



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2023-06-27

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), Kristen Guichard (Planning Director)

Absent: David Shoemaker, Fran Arsenault (Select Board Liaison), Barbara Rhines (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator).

Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:03 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – Terra Friedrichs expressed concerns about COA #2313 approved at the June 13 meeting for renovations, demolition and additions for 615 Massachusetts Avenue. DH: The Applicant will have to come back for approval for details concerning the porch, lighting, etc., and there will be an opportunity for public comment at those meetings, but anything that went into the COA that was issued was the subject of public discussion at hearings at which the public had the opportunity for comment. That COA is already done. When the Applicant comes back about the porch, that will be the time to comment about the porch.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – June 13, 2023 minutes, as amended, approved, DH, AR, AL and ZT voting to approve.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
 1. Outstanding COAs/CNAs/Denials –
COA # 2313, 615 Massachusetts Avenue: Issued and posted by DH.
CNA for re-roofing project at 504 Main Street: Issued and posted by DH.
CNA for historic marker approved by Historical Commission for 104 Main Street: Issued and posted by DH.
COA # 2306 Amended for roof valley and snow guard at 446 Main Street: Issued and posted by AL.



COA # 2213 Amended for construction of arbor at 75 School Street: ZT will issue by end of week.

37 Windsor Avenue window visit: Owner never followed up to schedule requested visit.

526 Massachusetts Avenue request for window visit: DH and AR will try to schedule at mutually convenient time.

Review Window Samples for 9 School Street: DS, DH and AL have visited AR's office to see samples. ZT will arrange to see them at AR's office.

2. Review of COA # 2109, 9 School Street new 6-family building, 525 Massachusetts Ave sign application, and 526 Massachusetts Ave window application expected to be on agenda for July 11 Meeting (see below for re-scheduling of July 11 meeting).

2. New/Special Business

- A. 7:24. Preliminary Discussion: Town Hall Garden. Cathy Fochtman (CF) and Linda O'Neil (LO), Members of the Acton Garden Club, attending. CF: The Garden Club has a grant to create a garden in front of Town Hall, the focal point of which will be a Victorian era fountain donated by the O'Neal family to be the centerpiece of the garden. They have met with the Town Manager and Select Board, which has voted to accept the renovated garden as a gift to the Town. Seeking feedback from the HDC concerning the project. DH: The HDC has no jurisdiction over plantings or any structure less than one foot tall. The only thing proposed that comes within HDC jurisdiction would be the fountain. CF: The fountain, which the Town Manager hopes to connect to a water supply – otherwise it will be used as a planter, is 64 inches tall and will have a gravel base. The garden is meant to be viewed from the sidewalk, not entered, and it will have a plaque noting the 50th anniversary of the Garden Club, soon to be updated to note the 90th anniversary. The garden will be maintained by the Garden Club. DH: It would be better if the fountain is not in the middle of the ellipse where the garden will be. Member Comments: AL: I'm fine. No comment. AR: Same. No comment. ZT: Will be lovely. AR: The fountain is relatively small. Better if used as a water fountain rather than a planter. LO: If a water fountain, it will need a base, which should lift it some. DH: Suggest experimenting with a mock base to see what makes the most sense before investing in a base. But the project looks good. Come back when you are ready to apply for the COA.

- B. 7:42. Preliminary Discussion: 53 River Street Park Components. Mike Gendron (MG), Town Conversation Agent, and David Martin (DM), Select Board Member, present representing the Town. MG: Making good progress on the project. Trying to identify key elements in the park and want the HDC reaction to these elements. The elements in question are:

- (1) An overlook of the park with a black steel railing composed of criss-crossing vertical and horizontal wires or rods, for safety.
- (2) Eco-walls built of salvaged stone from the park. These may or may not be over



one foot in height.

- (3) A parking lot, which the current design does not include.
- (4) Safety bollards for the parking lot.
- (5) A frost-proof hydrant.
- (6) Some form of bicycle access and facilities.

