

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-08-12

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT)

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA)

Opening:

DH opened the meeting at 7:03 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 22 July Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, DS, AL, ZT in favor. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 113 Main Street #2524 retaining wall (ZT) Done.
- 75 School Street #2520 (AR) Done.
- 250 Central Street (Theatre III) working on application for rot repair
- 274 Central Street #2527 Solar PH is August 26, 2025 (DS not attending)
- 285 Arlington Street #2530 PH is September 23, 2025; video for site visit?
- New Historic Districts
- Single Building Historic Districts
- Demolition by Neglect Bylaw
- Historic District Construction Funding Sources
- #2531 Gutter change – Aug 26 planned.
- 7:09 53 River Street Project Update. 19:08 Thomas Begin, Assistant Town Manager, (TB) joins. Update. Amphitheatre work underway. Scrap metal cleanup, along with material brought in by the river. Funding applications are in; CPC funding received, and several still pending. Signage nearing finalization, with a certified historian. Expect to submit material in the coming month. Parking lot, tailchase, bioretention station, boulders, parking signage, fencing are elements of documents to come soon. Commission members

appreciated and were generally pleased with the report. DH: next phase timing? TB: mobilize Sept/October, with a wrapup at close of Fall outdoor work season. DH: work upstream? TB: Not underway. Working with SNR (Designer/Architect of record). Monitoring the bridge for stability. Long-term plan to add 'scalloping'; seeking funding. HC has the text in scope. BH/DH: may want to look at past MoA and COA to ensure no updates are needed.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Application #2525 451 Main Street Roof (cont.). DH: Applicants want to choose a different shingle, so no discussion. Should firm up our description of suitable shingles to short circuit this topic for the future. AR: The marketing terms are different for different firms and should be avoided by HDC in its description. Thickness may be a criterion. Labor is significant in the cost, and warranty is important. Would like to seek consistent patterning terms. Street addresses are important for target materials; seen *in situ* shingles appear differently than the sample and promotional material.
- B. 7:45 Application #2526 106 Main Street Deck and Gate. Applicant not present. BR shares screen with application photos. AR: Looking at the drawing, it appears that it is an opaque gate. The drawing does not reflect the actual size of the lumber intended if we understand the drawing. DS: appears to be 2x6 boards with spaces of roughly 6" between them. AL: Appears that the deck has been framed, flush with bricks. DH: 4x4 post, 2x6 horizontals appear to be the choice; 1x6 feels sufficient. AL: the level of detail in the drawing does not quite suffice. AR: In principle, we find it ok, but just need some more quality of detail to be able to vote and approve. A drawing is requested that shows the detail now missing.
- C. 7:50 Application #2528 113 Main Street Sign. Applicant not present. AR: proposed that it be mounted a bit lower, with the bottom of the sign level with the soffit. Consensus is that the design is attractive. ZT: Vinyl graphics may make reference to the horse and chicken. Wish to specify that the lettering and checkerboard not be vinyl. Need discussion with applicants; not present at 8:05. DS: suggest to approve the design but with our requirements for the method of fabrication and materials. DH: all elements to be painted, as a requirement; no vinyl. Install with the bottom aligned with the soffet. AR's sketch can be used. Dimensions (95" length) per application #2528. ZT Moves that we approve the sign 2528 for Ericson Grain Mill, with the requirement that there be no vinyl on the sign, and with the height of installation level of the soffit. AR, AL, DS, ZT, DH approve. ZT to write the CoA.
- D. 8:15 Application #2529 56 River Street Deck, Stairs, & Entry Roof. DH, an abutter, recuses himself. Ilana Liebert, Applicant, (IL) and Andre Kuhn, contractor, (AK) join. Application is shared; AK talks through it. Flooring has hidden fasteners. IL notes work is intended to be a 'replacement in kind' from the perspective of appearance, exchanging the railings from wood to composite. DS: asks about the surface of the Trex handrails and balustrade; AR says it looks a bit too perfect but not objectionable. IL: The replacement is intended to replicate the current appearance. AR: Why not make a shed roof over the side porch instead of a gabled portico to put the snow off the stairs? IL: Wanted to replicate the roof detail, but agrees that the shed could be more efficient if long enough to carry the runoff beyond the landing. AK:

would require columns to support the deeper roof. IL: would the HDC like that? AR, DS like it. AL: Would it be a bit clunky? AR/AK: Depth would be 36-40", so ok. A sketch would be good to see. We propose to discuss at the next meeting, 26 August. Discussion of the best approach given upcoming absences. One approach would be to vote on the application as submitted with the gable portico, and if approved, expect that an amendment may be submitted for the shed roof. AK: would rather have a fixed plan. For the submitted plan, need to select the brackets for the roof. Select the 'Orange Door' bracket (right side, second from the top), shingles similar to the portico. AL: Ensure the applicants understand the process for vote at this meeting and subsequent amendment or, a single vote on an amended design next meeting, which would be 23 September; IL likes that better. Matter continued to 23 September for further discussion and a vote. DH Returns.

- E. 8:45 9 School Street Update. 20:00 Target of Opportunity. DH: If no changes, no new application, so may proceed. Request that they return to the HDC to refresh our memories of the plan. Invite to the next meeting for a 15-minute update.
- F. 9:00 Solar Guidelines Update (continued discussion) DH: US National Park Service, Dept of Interior, 'Solar Panels on Historic Properties': pretty much in conformance. Should we make reference? AL: Likes the idea; for the context section. DH: the ground-mounted array discussion in the Secretary of Interior discussion allows more flexibility for industrial settings. Also truly flat roofs can hide solar panels. AL: Asks for final consideration and votes on changes discussed at prior meeting. In the Guidelines, #2 – add turrets, sleeping porches, and the like, consensus in favor; #3 – Solar panels ...surfaces *directly* on the street. Again, consensus that it carries the right spirit. The Secretary of Interior may have good language for this. And #4 – 'but rather blend in...'. Consensus once again. #7 – as close as possible but no more than 4". AL: Maybe should revise to make 4" merely a presumptive limit, allowing an applicant to demonstrate that 4" is not workable in his/her case. Consensus. AR: Samples, or shop drawings, are important in the applications to help the HDC evaluate the actual proposed installation and then the guidelines can be compared to the reality. ZT: would not want the ideal panel to be excluded if 4.25" above the roof. AL: With a 4" presumption instead of a hard limit, the burden is on the proposer to demonstrate that a larger height is necessary. To the topic of Ground mounted systems; ZT: too many options; maybe case-by-case basis. DH: Propose that no visible pole-mounted array be allowed. AL: reads from guidelines; this approach would exclude categorically a type of installation which runs against the new statutory mandate. AR: If we have other ways to deny problematic installations, best not to call out the detail. AL: will look at the Sec of Interior has some language. ZT found language and will share with AL. Discussion of back yards: HDC has no jurisdiction on anything not visible from the governing way.
- G. 9:15 Proposed Concord Road Historic District: No discussion.
- H. 9:30 Outreach for New HDC Members -- 19:27 Target of Opportunity. DH: heard from AIA Boston, offering someone interested. BR: FA found letter talking to realtors about the opportunities and responsibilities of ownership in Historic Districts. DH: We should proceed with a new mailing, both with the original intent and the need for an additional letter

recruiting a new member who is a realtor. DS: we should seek new members with legal experience. AL: Bar Association may help. Will look around.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:20 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. DS, AR, DH, AL, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare