

Meeting Minutes 4/12/2011
Acton Historic District Commission

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Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB), TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Also present were Ron Rose (RR), Terra Friedrichs (TF), Anita Rogers (AR), Pam Lynn (PL), David Honn (DH), David Barrat (DB) and Mike Gowing (MG), BoS liaison,

There were no citizens' concerns.

Minutes of March 8, 2011 were approved by consent.

South Acton Train Station meeting recap: DH Meeting was held on Thursday instead of Friday. DH and RR attended. Peter Luckacic (PL) was in attendance. PL drew a site plan full size in advance for discussion of the landscaping of the north side parking lot. Architect's plan does not depict enough "presence" of the station. The curb line near the station will be pulled 10' north and will result in a loss of parking spaces. The plan also includes a paved plaza. The exiting riders will still be funneled through a narrow area in the head house. Bike racks were discussed but not resolved. Proposed revision entrance landscaping more canopy at eastern end.

The south side rider drop off coordinate with real-trail. Refer to plan #SA Det Site plan. Move pavement move drop off for handicapped. Left side more fixed up canopy on left - east- side. Trees on south side repair earth-moving damage. South side drop off. Bike racks and lockers increased on south side to equal those on the north side. Use trees on south side Number of parking spaces on south side undetermined. Sixty foot canopy. T will prepare a plan showing work they will do. T owns parcel on south side at the east end.

Area near platform will have dense shrubs to hide platform. Use berm to soften the look of the platform. Types of plants limited to salt tolerant plants. Need small leaves or evergreens to avoid collecting on the tracks and affecting traction. Types of plants are to be determined. Again the landscaping on the east end of the south side will be coordinated with the rail-trail planners. There is the issue of whether or not the rail-trail will pick up the cost of the landscaping for that area. No Picket fences. T is considering the use of a mesh type material. There will be a 6' high black, chain-link fence running a quarter of a mile in either direction or to Martin Street. Head house design is going well. There will be a weather vane on the top and there will be a "T" symbol at the top of the elevator tower. The north side tower will be taller. The glazing will have a vertical rectangular orientation. The south side can use less glass. Metal material will not be ribbed. Steel frame with steel members span the station. RR The horizontal metal panels currently proposed by the T's architect is less deep and finer in texture than options previously proposed. It has a profile with something of the character or wood drop siding.

7:45 Margos II Application for sign. Attending were Peggy Nazzaro, owner and Susan Muller from Custom Signs of Acton, MA. The proposed sign meets the sign by-law for dimensional requirements. PC more effective. Design was revised to be better balanced. AR

The design was simplified, the border was improved. TF Why was it bracketed? PN More visual. Preferred oval shape for a softer look. The text is acceptable might make letters thicker and have a smaller bevel. The bevel will be painted cranberry and the face will be painted white. RR It looks lovely. Color representative in in routed portion. Bevel should be a bit flatter and broader to reverse the drop shadow. Move the words inward, further away from the edge. TF Make the heart bigger. DH Lose the ampersand at the bottom so it reads "and much more" instead. DB Would like a bit more symmetry in the bottom lettering. Center the bottom wording more. KAB Agrees with the increased symmetry for better balance. Pull in accessories. The next meeting for resubmission based on recommendations is April 25. Susan and Peggy will make changes now and would like a vote tonight. She will submit the changes via email for review.

It was moved and seconded to approve the Application no. 1108 for a proposed sign at 260 Arlington Street for Margos II with the following conditions; remove the ampersand and use the word "and" to read "and much more" and moved the bottom line of words to the left to center it more, enlarge the border, slide the other text in the sign inward to increase the space between the wording and the border. The sides (edges) of the sign to be white to match the face of the sign, the routed cove will be painted cranberry and widened as much as possible for the most contrast $\frac{1}{4}$ ellipse. Approval will be without another viewing. Approved unanimously.

Application #1048 by Michaela Moran for demolition of chicken coop at 80 School Street: Public Hearing; KAB recused herself as an abutter to applicant. DB conducted the hearing and read required notice of the public hearing. Pictures of the 1960's structure were passed around for review. RR is the liaison for this application. The chicken coop can only be seen from the driveway. It is currently in a state of decay. Demolition should not be easily approved without due consideration. WE must consider its historic value. We have allowed the demolition of other structures in our jurisdiction. DB Does this structure add to the character of the compound? RR Explained that it did not add significantly but the sash might have been from an earlier building and should be retained for later use. This is an ad hoc structure. DH Some structures from the 1950's are worth saving such as the town's fire station. This is not the equivalent to that. The barn is much more significant on this property. TF agrees with all prior statements. DB agrees with all. It is not really visible. It was built as a utility building and has no redeeming value. DH supports RR's suggestion that the sash being older should be preserved. Does not see anything else to retain. RR moved and was seconded to approve the application # 1048 to demolish the chicken coop at 80 School Street. Finding that the chicken coop is within our jurisdiction, it is in poor condition, has an ad hoc design rather than a considered design, the sash will be preserved. TF Why is there such interest in the sash? DH The sash should be retained. TF For future use. RR The sash does not need to be reused at this site. KAB Point of order-solicit comments from the any attendant citizens. Ann Chang a citizen had no concerns. Upon receiving no further comments from anyone the motion by RR was passed unanimously.

