

Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Meeting Minutes, 14 October, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending: Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB; chair), David Honn (DH), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), and David Shoemaker (DS; note-taker), David Foley, Mike Gowing attending (Selectmen Representative)

Move to approve September 9 and 23 minutes by consent, and approved by vote.

7:31pm **Citizen's questions**
DS Recuses, asks about temporary hinges
DS returns.

7:33pm **Review of current issues**

82 River: still has satellite dish up; contacting.

24 River: will set a fine schedule. The nature of the fine --\$25/day – was discussed. We will send a letter (certified return) with requirement that the dish is removed by October 31st. Fines will start on November 1. Seconded by DS; vote is unanimous in favor

554 Mass Ave: Searching for the certificate to find the sketch indicating the agreed-upon path for the AC cooling lines; HDC will continue its research for that sketch.

69-71 School: Muntins in 71 are still not correct. HDC asks Frank Ramsbottom to follow up (building permit was given without confirming with the HDC that the condition to add the window muntins was completed).

102 Main St: Windows not correct and the applicant has not been completely incommunicative; FR to issue another letter, and 30 days after the letter (certified return) fines will start. Each violation is to count separately; each of the two windows count as a separate violation, and stairs, and doors; 4 violations, and \$25 per violation per day. Seconded by AR; unanimous vote in favor.

Neon Signs: FR has a list, has sent letters, and with little response. Where letters have been sent but not acted upon, a second letter will be sent (certified return) and 30 days after fines will start to accrue. Unanimous vote in favor. MG reminds us to ask FR to be

specific on each of the violations when there are multiple violations at a given address.

47 School St: Picket fence and storm windows are being considered; an application has not been filed yet. RR explained that a replacement in kind of fence would be a CNA and that storm windows are not in our purview. We will continue to follow the issue.

DH requests copies of letters to HDC emailer for HDC Records.

7:50 **Acton Center Traffic RFP** DS recuses himself. DH reports on RFP; it appears to be presented as a standard traffic engineer problem, without apparent sufficient attention to planning (landscape in particular). HDC's role may not be clear to all those involved. KB notes that if there is State money involved, the HDC will be asked to comment by MHC. It will be most efficient if the HDC works with Corey York throughout the process to ensure the best outcome with the least wasted resources. HDC would like to be involved if interviews are undertaken (will be the case if more than \$25k value). HDC will contact CY. HDC bifurcates the Common and the Triangle, which is a cemetery; there are two sides to the issue, both safety and historic preservation.
DS Returns.

8:00 **Violation: 14-20 School St.** Owners join us.
In the past the HDC chairs sometimes sent letters; we will continue to ask the building department. 13 Visible windows visible from the street. We required 16 total be returned to wood sash. Discussion was if any windows on the side should have been included.
KAB reviews the difficulty. The quote for the Pella windows was very high; we have suggestions for less expensive ones. Owner shows photos of the house suggesting that the windows are hidden by foliage. KAB notes that the HDC's bylaws indicate that foliage cannot act to obscure a problem. Owner indicates that he believes that the HDC had previously indicated that the windows were ok. KAB indicates that we want to find a solution to avoid fines. A review of HDC documentation shows we have shown it is necessary to change.
Owners indicate that some windows are still wood windows. AR to verify these windows. AR makes it clear that we need to address all

windows which are in violation. KAB indicates that we need to establish a schedule for change; otherwise, the Building Commissioner will start to fine at \$25 per window and per day. We want instead to find a schedule for replacing the windows with HDC approved windows.

AR indicates Jedwin or Brosco or JC Adams, as before, would be acceptable. Owners note that sash is about as expensive as new windows; AR notes that it can be less expensive for installation costs. Owners ask if simulated wood is acceptable; HDC indicates it is not.

Owner indicates they understood in the past that this would not be necessary as represented by some previous HDC members. KAB notes that the HDC must act according to law, and the work was done without attention to the local laws for the HDC or the Building Department (no permit was taken). The HDC does strive to find a schedule and an approach that is appropriate.

An earlier good faith arrangement was not followed through by the Owner.

Owner expresses that they were not invited to HDC meetings, and contests our decision. KAB indicates that the meetings are open and posted, and the Owners were present at key meetings.

