

ACTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes November 10, 2021 7:30 pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Bill Dickinson (BD) (Chair), Bob Ferrara (BF), Bill Klauer (BK), Victoria Beyer (VB), Alissa Nicol (AN), Barb Rhines (BR) - Planning Division, Fran Arsenault (FA) - (Select Board Liaison)

Guests: Andy Mcgee (AM)

Absent: Brad Maxwell (BM)

1. Opening

Chair Bill Dickinson opened the meeting at 7:31 p.m. and read the procedures and agreed-on policies the Town developed for these web-based Zoom meetings. Now that the Mass. Legislature has extended the open meeting pandemic rules about using Zoom vs. in-person meetings, the AHC will continue with Zoom meetings indefinitely until there is consensus about returning to in-person meetings.

2. Regular Business

1) Approval of October Minutes – Meeting minutes from the AHC’s October meeting were reviewed; BK suggested changing “sale/sand shed” to “salt/sand shed,” this suggestion was accepted, VB moved and BF seconded a motion to approve the minutes; the minutes were approved unanimously by a vote of 6-0.

2) Citizen Concerns: BK mentioned an email to HC from owner of #80 Piper Road re: remains of a foundation, BK will respond; BD announced that BM is retiring from HC, and we are looking for new members

3) Any ZBA/Planning Board projects on the CRL: BK stated that he had reviewed the meeting agendas of the ZBA and did not recognize any historic buildings in permits or applications

4) Bridge Project between Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and TTT: BD met with Tom Tidman and Town Manager to move forward on RFPs for consultants - topo engineering survey, etc., then will begin design work over winter.

5) Archaeological By-Law Update: BF is advancing outreach efforts, advertising Public Forum with flyer created by BR - happening on December 7th. BF and BD have met with Select Board and HDC. Further outreach needed - presentations to ACT, Planning Board,

back to Select Board, Green Acton, FinCom, AHS, etc. AN suggests adding Iron Work Farm to list. BR suggests forming a sub-committee to take on outreach efforts, HC as sponsor. Survey to be created to gauge interest of public, to be distributed in future. BD asks if this bylaw will be tied into land disturbance bylaw or just focus on zoning/permitting. BF says it is still an open question. Land disturbance is not in current draft, but BF will pursue answer.

6) 53 River Street Update - covered in presentation by Andy McGee

7) Status of Converting CRL to MACRIS: No update. The Massachusetts Historical Commission is still adding the records and changes to MACRIS.

3. New/Special Business

1) 53 River Street Presentation. Andy McGee has been hired by the Town as project lead. Work is happening now to progress the creation of MOU. Andy began his focus on historic preservation of dam and mill structures identified on site. Identified in MHC inventory as “53 River Street/Shoddy Mill Site Historic Area ACT.R” Historic park planned for site. Engineers have identified ACT.940 (Mill Pond) and ACT.942 - 947 for protection. All parts of dam, except the north and south abutments, must be breached due to determination of modeling by engineers (to meet hydrologic standard of Office of Dam Safety). All of concrete sections will be removed. To determine possibility of leaving stone block portion, ran models of entire 14 foot block section, as well as 8 feet and 4 feet of the block section. Perspective (or interpretation) of dam will be created by placement of blocks taken from removal of block section. Tailrace will be filled, leaving in place existing dry stacked boulder walls under woven geotextile; plantings planned along former tailrace. Stone retaining walls of brook, wheelhouse foundation, and engine house chimney base (how much TBD), and piers will remain. Board members asked questions about whether the woven textile contains PFAS, shape of stones that will line tailrace, width of opening required compared to width of arch of railroad bridge, will removal of most of dam put burden on dams further downstream? AM says this is a “run of the river” dam; this dam does not stop flood flow, it only stores water for a few hours (which is why it was used to power the mill). MOU is between Army Corps of Engineers and MHC, and this is a stream restoration project. AN moves to endorse the preservation opportunities proposal, BF seconds - Vote passes unanimously, AN aye, BF aye, BK aye, VB aye, BD aye

2) Conant Land Update: DH spoke with Phoebe Conant. Family has only just begun exploring opportunities for sale. 56 acres? AWD interested in purchasing. Isaac Davis trail to remain. Limited development possible.

3) Tasks for the New Cultural Resource Planner: running plaque program, monitoring ZBA projects, schedule demo delay hearings, etc. suggested by members. BR suggests she will be updating HC docushare, maybe include more information re: MACRIS on the website for property owners, BD suggests we could create a handout (timeline, step by step process for renovation, etc.), BR working on other outreach avenues (Town social media, Municipal Monthly, etc.)

4) AHS work. BK reports that AHS received abutter's notice for Hosmer House, work to be done per KC infrastructure initiative, property on National Register so Section 106?

4. Consent Items - None

5. Adjournment: At 9:22 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously 6-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Meeting minutes of October 2021