



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

06/08/2021

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Fran Arsenault (FA), Ron Regan (RR), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT).

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS), Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison.

1. Opening;

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:01 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

2. Regular Business

A. Citizen's Concerns – none.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DH – small typo on page 3 DH comment “impose” not “pose” same standards. RR – I noticed that the exhibits at the bottom were from the previous meeting. AL makes a motion to approve the minutes from May 25th, ZT second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, ZT – Y, AL – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 4-0.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – 80 School St chimney slipped through the cracks. RR – both applications were in a single pdf, the first was 34 School St, the second was 80 School St. and we missed the second one. DH – this was submitted during Covid while the timelines weren’t enforced. We can act on the same application, and I can put her on for the meeting on June 22nd. I’ll follow up Michaela and grant a hardship certificate if she can’t wait until the next meeting. AL – I’ll put in for abutters notices now so we can grant the certificate on the 22nd.

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

A. Public Hearing continued for Application 2109 New Multi-Family Building at 9 School St by John Perkins

Applicant present. DH liaison. DH notes this is a continuance for the public hearing from the last meeting and asks Patrick Guthrie, the applicant’s architect, to go over the updates from the comments. Patrick -- We added more detail to the site plan with plantings and hardscape. On the left side screening is added to hide the foundation and utility meters. The right-side foundation is screened with plantings. We moved the HVAC equipment to the front of the units with evergreen plantings as screening. Note on the roof that the mechanicals deck has been removed and the roof is full mansard all around. The pitch is now 1.5/12 instead of 2/12 on the upper part of the roof to address its visibility.



The front elevation includes the plantings as a ghosted impression and the proposed HVAC compressors. We used 184 Main St. as a reference for the location of the compressors. We increased the massing of the center bay stoops by raising the roof pitch, adding detail to the roof fascia, adding brackets on the inside of each door, and broadening the steps. Across all the front doors we added a header detail.

In response to the comment of distribution of the brackets in the cornice, I've included photos of other Second-Empire buildings in the town showing the distribution is similar to what we've proposed. We did make the brackets heavier, from 2 ½" wide to 3 ¼" wide to give a stronger presence.

We introduced a water table on the front and side elevations. On the east elevation the strip between the building and driveway isn't deep enough for planting screening. We added a stepped lattice with 4'6x5' panels and 5' posts. The stoops and steps are stained wood with closed stringers and a cove molding under the step edge. The back decks have privacy screening between the units that comes out 2' and then slopes down to the outer edge of the deck. The center bay deck has the same depth as the side bays.

In the detail drawings, on the rear deck balustrade we used a cedar top rail and post cap. The eave detail shows the changes in dimension of the brackets and the entry elevation and details with jamb molding and head detail above the door. The door jamb shows the band molding, the brackets mount to the widest band. The lower left shows the step design detail for the stoops, the water table detail showing 5/4x8 with a 2 ½" cap.

Next are a series of photos of Second-Empire buildings in Acton, showing the lower-pitch of the upper mansard roof won't be visible, 21 and 27 Central Street, and 3 Wood Lane as examples, plus some from Cambridge as well as other buildings with different bracket spacing and 184 Main St AC units.

Patrick goes over materials, the Majesty double hung windows, simulated divided light with the casing detail that wraps the flange of the window. The Wyndham series Simpson door with stile and rail dimensions; note, we won't use the shown glazing. The proposed entry door hardware is American Heritage Richmond & Wilmington style thumb latch with oil rubbed bronze finish.

DH – Made some good improvements, AR isn't present but sent some comments. DH asks for comments:

RR – Is there a change in the height of the lower mansard section of the roof. Patrick – No. RR -- I don't like having the AC units in the front versus on the back of the roof as the back is out of our jurisdiction. I'm okay with having fencing screening along the east elevation, but I don't like the standard diagonal lattice as it is chintzy. Patrick – we could add plantings on the lattice, although that would make it deteriorate quicker. RR -- I like all the other changes you've proposed. One thing I notice on the photos you supplied is that buildings with towers had brackets closer together and buildings without had brackets further apart and your building doesn't have a tower. I'd still like to see the mockup of the



window before signing off on it. I agree that the upper roof on the mansard won't be visible in close proximity to the building, but maybe if you go north on Main St. as the elevation rises it will be a little visible at a distance, but I'm not concerned about it.

ZT – I really like the main entry changes. Will the lattice be painted, and will there be enough space to access meters behind them? Patrick – the spacing needs to be at least 3' for access and we have them at 5' and the lattice will be painted, depending on if we add plantings to it. ZT – I like the idea of vines, I think it will soften the look a bit. On the west elevation the distribution of the second-floor windows have an empty space, is there a reason there isn't a window there? John – there is a shower on the inside so we can't put a window there. ZT -- I don't like the mechanicals on the front. I think it will be difficult to screen. Have you considered moving the AC units to the West? John – if you look at the photo from 184 Main St. they were able to hide the units pretty well. There is a limit to how far the HVAC compressors can be from the unit it serves so we can't put all of them on the West side. Patrick – also we can't put the compressors where the gas meters are. ZT – If you could move the compressors for the two west units to the side it may help. John – if we can move them, we will.

AL – On the roof plan it looks like you moved the sides of the back porches in. Patrick – no, this plan is deceptive because there is a deep overhang. The porches still meet at the corner boards. AL – can you go over the back railing details. Patrick – the top handrail and post caps are cedar; the balustrade and other components are pressure treated and will be stained with an opaque stain. AL – I would prefer the HVAC compressors where they were on the roof as that was out of our jurisdiction, there isn't as much space from the sidewalk to the front of this building as there is at 184 Main St and it is going to be hard to hide them there. What is the siding? Patrick – it is wood. AL -- I agree that the top of the roof won't be visible from School Street.

