



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

6/2/2020

6:00 PM

Online, Town Hall, 472 Main St, Acton, MA 01720

Present: David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Ron Regan (RR), Fran Arsenault (FA), Art Leavens (AL), Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison, Mathew Selby (MS) Director of Land Use.

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS).

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 6:12 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

2. Regular Business Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – DH got an email from Selby about the 53 River St. committee getting a grant to remove the salt shed and concrete block building at 53 River St. Maybe the HDC can carry out a public hearing on June 25th with the other one. Anne Forbes made a comment that there is an Area Form inventory sheet for the 53 River St site available from MACRIS that the HDC should get a copy. DH got an email from Frank Ramsbottom about someone interested in 615 Mass Ave. asking about HDC information; DH will send the homeowner letter plus the rules and regulations.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DH made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the meetings of February 25th, AR seconded, roll call vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y. motion approved 5-0.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – DH asked if application 2003 was all set; AR confirmed it is. Both applications 2004 – 104 Main St. and 2005 – 53 River St. will require public hearing that we will hold at the next meeting on Thursday June 25th. 104 Main St. will be at 7:15 PM and 53 River St. at 7:45PM.
- D. AL brought up an issue of how we get responses for abutters’ notices. FA said Kimberly is going into town hall to do mailings. DH suggested we send an email to the building department to have someone check our mailbox.

3. New/Special Business [or other applicable agenda items]

- A. 8 Concord Rd. Congregational Church House Roof - Application 2006 – applicant not present.

AL Liaison. DH read through the application and noted the ridge vent must run gable end to end; the pipe flange should be a black rubber boot or something that doesn’t have a bright metallic finish, like aluminum. DH calls for comments: AR – what about step flashing? The step flashing should be lead or copper, no aluminum. RR – none, FA –



none, AL – what about abutters' notices? DH: we should do them. AL makes a motion for replacing the roof noting above comments. DH seconds and calls for vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y. motion approved 5-0.

B. 81 River St. New Fence - Application 2008 – Heather Sheehan present

AR Liaison. DH made a motion to swap the order of this application as the applicant was present early. Heather presented an overview of the fence – a 6' privacy fence – and reasons for wanting it – traffic and small back yard. DH noted that historically there was a mill and people used to walk along a path where the side yard is now and behind the property. AR is sympathetic to the need for a fence but is concerned it will change the landscape of the street. RR was very concerned based on the application, but after viewing the site with the light post and guardrail and the fact that the fence won't be in front of or block the view of the house I can support it. FA has the same concerns as AR. AL noted that the bylaw does not indicate that the Committee should take into consideration the needs of the applicant but rather directs the HDC only to consider "the appropriateness of the scale, shape and proportion of the [proposed fence] in relation to the land area on which the [fence] is situated and in relation to the Buildings and Structures in the vicinity." AL does not think the fence, being along the edge of the street and effectively closing off the whole yard with its proposed height, is proportionate to the proposed site or the fences in the vicinity. There are no 6' fences in the vicinity along the front of properties this close to the street.

There was a discussion on how close to the street the fence would be and Heather noted that the fence will further back than indicated in the application. MS pulled up the GIS listing for the property and noted that there is an easement along the front of the property that needs to be identified as it seems the fence may need to be moved back more. MS said to contact Corey York in the Engineering Department.

The HDC asked if Heather would consider a different style or lower fence. She didn't think having different style or sizes of fences met the aesthetic she wants. It was noted that the HDC must consider the impact to the street and districts, not just the applicant's house.

AR and DH offered that plantings in front of the fence could be used to soften it, possible trees or other tall plantings. The discussion turned to a buffer space between the sidewalk and location of the fence to place plantings. The consensus was for a minimum setback of the fence 2 feet from the sidewalk unless the easement requires it to be back further.

AR makes a motion to approve a 6' cedar fence set a minimum of 24" from the sidewalk. The homeowner should locate the easement and put the fence behind it if more than 24" from the sidewalk. Findings: the new fence matches the existing fence; the new fence does not obscure the façade of the house. Recommendations – plantings to soften the impact of the fence between the fence and sidewalk. FA seconds. DH calls for vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – N. motion approved 4-1 pending abutters notices.

NOTE: S Krantz joined the meeting at 7:27PM but missed the discussion as the application was discussed early. She had no comments.



C. 491 Main St. New Fence and Light Post with Mailbox - Application 2007 – applicant not present

RR Liaison. DH went over the application, a new 3' picket fence with a double gate across the driveway and a smaller gate in the back. There is also a combined light post with mailbox. DH noted there was a picket fence with granite posts. The applicant also noted use of composite material for the fence.

RR shared google maps street view with the old fence and existing mailbox visible.

There was a discussion about the combined light post and mailbox, the consensus is that it is okay.

DH prefers painted wood; is okay with the combined light post and mailbox.

There was a discussion about where the new combined light post and mailbox will be located; the location on the application was approximate. There was a further discussion about the property line. MS commented that the property line is 63' back from the pavement

AR is okay with the fence and light post. Would also be okay with composite material if it is something paintable like Azek. If the applicant wants to use something that isn't paintable the HDC would want a sample.

There was a discussion on materials; it was noted that a fence on school street used Boral that was painted and looks good.

RR is okay with the fence and light post and composite material.

AL is okay with the fence and post as long as it isn't plastic or vinyl.

FA is okay with the fence and post, same concerns about material not being plastic or vinyl.

RR makes a motion – Finding the property line is more than 60' from the street making a composite material an option. If the material selected is not wood the applicant shall provide a sample. The installation of a 3' picket fence with a scalloped double gate at the driveway and a smaller scalloped gate in the back. The fence parallel to Main St. shall use the granite posts, use granite posts from the sides in the front if needed. Visible hardware shall have a black finish. Wooden posts on the side shall use the caps as shown in the photo in the application. The light fixture shown with a black, copper or patina finish. If a different light fixture is chosen, it must be submitted for approval. AL seconds. DH calls for vote: DH – Y, AR – Y, RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y. motion approved 5-0 pending abutters' notices.



D. 25-27 School St. Blue Building Discussion - Application none – applicant not present

DH went over project. The partial demo and cleanup looks good. DH had asked the members to visit the site and look at the blue building at the back. The consensus is that the build is probably not salvageable. It is structurally suspect and the back of the building that steps down the hill complicates doing anything with the building.

The foundation is worthy of doing something interesting.

The scale of anything that replaces the building is important.

4. Adjournment

At 8:50 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Meeting minutes of February 25th, 2020;
- Application 2006;
- Application 2008; and
- Application 2007.