



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2023-10-10

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Zach Taillefer (ZT), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Absent: Art Leavens (AL)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:05 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

A. Citizen's Concerns – Marjorie Norman. Windows installed at the rear of condominium. Would like to invite HDC to see the noise level, the reduction in noise level with the double pane windows, and to reconsider if a change in the decision might be possible. DH: Notes that we must follow State Law. We considered briefly a ‘Hardship condition’ at the time of the decision. HDC needs to check on the procedure and the status of the application; HDC invites MN to assemble an argument for a hardship decision for a structured consideration of the issue. It is very loud and invasive. The playground is now open and that may be an argument. Corey York will speak later discuss the Park. DS: suggests a sound level meter.

Rajesh Bajaj: School Street roof replacement. DH: spoke with the house owner. The roof had been re-roofed without permission. The roof was installed apparently by inspection. It is important that the owner understand that, as the house is in the District, for external work visible from the street of reference, an application to the HDC is needed *in advance* of the work being done; the Building Department also requires a Building Permit (which may lead to a fine). HDC requests the submission of a proper application for consideration of a certificate for this case and retroactive (likely) approval. RB: a family member asked the Town and did not hear about a Building Permit; RB will ask. BR offers to approach this tomorrow.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 26 September 2023: DS moved their adoption, seconded by DH. AR, DH, DS, DH, voted to approve. ZT Abstains having missed some of the meeting. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:



Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 66 School Street Roof CNA (DH) (Issued): Application for a CNA for re-roofing issued.
- 34 School Street COA (ZT) (Due 10.9.23): BR sent the document.
- HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD: DH will write a letter endorsing the idea.
- 37 Windsor Avenue Window Status: Extension made, but just to the 17 October. DH requests that we resend an extension to 28 November.
- 14 Newtown Road Generator Status: No quorum; will discuss 24 October.
- 53 River Street Park Elements on 10.24.23
- 12 Concord Road Solar Panels PH on 11.14.23 BR notes that no application has yet been received; BR will contact the Church Reps to let them know that this is a pre-requisite for action by the HDC.
- DH: The Garden Club folks have a mockup of the fountain and its podium. The town will supply recirculating water service, and may add lighting to the flagpoles. BR to ask when the mockup will be in place for viewing by HDC members. AR: should ask about the final dimensions of the podium. DH notes that a millstone or similar would be nice.
- BR notes the masonry repair for the window infill will require a time extension.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:25 Application # 2135 Gardner Field: Status Update. Cory York joins. DH: recaps the interaction to date. DRB offered some ideas. CY: nothing to show yet. Landscape Architects are working through the paperwork and ideas. Hoping to have the first step this week to the Town. DH: Introduces Marjorie Norman's concern. CY has shared input from MN to the Landscape Architects. Sees the need for a visible barrier, that can grow quickly. DH: the sound level indicates that the Town should consider a solid wood fence to mitigate the sound level for the neighbors; will also provide some visual protection. MN joins; the public is quite close. Encourages an 8 foot tall visual barrier. DH: when will there be a step forward? Oct 24, Nov 14 are upcoming meetings.
- B. 7:38 Application #2335 543 Massachusetts Avenue Signage. Katie Gorczyca, Cindy McCarthy and Bill Crosby join. Moved into the former Church Space, and wish to put up some signage. On main doors left and right would be two signs, replacing the current sign lettering with 'Danny's Place and '543 Massachusetts Avenue'. Other is on the East side, with a larger sign with Danny's Place in large font. There will be a patina 'look' to match the building style. BC: the sign will be $\frac{3}{4}$ " pvc; letters pinned off the wall. AR: Fine with the pair of signs on Mass Ave. The East wall lettering seems large. Asks for a more distant view to get the sense of scale. ZT: Existing copper face will be replaced? BC: May be 'Die-Bond', with phenolic faces, a thin rigid material with a look-alike fake patina. May do it with Aluminum. There is back-lighting so this will be used with cut



through. ZT: believes that either approach would work if appropriately painted. Would prefer keeping just one font size on the Mass Ave, which may make the full street name impractical. For the East face, also concerned that the size of the lettering may be too large. Illumination: would prefer indirect light if any used, pointing at the face of the sign to get shadowing. Could return at a later time with lighting, or you can come to a later meeting with lighting. DH: A stem with an end swivel light is good. BC: can put a dimmer on the light. DS: consider putting 543, Massachusetts, and Avenue on separate lines. DH: Maybe just make 543 a significantly larger font to balance the visual weight, and assume people will know they are on Mass Ave. May also choose a larger font also on left sign 'Danny's Place'. On the East face, it seems to send a message that is different than the role of the service. AR: could it be mounted not on the building? If on the building, the pinned letters do seem good, but are large. BC: Considered a blade sign on Mass Ave. DH: Raised letters on pins would be something new for the HDC, and there are a number of blade signs. KG: Additional occupants of the building are likely to be on the parking lot side of the building. No plan to make use of the Lawn. BC: might consider proposing a smaller sign, or come back with a revised design. AR: Trees might hide the sign on the wall; the blade sign may work better once landscape is in place. DS: feels the blade sign sends a more accurate message about the role of Danny's place. DH: Recommends to proceed with the signs on the door; and put up a temporary sign on the wall, and reconsider after the planting is in place. AR: Illumination of the blade sign is a nice addition. ZT: could make the sign larger too. DH: invites a return in 2 weeks – 24 October – with a revised design.

C. 8:16 COA # 2313 (Amend) 615 Mass Ave. Window Renovations/Replacement. AR recuses herself. Lisa Adamiak joins. There is asbestos in the glazing of the windows. Feels that a point of diminishing returns has been reached to rescue a limited number of windows. DS: cost and complexity of having the asbestos removed? LA: Do not yet have an estimate or know what the additional burden would be. Do not know if the windows can be restored, and may require an expensive asbestos remediation only to discover that the windows cannot be restored. DH: recommend that the window issue be separated from the rest of the project via an amendment; to abandon the old windows will be likely a hardship application. But best not to have this in the path for the project. LA: can proceed with other activities in parallel, and order the replacement window which were already planned and agreed upon with the HDC. DH: Asbestos is an unfamiliar problem. Hardships can be financial or "otherwise". ZT: Consider processing just one of the windows through the remediation and restoration to save cost. LA: will ask a bit more about costs, and processes, and if there is a path. Will return in 2 weeks. DH: Height of the Cupola? LA: Zoning Department does not allow automatic grandfathering; but it is an architectural feature so it is allowed. DH: We worked to get the ZBA to allow replacement of a building closer than the standard 10 feet; height would be another consideration to enable. To discuss at a future meeting.

D. 8:40 Ed Mullen joins. Energy efficiency and impact on permits. Want to be fossil-fuel free in 2024. Has contractor experience in historic districts. Sees the absolute need to allow solar power. New bylaw was approved by Attorney General; will be in January



2024. Andrea Beccara joins. Bylaw will be in force 90 days from approval. Website will be posted for resources. New construction or renovation must go all electric. Just want to be sure that there are paths to solar power to help in this transformation. DH: The HDC bylaw does not address (or allow us to consider) energy use. ZT: We have been able to move forward with all of the applications for solar panels to date after some consideration and adjustment. DS/DH: 200 out of 8500 houses are in historic districts -- ~2%. Encouragement to have anyone with interest to come by informally for any questions on energy modifications

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 8:55 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS seconds. AR, DS, DH, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare