



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2023-01-24

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), Kristen Guichard (KG) (Town Planning Director), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Absent:

Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:04 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – January 10 Meeting Minutes: DH moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, and DH voted to approve. DS abstained due to his absence at that meeting. Minutes approved.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates: DH: HDC Annual Report is in construction. DS and BR collected data. No conservation restriction for Morrison Farm on the Town Meeting. A solution for the buildings is needed for the Select Board to proceed.
Outstanding COA updates: ZT took care of a sign for 525 Mass Ave and sent to Barb Rhines, who is on leave; ZT will forward to the Planning Dept. AR for Window on 53 Windsor Ave. was also sent to Barb Rhines, but will forward to Planning Dept. DH asks KG to ensure the applicant gets a copy directly. DH notes that the firm making the sign for the library cannot obtain wood in 2" thickness. 1 1/2" true wood thickness is preferable to 2" urethane, but if the 1 1/2" thickness would be too thin for the planned two-sided incising or if the warranty would be unreasonably short, urethane should be used. DH will follow through. A solar installation was approved last year for 75 River St. conditioned on no exterior electrical conduit. A path for the electrical conduit inside the house could not be found; DH asked that the applicant bring the revised plan to the HDC on the 14th. The fire department is asking for signage on EV chargers to indicate the nature of the appliance. The HDC has no jurisdiction.



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

- A. 7:15 Continuation of Public Hearing for App. # 2218, 267 Central Street: Demolition of a house and garage to build a new 4-unit structure. DH: Opens the public hearing. DH contacted Mark Foster (MF) and Architect Dan Barton (DB), and they said they were not ready to present. Thus, we will extend the hearing. DH thus moves, to Feb 14. Barb Rhines has made an extension form. AL Seconds. AR, AL, ZT, DS, DH all in favor. Approved.
- B. 7:30 Application # 2301: 94 Main Street Windows. Application states replacement with same style; a vinyl replacement window sample was taken to town hall, and it was stated that it was the same as next door and approved by the HDC. DH asked to see if 96 Main had been approved. In 1994, a wood window was approved. It is not clear if the comparison is correct, or what windows were installed in 94, unlike the proposed windows and those at 96 Main which are six-over-six. DH suggests that a visit would be good. AR checks the date of construction; MACIS shows 1867. The windows on 96 should also be checked to ensure that the right windows were installed. DH will contact the applicant; can note that vinyl windows have not been approved in the past.
- C. 7:50 Continuation of Public Hearing: Categorical Re-Roofing Approvals. AL: At our last meeting we reviewed the proposed amendment to Section 3.2.3, **Categorical approval**, of the HDC Rules and Regulations, which would amend Sec. 3.2.3 to allow an application to re-roof an asphalt-shingle-covered roof to be categorically approved and issued a Certificate of Non-applicability following a cursory review by an authorized HDC member. The proposed amendment would exempt the application from review by the full HDC and from the requirement of a Certificate of Appropriateness, saving time and unnecessary effort. AL notes that the specification of the architectural shingles has been a subject of discussion. Alternatives are now delineated. Basic and stylized designs are possible. Could be described as standard architectural asphalt shingles. DH: some examples of specific manufacturers might be added; DH and AR think it would work well. DS: could state explicitly that we are not making a recommendation. Consensus to proceed with that approach. This modification is in the Rules and Regulations, to replace and supplant language on drip edges on ridge vents. This addition will allow a quick turnaround. AL moves that we approve the amendment to our R&D 3.2.3 as set forth. DH: second. Vote: AL yes, AR yes, ZT yes, DS yes, DH yes. Approved.
- D. 7:45 South Acton Master Plan and MBTA Section 3A Proposed Zoning. DH notes that the Planning Dept has indicated that they are working on a new South Acton Plan with the MBTA. The Library has materials, and sessions. 11-13h is the next one on 25 Jan. Comments are invited. KG: Last planning was in 1995. A lot accomplished in the interim. Are the visions accomplished? If not, what should be the path forward? Zoning and design guidelines are good to pursue in parallel with the infrastructure. Citizens'



ideas can impact the design, but it is important to do this in light of constraints. New state regulations – 40a, Sec 3a – requiring communities to include multi-family living by right. Communities with MBTA stations bring in certain requirements. For Acton, there is a requirement to set aside 50 acres throughout the town for low-cost, with 10 near the train station. One 25-acre contiguous parcel must be allocated. No areas smaller than 5 acres are allowed. The objective is to encourage the growth of neighborhoods. 15 units per acre is the minimum. HDC has seen and approved designs with up to 18 units per acre. The community needs to exclude the lands which are not developable, of course. The Library display has screens where ideas can be explored. The notion of the effort is to think of how zones should accommodate these sorts of use, independent of the current built environment. Considerations of the designs to fit in the context of the neighborhood are possible to include in the restrictions. All are welcome!

E. 8:00 HDC Violations Follow-up Plan. DH: A generic letter citing a violation would be good which would be used to communicate to the owner, and a second one seeking a particular enforcement action for the building inspector, citing the name, address, and violation. AL “volunteers” to prepare and circulate proposed drafts of each for our next meeting. We also need to have a plan for HDC member visits to sites of potential or apparent violations. Photos are legal from the public way. Photos can be brought to a normal public HDC meeting for discussion and determination of any action to be taken. AR: Certificates could carry a clause that requests that completion of the planned activities be signaled to the HDC liaison. Knowing when the Building department permit is pulled would allow a way to trigger a visit. AL: building conditions established before the 1990 are not in our purview. AR: a photo of the relevant faces of the building would be good. DS: we could note that HDC members are interested in the work done and may visit. AR: ‘Thank you for letting us know when the project is finished and enabling us to update our historical files’. DS: could we ask the Building department to signal when the project is closed. KG: a new online permitting system is in preparation for the Building Department, and the HDC may be able to engage with the system. This may allow a checkpoint for completion, and may allow a linking of the Building permitting process and that of the HDC. KG will look into some sort of cross-connect. Automatic alerts at the opening of the permit, and its closing. AL: It is in the scope of the HDC to identify violations. But we don’t want to be cops.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 8:22 AL moves to adjourn the meeting, DH seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting



- # 2218
- # 2301
- proposed amendment to Section 3.2.3, **Categorical approval**, of the HDC Rules and Regulations