8:30 Economic Development Committee Discussion regarding sign by-law violations and enforcement. Present for the EDC were Ann Chang (AC), Nancy Dinkle (ND), and Dick Callandrella (DC). KAB There is an urgency about this matter. The situation is likened to

fires that need to be put out. There is confusion among property owners regarding standards for business signs in the town's historic districts. Some signs have been grandfathered in and are not subject to approval. Many signs are displayed without approval. EDC seeks to reach an understanding with the HDC and the town sign by-law enforcement officer. DC

DC The Sign Review Committee. Scott Mutch is attempting to obtain compliance with the sign by-law. Offenders want to comply but are getting no help from the town in achieving any cooperation. Businesses are being hassled. Two examples are Venash Florists on Rte. 2A and the General Store in Acton Center; they are fighting the process. Enforcement is too legalistic, too complicated. We need a more humanistic approach. Scott Mutch is too formal. West Acton Village has a bunch of sign violations that could be resolved with conversations rather than strict enforcement. The sign by-law is too complicated. Can HDC buy into a more used friendly approach. Scott Mutch is not the right one for this. Hold a dialogue first without the legalistic approach. There are many sign violations. Compare by-laws of other towns. Coordinate the enforcement process. Town counsel says we (EDC) cannot talk to violators. Businesses threaten to storm town hall looking for a different approach. KAB We are stricter than the regular sign by-law. We do not allow window signs in the Historic Districts. Frank Ramsbottom is the by-law enforcer for HDC. When we have applications for signs we vote on them and then send them to Scott Mutch for further guidance. Scott has been very helpful. Have EDC do a sweep of questionable signs to determine what is not allowed. There are approximately 20 of these signs to deal with. Could we hold a special meeting after the annual town meeting to revise the sign by-laws. Invite town counsel. RR has anyone been fined for minor violations such as having a sign 6" too long? There are too many signs. MG HDC grandfathered certain signs that have been identified. We can cite this for the benefit of the violators. RR Business applications signs to bring this agreement for a good discussion. Sweet Bites is a good example of a violation that wasn't pursued. Application was filed but owner didn't follow up. DC 95% of violators would be willing to comply after discussion with HDC for suggestions.

DH We can have an information seminar to explain the purpose of the sign by-law and what the process is. Prepare handouts containing preapproved materials. Many do not know about distinctions between the Historic Districts and the rest of the town. TF Agrees. It is not the individual owner that starts the clock ticking. Have a slide show of examples of good and bad signs. Take a positive approach.. This was discussed. There might be a storming of the castle.

KAB Public meeting could be held to permit presentation of information, take comments and questions. We could set a time limit for questions and comments to prevent a drawn out session. DC This could involve town officers who could speak authoritatively. The point is to avoid having business applicants bounced around from one department to another and having to deal with different sets of standards.

The onus is still on the owner to follow the guidelines. It should be clarified as to what is allowed and what is not. AC The applicants need to come to us for original sign guidance

regarding whatever sign is wanted. We need to know who is complying. There is also the question of the number of signs allowed; 1 sign per business, 2-sided sign, two signs?

There are no neon signs allowed in the HDs. Other areas have different rules. No more than 25% of the window area can be covered with obstructive materials. Should this be changed? Should decals be allowed? PL Why do we need to change these rules? KAB Should we reconsider window signs as long as they're tasteful? PL Would it be wise as to what we are trying to accomplish-to appeal to foot traffic? AR What about a merchant friendly environment-how tasteful? TF What about trying to use signs to get vehicles to slow down in the village areas? DH What are complacents (?) from merchants-bigger signs? What proof is there that these are effective? RR The Historic District signs and ads are a part of the atmosphere. Now it's been done. We can change the by-law to accomplish how it is designed – not blanketing. Must still be approved. We need to study this issue, to precognize applications and constraints that we get a buy in to user friendly signs regulations for the vitality of business centers.

PL We should have a dialogue with business if it is okay with town counsel. AR The by-law must be consistently applied and business must follow the rules. ND Likes the business friendly approach and looks forward to a symposium.

DC Recommends that EDC and HDC have a working session before any seminar to review the regulations. AC We need to consider the cost of doing this. Reluctant to do this. TF agrees. DH A joint presentation with interesting handouts for rewriting by-laws to include alternatives and different paths to choose. Should not be too all-inclusive. RR A meeting would be okay. EDC and HDC should do research to avoid reinventing the wheel. What have other HDs done that were successful. We should be proactive, find illustrated possibilities and systems that work. MG Changing the by-laws will need tow meeting approval. KAB We can reconvene at the end of May.

9:15 Project updates: PL to be the liaison for 49 Windsor Avenue-Rosalie Dequatro. AR to be the liaison for WAVE. There are 2 possibilities for phase extension for WAVE's current extension. One option is not to restore and rebuild white barn. Will need a public hearing. This will need a half-hour appointment. AR to visit the white barn at 10AM 4/21/11.

TRF You can see a retaining wall from Mass. Ave. at the parking lot. We need to check to see if any changes have been made to the wall that are with our jurisdiction.

David Hale is not contesting the HDC decision yet. Past two weeks period. MM to address Mass. Ave. The windows at 445 Main Street need to be addressed. The Acton Women's Club to get CPC funding. Other issues include satellite dishes, a fountain on the Flannery land. Have a visit with Frank Ramsbottom.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM

Respectfully submitted.

David T. Barrat, Secretary

