing is to be manufactured by Jerith Company. Model shall be "Kensington" with imperial finials and ball caps. Height shall be approximately four feet. Color of balustrades, posts, gates, and fittings to be black. Gates shall be of the same construction, details and color as Type 2 fence. Gates shall not be higher than the fencing. The fencing and gates shall be located perpendicular to the Type 1 fence. The fencing shall be supported independently of the house and not be physically connected to the house.

Type 3: Type 3 fencing to be a metal mesh located at the bottom of the existing rear yard wood fencing. It should be installed in as inconspicuous manner as possible.

Seconded by DS.

Will be issued pending abutter notification. Accepted unanimously.

7:40 PM    Citizen's Appointment: Scott Kutil

Scott Kutil of 43 Windsor Ave. shared the positive outcomes that came out of the moratorium process. The selectman had been supportive and Roland Bartl had suggested positive proposals including additional staffing and a possible zoning study.

SK brought a packet of materials including the original moratorium statement, a summary of a talk given in front of the Planning Board about zoning changes, and a letter written to the BofS.

In the talk (p. 4 and 5 of the packet) SK emphasized how Village Zoning can have a negative impact on the Historic District. SK shared steps taken by RB, proposed staffing for the HDC and a study proposal put before the CPC.

SK explained how complex zoning is in West Acton with three different zoning districts. For instance the Village Residential District includes all of Windsor Ave., inside and beyond the historic district.

KAB summarized that SK would like to have the HDC approach RB and the Planning Board to initiate zoning changes in all the districts. DH added that South Acton has sewers creating a big distinction. KAB clarified that the districts and zoning all date from the late 1980s with the intention to protect open spaces and to encourage greater density in the districts. SK is frustrated by other town goals being overlaid on the districts. DH emphasized that the districts were created to encourage preservation, not development. DH agreed with SK that the zoning needs to be finer grained

Joe O'Donohue of 48 Windsor Ave., speaking as a citizen, challenged SK suggesting that development can be compatible with a historic district. Christa Roberts of 44 Windsor Ave. also attended.

8:02 PM Appl. 1331 Public Hearing for Generator, Acton Center Fire Station, 492 Main St.

KAB read the posting of the public hearing in the Beacon.

DS, the liaison to the project, explained that a generator is needed and selection of best location has been done. It will be possible to see the generator from the public way.

Dean Charter, Director of Municipal Properties, brought the bid set of drawings focusing on the entire property. The generator will be located next to a small yellow alarm building. It will be a 50 kW diesel powered generator and minimally invasive. The existing generator is 15kW which does not provide enough power for venting of the fire trucks. The existing unit was likely placed in the 1960s. This new placement is

consistent with the effort to place such mechanical systems outside of the buildings rather than inside as used to be standard procedure.

Soundproofing will cut sound down to 65 decibels, less than the 75 decibel currently used in West Acton. It will fire up once a week for about a half an hour. Otherwise it will not be audible unless there is an emergency.

KAB inquired about using fencing such as is currently used in the front of Town Hall. DC suggested, if done, it should be painted manila to match the adjacent building. Vegetation and cars will likely be more visible than the generator. AR wondered about paint color options. DH suggested a darker color rather than the manila color. RR thought the fencing would make it stand out more rather than diminish it.

MG of 93 Harris St. indicated that a leaf blower is about 100 decibels as a comparison.

Vera Godley of 10 Wood Lane came out of concern about the noise. Dean indicated that the town generators fire up on Tuesdays at 10 AM.

Priscilla Dallmus of 3 Wood Lane indicates she can see everything in the parking lot especially in the winter. She likes the idea of not having it be yellow; that the suggestion of grey would likely be better. She might support a screening fence. She is reassured by what she has heard about when and how long it would be audible. DC explained that it is unlikely that she would be aware of an odor based upon other units in town. No complaints have been received about these similar units.

Vera Godley also asked about protective bollards that need to be put in front of the units. DC indicated they would be necessary to avoid accidents and that they would be painted the same color as the unit.

KAB closed the public comment portion of the public hearing. PL and KAB commended Dean Charter and agreed simpler is better. DH again suggested charcoal grey for the unit and the bollards.

DS moved to approve Application 1331 as stated a generator be placed per the drawings, no exposed conduits, color recommend charcoal to blend in, bollards to be painted same as generator. Seconded by AR. No discussion. Accepted unanimously.

KAB closed the public hearing at 8:26 PM.

8:27 PM Appl. 1332: 52 School St., Discussion of Installation of a Generator at the South Acton Fire Station

DS explained the application proposing to install a generator both closer to the road and neighbors than in Acton Center. Again referencing the bid set of drawing Dean Charter described the proposed 50kW external diesel powered generator with connections going into the building underground. One neighbor did get in touch with DC to discuss the issue.

KAB asked about the unique issue of proximity to a recreational area.

