



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

9/01/2020

7:00 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.

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS).

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:02 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

2. Regular Business Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – Michaela Moran asked about removing a small 1x1 ft chimney from the back of 34 School St. that was discussed 2 years ago as part of an application with some other work, but then not done and also relating to adding caps to other chimneys that was originally going to be stone, but now will be metal, and another chimney that needs to be rebuilt above the roof line. DH said to treat it as a new application and we will review. Terra Fredricks reported that 612 Mass Ave installed a plastic fence. Terra also commented that the meeting number with the dial-in information is for the wrong meeting. HDC received an email about a fence at 26 School St. made of tarp material and wood. DH commented that the fence was erected by the previous owner and a neighbor is now complaining. FA commented that 491 Main St. is back on the market, the owner never installed the fence or light post.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – skipped.
- C. Violations – 104 Main St – the new solar arrays have conduit visible on the roof. DH sent a memo to Trinity solar and hasn't heard back. We will discuss the fence at 26 School St at next meeting.
- D. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – spreadsheet up to date. 282 Central roof repair, this may be a CNA.

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

- A. 9 School St. – Application 2017 Public Hearing: Applicant John Perkins, not present.

DH reads the public hearing notice and noted that last meeting we voted to reject the application because it was incomplete, but because we got the application late it wasn't rejected outright because we missed the 14 day window. DH sent a memo to John with what should be included in the application, heard back John may be interested in selling the property. We are having the public hearing because we are required to have the hearing



within 45 days of the application date. At this point we should consider whether to deny or approve the application. AL – I thought we denied it at the last meeting. DH explained because we missed the 14 day limit for rejecting due to content (we made that determination during our last meeting), but without new content now we should decide whether or not to deny the application both for inadequate content and on the merits. If there is a denial, AL will prepare the denial based on DH’s memo to John pointing out lack of required content for HDC requirements, and the substantive problems in the proposed scheme. DH asked for comments:

AR –the application treated the site as three parcels with identical buildings on all three and is not appropriate because it does not conform to the surrounding district properties.

FA – the aesthetics don’t fit with the properties around it.

AL – citing Town Bylaw P 8.2 and quoting the HDC Criteria: “New work should be compatible ... with the massing, size, scale, [and] style” of historic buildings in the vicinity, and the proposed buildings are inconsistent with Exchange Hall across the street and other nearby commercial buildings. Three identical, side-by-side houses don’t fit with the character of the area.

DH – In terms of architectural form the buildings are too small; the layout is based on fire code and not consistent with the appropriate massing and scale of historically significant buildings in the area. Three separate buildings are not compatible with the area.

AR makes a motion to deny the application for 9 School street based on the reasons previously stated. AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote:

RR – Y, FA – Y, AL -Y, AR – Y, DH – Y.

The motion is approved 5-0 and the application is denied.

B. 25-27 School St Update

DH discussed with David Veo that what to do with the blue building is still up in the air. DH suggested Dennis Dale as a landscape architect to come up with some ideas. Possibly duplicate the building, moving it forward and use the foundation of the existing building as amenities for the tenants.

C. 53 River St Joint HC/HDC Memo.

DH has been preparing a memo with Doug Herrick of the HC and reviewed the contents:

- Selby is setting up an archaeological study RFP.
- Section 106 – Federal money for project is reviewed by MHC
- Selby will hire a landscape architect to design the park. DH has suggested Dennis Dale, a landscape architect with historic expertise.
- We need to hold public hearings for park criteria and the design needs to be at 60% for environmental permit.



DH asks for comments:

FA – looks good.

AL – fine with it in theory, nothing to add.

DH – we need to stay on top of this for historic aspects. MMI (company that generated existing report) is concerned more with the engineering issues.

FA makes a motion to approve sending the memo to the 53 River St. Commission. AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote:

FA – Y, RR – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y.

The motion passes 5-0. DH will contact Doug Herrick to send the memo. Selby is coming on September 22nd for public hearing with new information.

D. CPC Funded Tree Replacement

FA didn't hear back with guidelines from the CPC on where we can plant the trees. DC commented that in the past it was approved to plant trees up to 20 feet back from the right of way. Anywhere in the front yard is probably okay. Check with Ryan Hunt the Tree Warden in Acton; he may be able to do the plantings which will allow planting more trees, potentially 15-30. DH commented that we should include information about the funds for tree plantings in our annual letter to HDC owners to see if there is interest for trees in specific locations.

E. HDC Discussion: Solar Panel Guidelines

We have generally allowed solar on non-residential buildings, for example the ballet studio in West Acton, but it does depend on the case. We denied solar on the Church at the corner of Mass Ave and Spruce Street used by the architecture firm of Michael Rosenfeld. In general, we haven't allowed solar on residential buildings that is visible from the street, except for 104 Main St. which we allowed partially visible panels on the south facing roof of the garage. AL – DS suggested the guidelines relating to point 4 may be too permissive regarding "solar need" which should be changed to "main objective". AL also pointed out that the focus of the guidelines is specific to residential. Also, these are guidelines and not entitlements; meeting them doesn't automatically mean approval.

