



## Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2023-02-28

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), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

**Absent:** David Shoemaker

### Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

#### 1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 14 Meeting Minutes: Postponed until March 14 meeting.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
  1. COA/CNA – discussion of certificates in work.
    - (a) 96 Main Street – CNA issued to Robert Trombley for repairs-in-kind of roof and gutter.
    - (b) 53 Windsor Ave., App. 2220 – Window replacement. AR reported COA completed and will be submitted for filing.
    - (c) 446 Main Street – Application for CNA to replace slate roof with asphalt roof. Project deemed inappropriate for CNA. Will need a public hearing. Application to be returned to applicants with instructions to re-file as an application for a COA.
    - (d) 74 Nagog Hill Road, App. 2128 – Request to extend COA for another year. Beyond one-year time limit. Applicant to be advised to re-file the original application, fee waived, and extension will be granted.
  2. Asa Parlin RFP Site Tour/Architect Selection. DH: New money is available for the project; the Town issued a RFP for architectural proposals. The building will be open for a walk-through on Wednesday March 1 from 11 am until 2 pm.



3. 75 River Street Solar Panels. DH: A former member of the HDC asked if the solar panels recently installed on the rear roof of the house at 75 River Street had been approved by the HDC. DH had asked AL, who wrote the COA for the project, to check and see if the panels were installed consistent with the COA. AL: I inspected the solar installations at 73, 75, and 77 River Street, and the panels on each were installed consistent with their respective COAs. The panels on the south side of the rear roof of 75 River are visible from River Street, but the installation is consistent with the Solar Guidelines, which permit panels to be installed on roof surfaces which do not front on the governing street but are visible from the street. The Guidelines provide that in deciding whether to permit such installations, primary factors are the building's age, historic significance and/or unique architectural character. The older, more significant, architecturally unique a building is, the less inclined the HDC should be to permit solar panels otherwise permissible. None of these factors apply to these three buildings. Although one could reasonably disagree, while the panels installed on 75 River are visible from the street, I think it was appropriate to issue the COA. DH: Pictures attached to an application don't tell the whole story. We should try to have at least one member visit the site to take a look before considering an application.

## **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, reporting that the owner/architect will not be ready to discuss the application until March 28. BR: The current extension of the 60-day deadline extends until March 28. DH: Suggests extending the 60-day deadline until July 25, observing that if this project moves forward, it could take several meetings until it is ready for a vote. Asks BR to prepare a written extension to July 25 for his and Marc Foster's signatures. DH moved in favor of a continuation of the hearing until the March 28 meeting, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, and DH voted to approve.
- B. 7:26 Application # 2301 94 Main Street – Window Replacement. Applicant Amjad Amin (AA) not present. DH and BR both try without success to reach him by phone and email. DH reports that he, AR and AL visited the site in the company of AA. Because AA had pointed to the replacement windows at 96 Main, earlier approved by the HDC, as an example that he wanted to follow, the visit began with an inspection of those windows. AR: Those windows, which are Marvin tilt-back, single-glazed panes with energy panels attached, had not been successful and are no longer available. DH: They are not relevant anymore. After discussing possible wood-window alternatives, AR suggested that it might be time for the HDC to consider alternative materials, e.g., clad sash in a wood frame such as the HDC approved for the Nagog Hill project. AR noted that Concord HDC routinely approves windows with particular non-wood components, citing the Middlesex Bank and the Concord Library as examples that are worth inspecting. AR conceded that such windows are not within everyone's price point, but they will last a