AR asked about sound and thought perhaps fencing would be more appropriate in this location as there will be more people coming close to this unit. AR does think it is, however, in the most innocuous location.

KAB wondered about passersby; AR, the potential for vandalism. DC did not think there was a vandalism issue. DC suggested could add fencing later. There will be enough space behind the bollards to do so. DC anticipates installation in March, 2014 and to be done by May, 2014.

Clarification of the proposed location caused DH to say this seems like an object in a sea of asphalt. Consideration was then given to the direct abutter. DH proposed turning the unit 90 degrees to make it seem more like an island minimizing its width from the public way.

DH and AR suggest fencing to further minimize it and produce a more finished look. The fence could be open on the back.

DS moved to accept Application 1332 to install a generator as described directing that it be oriented north south perpendicular to School St., fencing to be determined after installation (using a simple fence on the east side to shield the generator), should be painted as the Acton Center location a dark grey to blend in with the parking lot. Seconded by AR. Accepted unanimously.

9:00 PM Discussion of Role of HDC concerning Asa Parlin House, 17  
Woodbury Lane

KAB shared that Town Counsel indicated that there is no distinction whether a property is owned by town or not with regard to demolition.

DC explained the purchase and intermittent use of the structure. A preliminary study of the structure was done by Turk, Tracey and Larry in the 1990's. The study used as source currently available on the town website. Historic Committee reps and Dean considered saving only one portion. The 1970 addition was cobbled together from timbers from Arlington St. The front portion dates from 1860s.

During public meetings the neighbors have indicated they want something to stay there. The Selectman would like to take the property down and then create a dedicated green space.

An RFP could allow some discretion. If no one wants the building, it will cost about \$80-95K to demolish due to asbestos. It is only becoming more expensive to dispose of it. To save it would cost close to \$300k to mitigate and stabilize whether left in place or moved.

KAB corrected DC that there is no demolition delay in a historic district. As a result she suggested that it would be better to have the HDC arrive at a decision before issuing a RFP. KAB reminded the HDC that purpose is not within the Commission's purview. HDC must think about how the building contributes both as an individual structure and to the neighborhood as a whole.

KAB suggested thinking the HDC consider its judgment: indicating it cannot be demolished, may be moved, or allowing its demolition. RR wants to know about the obligation to have a plan for replacement.

A public hearing is the logical next step. DS wonders how such a meeting would be organized. KAB explained how the HDC might structure the presentation highlighting its role.

This discussion ended at 9:24 PM

9:30 PM      Appl. 1338: Public Hearing for 108 School St. Stone Wall Removal and Driveway Installation

David Honn recused himself as an abutter within 300' feet.

Pam Stevens and Bill Prioa attended as the applicant and her attorney.

KAB read the posting of the public hearing which appeared in The Beacon.

KAB as the liaison turned the discussion over to Bill Prioa. He aided the discussion with pictures of the road and wall plus a proposed representation.

AR felt that the cut should be casual and there should not be a bump right at the beginning of the driveway.

DS and KAB commented that the plan followed the HDC's previous suggestions for simplicity. RR was satisfied about what would be done with the stones.

David Honn, speaking as a citizen, asked about the chain linked fence hoping that it would be taken down. Although the fence is not in the district, he hopes it will be taken down to be seamless with the district.

DH, speaking as a citizen, suggested turning the stones into the driveway. BP was concerned with the grade. AR felt the grade would require such an approach. DH shared the history of Alvin Lothrop who owned the shingle style house and barn. Lothrop had contributed a stone crusher to town and DH believes that is likely the origin of the stone wall. DH suggested that similar stones be used if more are needed. Roundish ones should not be added.

Mike Gowing of 93 Harriss St. asked about whether the applicant had checked with Cory York to assure that the turning was safe and respected the site lines in the area.

KAB moved to accept Application 1338: Stone wall removal for a driveway installation and recommend that the stones on the edge of the driveway angle back along the driveway Seconded by DS.

AR suggested requiring as a Condition that there be no mortar or any stone used to infill open places in the wall and that the wall be made of stones of similar size, color and shape.

DS recommended that the slope of the driveway be gentle as it leaves School St. Accepted unanimously.

David Honn returned to the meeting as a member.

9:50 PM      **Return to Application 1335: 260 Arlington St., Sign Discussion**

AR recommended accepting the sign without the telephone number and would accept responsibility for final okay.

AR moved to accept a grey scale version Application 1335: a 24' x 74 oval wall sign LaBelle Roofing sign, similar to the artwork but without a phone number and without the line between the phone number and the text, that the sign be wood with all elements painted, that the sign be mounted on standoffs so that it sits off the shingles and that the text be maximum 4 1/2 inches tall.

As an alternative the applicant can install a projecting sign, maximum area of six square feet, with the colors represented in the sign artwork with no phone number or line between the text and the phone number.

Seconded by DH.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn  
Secretary