To make these guidelines official we need to have a public hearing and vote. DH – let's plan on having a public hearing in October.

F. 69 River St – Application 2018 Under-Porch Enclosure by Kendra Wilson, present

FA liaison. DH gives an introduction, this is the first house in the new development on River St, and we just approved updates to the fence around the backyard for 6 feet high. We approved the closed in porch on the back a few years ago. Kendra goes over the design and sketches: vertical planks of composite material with ½ inch between planks. sliding barn doors on the west and east side. DH asks for comments:

AR – this looks fine, composite material is fine. Will the color match the house? Kendra responded that the trim on the porch is white and the enclosure will match the porch.



DH commented that with the taller fence this won't be very visible.

FA asked how the doors will work; Kendra said the first panel is fixed and the doors will slide over the panels.

DH asked if the ½ inch spacing is for air circulation; Kendra said yes.

AL – I don't have a problem with what is proposed. I already mailed out the abutters notices so we can issue a certificate immediately.

DH makes a motion to approve the porch enclosure. FA seconds. DH takes a roll call vote:

AR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y.

The motion passes 5-0. FA will process the certificate and email a copy to Kendra.

G. 73 River St – Application 2020 Solar Panels by Rahul Ponniah, present

AL liaison. DH introduces the project, members were asked to view the site and give feedback on what parts of the roof weren't visible' Rahul took the information to the solar company that came up with a plan in the shade report presented. The main house roof is a hip gable. Panels will be on the rear face not visible to the street. More panels will be on the garage roof which is also a hip gable, but because the garage is offset from the center of the house, panels placed on the east side from the middle of the garage forward to the back of the house will not be visible nor will be the panels on the west face in the upper corner towards the house. The back face of the garage roof facing south is also not visible and will have panels. DH asks for comments:

AR – looks like a good plan. It is important that any equipment or conduit also won't be visible. Raul said that there will be an additional meter next to the existing electrical meter that will be visible, but the conduit will not be.

DH added that we prefer the conduit to run inside if possible and tucked along the back of the house between the garage and main roof. Rahul noted that on the main house there is attic space the conduit can be installed, but the garage doesn't have attic space; however, the conduit can be run on the garage so that it is not visible.

FA – looks good.

AL – I'm okay with it.

RR – I'm good with it.

FA makes a motion to approve the solar panels per the supplied drawings. AL seconds DH takes a roll call vote:

FA – Y, RR – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y.

The motion passes 5-0 pending abutters notices. DH goes over the process for Rahul.

H. 103 Main St – Application 2021 Window/Patio Door Replacement by Kris and Nancy Depew, present, Jaime Morin of Renewal by Anderson also present

Jaime gives an overview of the windows: 6 over 6 Fibrex material FDL style (simulated divided lights with fixed muntins and spacer bar between the glass)



DH asks if the windows being replaced are original.

Kris gave an overview of why they want to replace the windows: to improve efficiency, some of the windows aren't fully operational, some of the storm windows are not operational, and they want to improve sound blocking from the street. They also want to remove the storms to improve the look of the house. The windows are in decent shape.

DH said that we like to evaluate the windows on the house, as preservation is a top concern. We would like to do that before allowing replacement.

AR asked if the windows have been restored aside from glazing and painting. Kris said they have not been weather proofed or restored.

AR pointed out that the replacement windows are effectively sash replacements in the existing frame and there will be about 1 ½ inch of glass reduction. Jaime confirmed and added that the weight pockets will be insulated which improves the efficiency.

Nancy pointed out that there is already a reduction in glass by the storm windows.

AR said this is an irreversible procedure so you really want to consider your options before committing.

We usually don't like replacing windows unless the original windows were already replaced. For example, 104 Main St had very few of the original windows remaining.

DH said we can put you on the schedule for September 22nd and plan a site visit. It was decided to have DH and AR do the visit at 9 AM on Friday September 4th.

I. 615 Mass Ave – No application – Rehabilitation Guidelines for purchasers Erin and Rich Kirk, present

Erin and Rich are in the process of purchasing 615 Mass Ave, which is currently uninhabitable, and will be doing major renovations to make the house livable. They are not purchasing the second lot behind the main house that was split off.

DH goes over the HDC process and suggest reviewing the bylaws and guidelines.

Erin noted that the garage was never demolished. DH said it would need to be part of a new application.

Terra Fredricks asked if Erin and Rich knew who owned the back lot and if they were aware of what was happening with it. They don't have any information.

No motion was made.

J. 25 Windsor Ave – Application 2019 – Bulkhead Door Replacement by Ellen Spiro, present

DH said that based on the supplied photo and the bulkhead not being visible from Windsor Ave that he will write up a CNA and asked Ellen to submit an application to formalize the process.

No motion was made.



4. Adjournment

At 9:31 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Application 2017;
- Application 2018;
- Application 2019;
- Application 2020;
- Application 2021;
- Combined HC/HDC memo for 53 River St;
- Draft HDC Guidelines re Solar Panels for Residential Buildings.