very long time. DH turned to the windows in need of replacement at 94 Main, noting that AR, AL and DH had inspected and photographed the windows in question, i.e., those visible from Main Street, from both outside and inside the house. At least eight of the windows appear to be original, circa 1860. The windows in the house (both apparent originals and replacements) are in varying states of disrepair, some repairable, others not. At least one of the windows is missing a sash. Following our usual practice, the originals would have to be repaired, but that leaves the question of what to do with those that need to be replaced. AR: Not had a situation like this, where so much of the house is in ruin. Maybe here, for the windows in the house to be consistent with one another we might have to consider replacing them all. DH: The house is in tough shape, but we need to be consistent in how we deal with windows. Across the street, we denied replacements. AR: But at 100 Main, we allowed replacements. BR: The application is dated Jan 3d, which means the 60-day limit is March 3 or 4. DH: We could deny the application, inviting the applicant to come back for an informal consultation and then re-file. A "friendly denial." What would you suggest, AR? AR: We could consider replacements with cellular PVC, which looks like wood and could be painted. All the windows would match each other. We could require that the originals be restored, but that takes a long time. DH: Anderson Vibrex has a composite sash. AR: It has details and looks old. DH and AR discussed other possibilities. DH: But no vinyl. AR: Cellular PVC could be appropriate if it looks like wood. ZT: Should keep original windows where possible. Not prepared to approve without applicant present. We need more information. Should issue a friendly denial, with some questions. AL: Move that we issue a Denial of the application, offering the applicant the opportunity to meet with the HDC and then re-apply. DH: Seconds the motion. AL, AR, ZT, and DH vote to approve. AL will draft the Denial for DH, who will arrange to send it to the applicant with the offer to return for consultation.

- C. 8:02 Application # 2230 25 Windsor Avenue – Window Restoration/Replacement. Bradley Pruett (BP), contractor, present. BP: Found a possible solution using existing sash, altering sash using balance systems, which should make everyone happy. The original suggestion was to replace windows with one-over-one wood sash but with vinyl jam liners. DH: If the existing window can be renovated, that is the default solution. There may be extreme situations in which existing window must be replaced, but not here. The existing windows are in good shape. BP: I think we are all good. DH: We issued a Denial. Ask you to re-submit with the product literature and details so we can consider the proposal. BP: This product has gaskets and goes a long way to answering your concerns. DH: If you get it in on time, we can consider it at our next meeting on March 14.
- D. 8:15 No Application – Preliminary Discussion of 615 Massachusetts Avenue Renovation and Addition. Daphne Schneider (DS) owner, and Lisa Adamiak (LA) architect, present. DH: Here for an update on your project. DS: When we last met, we were still considering how to restore the house, but we needed the adjacent property. It since became available, and I bought it. DH: Very good. LA: Screens a three-dimensional



depiction of current plans, showing the main house connected to a barn by a two-story connector with a sun room wrapped around the corner of the connector. DS: Conferred with an arborist and will be able to save the large maple trees in front of the house. LA: Shows an old photo of the house in its original condition. Trying to bring the look of the house to what it used to be. Shows current picture of house. Need to repair the foundation and create a new sun room. DS wants the belvedere restored. We plan a two-car garage in the barn, with the doors in the back and an apartment on top. Add a new ell in the back of the house; the current ell in poor condition and needs to be demolished. Currently plan to restore existing windows, using, where we can, restored existing windows from the back of the house where existing front windows cannot be restored. Will probably request clad units for other windows and clad frames. New storm windows on new windows, simulated divided lights. Would like composite shudders with attachments to hang. The house is currently clad with vinyl siding. Hoping wood underneath, but no PVC for any replacement except where touching the ground.

Planning to replicate original fenestration. DH: Comments? AL: Not an architect, but the plans look good. Massing of the additions seems appropriate. ZT: Also not an architect, but the plans look good. Supports using original materials where possible. Pleased with the acquisition of the neighboring property. AR: Discloses professional affiliation with LA, offering to recuse. DH: No application and not voting, so recusal not necessary. AR: Nice to have something being done with the house. Enthusiastic about the project, including the acquisition of the neighboring property. DH: What happened to the chimney? LA: Unknown. DH: Are there fireplaces inside? LA: Yes, but don't appear operational, and can't find chimneys to match. Nothing in the attic. Can see inside evidence of chimney on the left; probably for heating. DH: The chimney is aesthetically pleasing. Too bad not there. LA: Agree. Maybe the one on the right is fake. DH: Back to the plan image front on. Main house looks good. Needs shutters for top windows. Barn looks good. But connector looks like an ordinary house stuck in the middle. Not up to the design of the two ends. Needs something, but don't know what. Dormers? The rest is good. Front windows on house are original, triple sash with long shutters – Italianate elegance. Keep them. Want to make the house and barn primary structures and the connector secondary. DS: If barn higher, help connector? DH: Maybe. DS: Need sunlight from west and south on the garden room. Might need to recess the barn. AR: Could connector hip at the end? DH: Not solve everything tonight. Come back with ideas. Like the way it is going.