The first two of these, the Overlook and Eco-walls, are part of the base bid. The others are not. DM: The bids for removing the dam, etc. came in higher than expected, so the amenities will depend on more funding, but in preparation for applying for a COA when the time comes, we seek guidance for what might be required or permitted. The Select Board is concerned about including the bicycle elements. There have been problems at Nara Park with trails open to both bicyclists and pedestrians. What's the best way to proceed? DH: One option is to apply for a COA for the parts covered by the base bid, delaying application for the parts not yet funded. DM: We would request a COA for all of the project. There is some funding for park elements, and as we get more funding, we could come back to the HDC for necessary changes. DH: Member comments? AR: This is a thoughtful presentation and project. Anxious to get started. ZT: Agree. Looks good. DH: Will a parking lot be included in the plan? DM: Yes. The Town Manager should be able to facilitate, perhaps using Town staff; that's why it is not part of the base bid. DH: Not have to shield a parking lot from the east. Question is the west side. Normally would require some screening using shrubbery, etc. AR: There are large parking lots in other places in Historic districts which use that sort of screening. AL: Not sure HDC has jurisdiction, but if so, modest screening would seem appropriate. ZT: Agree with modest screening from the west. DH: Porta-potties? DM: Yes. They will be screened. DH: Want to see the final plan, but screening on the walk looks good. Black historic markers seem OK. Benches are generic. Want to make a pitch for bike facilities. Would be very popular, and should be able to design facilities that protect walkers. DM: Have been problems at Nara Park. If along River Street, facilities would be visible. DH: We know what bike racks look like. They are OK. If black, would blend in. DM: Do the posts for markers have to be PT, painted wood? DH: Recommend powder-coated aluminum. Have approved PVC signs if painted (not stick-on) lettering, etc. DM: The overlook railing is urgent. We'll need approval of that in time for its installation. DH: A rolling series of applications is fine.

8:11 Application # 2319: Windsor Avenue Garage Door and Preliminary Discussion of Air-Conditioning Condenser. Renee Robins (RR), Applicant, Bradley Botkin (BB), Applicant, present. RR: Two issues.

First, replacement of garage door, the subject of the Application. You suggested replacing the door with a different type than we applied for. The door we applied for, which is basically identical to the current door, is priced just under \$6,000. The quotes we got for the suggested door were \$15,000 to \$17,000, and we just can't justify the extra cost. DH: According to Macris, the house was built in 1892, but no mention of a garage. RR: The garage was built in 1940 or so, and the current door (along with its requested replacement) is consistent with that vintage architecture. DH: We have approved metal doors for garages as far from the street as yours. Clopay manufactures a metal door such



as we suggested for about \$7,500. We wouldn't require \$17,000 for this door. What's appropriate for a 1940s garage door? RR: A wood door. When you see a metal door, you know it's not wood. We prefer to go with wood here. AR: This seems to be a replacement in kind. Not sure you need a COA. A CNA would probably work. Either way, I would approve the requested door. AL: This seems to be a like-for-like repair for which a COA is not necessary, but I would vote to approve a COA if that's the way we go. DH: This is an in-kind repair. CNA is appropriate. DH will issue.

RR: Second, we seek advice on installation of a compressor for mini-split air conditioning. What are we allowed to do for condensers? AR: Will there be exterior piping? Where would it go? RR: The north side of the house has more room for a condenser. The south side is more challenging. DH: We've done four or five of these installations. Some have been successful; some disastrous. Condensers are the easy part. They can usually be screened by plantings or lattice work. Piping is really the problem. Where it's gone inside the walls, it's been successful. Where outside the walls – disaster. We would need to know exactly where the piping would go. Vertical piping may be able to be attached by corner boards, but external horizontal piping is a problem. You need to figure out your internal routing. BB: We agree. Prefer piping to run inside. We'll go back and do more with contractors. RR: Workable to put condenser on south side of house? DH: Need a lattice screen. AR: Like you have under your porch. BB: We worry the ground's not level there. Need to go back and work with contractors.

8:42 Discussion: Concord Road Historic District. No one from the Historical Commission appeared. Discussion will be scheduled for a later meeting.

8:44 Scheduling: ZT, AR and DS unavailable for scheduled July 11 meeting. ZT, AR, AL and DH available for July 18. July 11 meeting canceled; re-scheduled for July 18. July 25 meeting to go as scheduled.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 8:49 pm DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications, in Docushare