FA – I have a hard time with the HVAC compressors in the front. The photos of the other mansards are helpful for the bracket and roof visibility. I would prefer to have thin brick on the foundation wall.

DH reads AR's comments – I am opposed to putting the HVAC compressors in the front. We need to find a less prominent location. I like the changes to the center units' porch; I wish it was larger. I'm fine with the lattice screening; I prefer horizontal lattice. I appreciate the street view samples of upper mansard visibility; I don't want to see the EPDM. Should the pitch be lower? DH noted that it was made lower. AR -- Are the heavier soffit brackets on all three sides? Patrick – Yes. AR -- The cedar on the porch railing is an improvement. Glad to see the butt-joints on the window; the SDL grill should have spacer bars. I think the almond jamb liners will be noticeably plastic looking. DH – the window should be one color, if you can only get the jamb liner in white or almond, then the window should match. AR -- I'm okay with the door selection, but not the glass. DH – you can come back with the glass selection, maybe you can have some variety with the doors, second empire tend to be exuberant.

DH – I'm fine with the stepping lattice. I'd like to disguise the posts for the back deck, maybe more lattice with some greenery. I'm okay with the EPDM roof now that you've decreased the pitch. The front stoops are good; are you staining everything? Patrick – the



decking and step will be stained; the riser will be painted. DH – that’s good. I like the changes to the central porch; I like the thicker brackets. If there is something you could do in the front mansard shingles with a decorative pattern that would be helpful. The 184 Main St project is a 40B and not in the historic district; the design review board had some input but not authority to enforce changes. That project has higher front porches and is about 30 feet from the street versus your project which is 10 feet. I won’t approve with the HVAC compressors on the front. I think you will be able to locate the compressors on the west side, you will need an HVAC engineer, but they will come up with a way to run the longer lines.

AR joins the meeting – regarding the compressors, not just the visibility but the noise will be an issue in the front. As many that you could move from the front would be a plus.

DH – we’d like to take a vote tonight and make a list of items to finalize later: doors, jamb liners on the windows, you probably should have a backup window if the mockup doesn’t meet muster. Moving the HVAC compressors, Updated end elevations with screening for the deck.

AR makes a motion – I move we approve the 9 School St project based on the Mark B 6/8/2021 revision drawings including: South Acton site plan, site plan, basement plan, first floor plan, roof plan, north and east elevations, south and west elevations, details A-3.0 and A-3.1, 2nd empire samples, majesty window info sheet, Simpson door spec sheet, EMTEK hardware sheet, and Herrington light details. Noting items that will be finalized later. AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, ZT – Y, FA – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 6-0.

B. Miscellaneous HDC Business: Proposed Outdoor Space at Town Hall; Asa Parlin House; 53 River St Site Visit

DH goes over the 53 River St visit; DH, AL, FA, and RR attended. The hydraulic engineers, archeologists, and landscape architect gave presentations. Members of the Select Board, HDC, HC, CC, 53 River St Special Committee, and various town employees attended. ZT, you should familiarize yourself with the site. The archaeologist said there was about 15 buildings there; they think the foundations are there, but down about 2 feet below the current grade. The project is going to be tricky with a combination of historical aspects plus a park and solving some substantial water problems with hydraulic engineering so there are competing interests. Next steps – the landscape architect will start planning; it will be a passive historic park with some parking, not a recreation park. At some point the town will come to us for the demo of the buildings.

AL – there is a 380-page report from the archaeological study that is worth a look and, if you go on site, be careful of poison ivy.

RR – should I write up a summary of the visit? DH – I think a summary of who was there, mentioned what happened, a paragraph or two is enough.

DH – The outdoor space at town hall – a flat grass area, not much contouring to it. There is a big granite disk with names on it, a concrete sidewalk and one nice tree. FA – It is nice because there is a fenced in area with some mechanical equipment between the area



and Main St., so it is secluded there. ZT – The sketches included a retaining wall on one side. DH – It's fairly flat and a retaining wall isn't needed but having a wall to differentiate itself from the public street makes sense. DH – I'll start a memo about our thoughts and pass it around.

John also showed us some preliminary plans on Asa Parlin. The main house is very tiny; I was reluctant at first to keep the later addition, but I think it could be made to work as a L-shaped building. The outdoor space is nice with the juniper bushes separating it from the parking lot. FA – including the addition so that there could be 2 meeting spaces is nice. DH – taking out the second level and leave cathedral height rooms would make it simpler and a nice space.

C. Application 2112/2113 demo of garage and front porch at 615 Mass Ave by Jessica Donahue for Daphne Schneider

DH – All demolitions have a public hearing and we've scheduled the hearing for these applications for June 22nd, FA confirmed that the advertisements and notices have gone out. I'd like members to have access to the site for a site visit, and Jessica said Wednesdays would work. The committee members agree that after 5 PM works. We will meet at the address and tour the outside in two groups. There will be no discussion, just fact finding.

Generally, we require the applicant to submit a sketch or plan of what is replacing the demolished. RR – What if we have photos documenting with notes? DH – Annotated photos may work. Daphne, is your intent to rebuild the porch to match what is there? Daphne – The plan now is just to take down the roof as it is collapsing and leave the columns in place and restore the roof to match what is there now. AL – I'd like to see a list of materials.

DH – I'd like clarification of the ownership of the garage. Jessica – The garage wall runs along the lot line, there is a retaining wall on the back left corner that runs into the abutter's property, but the garage is owned by Daphne.

No motion was made.

4. Adjournment

At 8:55 p.m., AL makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, FA seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AL – Y, ZT – Y, FA – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 5-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Minutes for May 25th
- Application 2109
- Application 2112



- Application 2113