KAB asks the HDC to express their opinions. The COA specific a schedule for replacement, suggesting windows, and was not adhered to. KAB suggests to look online now for some potential windows and to establish a schedule for replacement. If the schedule is not followed, then 30 days after that point fines for all windows will start to accrue.

DH indicates the Jeld-Wen windows are probably the best trade, and a sash kit is probably best, and suggest that the best value would be in working with an independent installer.

AR notes that the HDC, to be fair the HDC must apply the rules.

DF says the data support

RR re-expresses the interest in finding a schedule that works

DH indicates that the most important windows should be prioritized.

DS supports the approach

AR and RR are to work together to inspect vinyl vs. Wood.

KAB: HDC to vote on how many windows, and the schedule overall – when to start.

AR reads the previous schedule from 10/18/2011 and its phasing.

Will do by apartment; AR indicates on dwg.

Phase 1 #20 School Street – 5 windows (all windows for this apartment). KAB proposes March 31st 2015 must be completed.

Phase 2 #16 School Street – 3 upstairs windows - January 31, 2016 due.

Phase 3 #16 School – 5 first floor windows (above garage door) – January 31 2017

Phase 4 #16 School – remaining windows on West side January 31 2018.

If Phase 1 is not **completed** on time, 30 days later, fines will commence. Similarly, if any later due dates are missed, fines will start at that time.

MG suggests checking again the old sash to see if any are usable. Restoration can be very effective. AR and RR to look at old sash on their visit

Unanimous vote in favor of this schedule. KAB notes that orders for the windows no later than January 1 may be required to maintain the schedule, but the Owners are responsible for maintaining the schedule. MG notes that the storms can be used to conserve heat during the window work.

8:45

Articles for Acton Town Meeting DH reports: Public meeting on 21st on zoning changes for Nov 12th town meeting. Some elements are historic relevance. DH to attend. This is a Planning Board meeting, and it must be voted to be at the town meeting. One on indoor space footage, requesting more space; a change in restaurant seating, etc.

Motion that DH to be our representative; DS seconds, and unanimous in favor (DH abstains).

DH, Scott Kutil, and Roland indicated a bit late for the November meeting; the April meeting seems more timely. But very important to get things going as soon as possible, and a meeting soon (in October-November) is best. Warrant closes to the public at the end of December; need to have a placeholder by then. Early March all must be definitive.

AR resolves to find the previous meeting minutes on Signage to jumpstart that.

KAB to contact Steve LeDoux about placeholders once this November meeting is over.

MG stresses that the Planning Board should be brought on board early.

9:00

Solar Panels in the Historic Districts AR notes that we denied recently solar panels on a recently constructed house. Suggests that the particular house makes a difference – new houses find that to be more compatible.

KAB suggests one time around the room on the subject. MG suggests pro and con arguments. KAB: has come up a number of times, and has typically not been in favor. It is often the most striking feature of the building. Industrial modest buildings, in the background. Did not want them on the slate roof. A modest 'cottagey' building would be significantly impacted.

DS: hard to find a way to make consistent, and defendable, decisions; in favor in principle!

DH: has seen some very unfortunate examples. Notes that ground-mounted arrays are allowed but are very unattractive. HDC should determine if it has jurisdiction (can it act as a bird bath?). Often overwhelms the house. Perhaps stick with distinction of industrial Commercial buildings approved, private residences not.

RR: Examples of local antique houses which has not well survived addition of solar cells. Carriage house or Barn could work. MG echoes this notion of secondary buildings as more appropriate.

DF: In favor in principle – we call ourselves a 'green community'. Seen it broadly used in Europe, successfully. Regulating rather than forbidding – e.g., only southern roofs to ensure that the hardware is not overwhelming, so not in favor to distinguish commercial or not. Terrestrial installation really not welcome. Try to establish numerical criteria to help guide decisions and planning of owners. Limited lifetime could become a central part of our process and decisions.

KAB notes that rules are hard to make successful in this business. We'll track technology.

DH to attend a meeting on Conservation Easements, to tell the HDC at a subsequent meeting

9:24 Move to adjourn; seconded; meeting ended.