Public Comment: Terra Fredricks (TF): Can't see drawings due to phone connection. Wants drawings shared. Would project affect large trees in front? DS: Arborists say trees can be saved.

DH: Schedule? LA: We will have discussions and expect to submit application at the end of March. Assume there will be a site visit. DH: We'll review application and decide when.

9:03 94 Main Street Application #2301 – Window Replacement – Amjad Amin (AA) calls in. DH: Too late; this was scheduled and discussed from 7:30 to 8:00. AA: Just give me the specifications so we can buy the windows. The guys I talked to don't want to restore the windows. DH explains the process and the "friendly denial." Recounts the



earlier discussion, noting that there are so many windows with different needs and that the HDC reached an informal consensus that replacement is probably the way to go. If AA comes back to meet with the HDC, the HDC will help him find the appropriate replacements. AA: Tried to get a link to the meeting, but no luck. There was a mix-up. DH: Arrange for a spot at the next meeting, on March 14, and we should have something for you.

9:11 Proposed Concord Road Historic District. Anne Forbes (AF), founding member of HDC, joins. DH: Received your email and forwarded the attachments to HDC members. AF: The main thing to follow in considering whether to go forward is the revised MHC publication, which tells you all you need to know. We have the forms for the Robbins House cellar. DH: Terra Fredricks has suggested that there can be a sub-committee that includes persons other than HDC members to serve as the Study Committee. That might be good; with only five members, we have a manpower problem. AL: According to the MDC materials, the HDC is the presumptive study committee for a new district, but it can petition the Select Board to appoint a study committee on which it would be represented, but others would be included. Seems like the way to go here. AF: If you do that, you would want someone from the Historical Commission, probably an affected property owner or two if they would be willing to serve, and persons nominated by the AIA, Historical Society and Board of Realtors. DH: Expect push-back from the Town? Select Board may point out that the Town owns almost all of the property in question, which provides necessary protection. AF: They would be wrong, because membership changes on the Select Board. Protection would only be as good as the willingness of Select Board members to provide it. DH: Are the properties noted, basically Morrison Farm over to and including Woodlawn Cemetery plus, perhaps, the house on the other side of Concord Road that used to be the sawmill, the only ones that should be considered? AF: The only one that might be added is the Robbins House at 844 Great Road, which abuts the proposed property. AR: It abuts the bike trail. AF: There is talk of preserving the causeway at the north end of the Ice Pond. FA: John Robbins House was restored by Historic New England. AF: Historic New England has a preservation restriction on it but never actually owned it. DH: What are the next steps? AL: At the end of the MHC publication, there is a suggested flow chart that AF suggested. It gives a pretty clear summary of the process set forth in the brochure. DH: What about HDC jurisdiction over the cemetery? AF: Ask MHC. You'll want a policy about that. DH: Should consider whether better to expand Center Historic District or create a new District. There would be a gap between the current Center District and the district under consideration. Discussion to be continued.

E. 9:34 HDC Violation Procedures. AL: Following up on last meeting's discussion regarding possible fines for violations, I misspoke when I suggested that Local Historic District Bylaw P, sec. 11.5 created a conflict between its provision for a range of fines between \$10 and \$500 per violation and Town General Bylaw #E45, providing for a fine of \$25 per violation. Bylaw P, sec. 11.5 provides that a violation of Bylaw P is punishable under either Bylaw P "or alternatively" Bylaw #E45. So, there is no conflict



about the fine but rather a choice. However, Bylaw P does not say who makes the choice: the HDC (who determines the violation and refers it to the Building Commissioner for enforcement) or the Building Commissioner (who enforces the Bylaw). AL believes that the HDC makes the choice, but wants to check with Town Counsel to confirm. Will report back with the answer.

### **3. Consent Items**

None

#### **1. Adjournment**

At 9:41 AL moves to adjourn the meeting, DH seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, ZT all approve.

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- #2301
- #2230
- Drawings provided in regard to proposed renovation and addition at 615 Massachusetts Avenue
- Draft letter on violations