

## Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-09-23

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), Zach Taillefer (ZT – joined at 19:06), Art Leavens (AL)

**Absent:** Fran Arsenault (FA)

### Opening:

DH opened the meeting at 7:04 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

### 1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 9 September Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, ZT, DS in favor; AL recused due to absence. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 511 Main Street #2534 roof CNA DONE
- 285 Arlington Street #2530 PH is 9/23/25 (today)
- 106 Main St #2526 gate Denial DONE
- Solar Guidelines PH 10/14/2025
- 250 Central Street (Theatre III) working on application for rot repair
- Revised Barn School St under construction, with the one standing exterior wall
- New Historic Districts
- Single Building Historic Districts
- Demolition by Neglect Bylaw
- Historic District Construction Funding Sources
- Open Meeting Law presentation – discussion of need and interest.
- Should firm up the procedure for withdrawing an application

### 2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2530 Public Hearing 285 Arlington Street. AR is recused due to a potential conflict of interest. Lisa Adamiak (LA), Architect, joins. BR reads the Public Notice. LA recapitulates the project goals and approach, and shares slides. LA shares the MCRIS Inventory Form ACT.210 describing the building and its history. Known as the Isaac Davis Birthplace, the original birthplace of Isaac Davis was constructed circa 1740, but about 100 years later that dwelling was integrated into the current Federal/Greek-Revival farmhouse to which several additions were made over the ensuing 50 or so years. For the house, repairs in kind are planned. A structural engineer notes that the connecting link between the house and barn is unstable, with no foundation and rot in the wood framing/sheathing in contact with the ground, and recommends demolition; Barn and House are in acceptable structural condition. LA intends to replace the current connector with a new one. The new connector would have a garage, as would the ground floor of the Barn. No windows are to be replaced on the Main House. A door that is now too low would be raised with a new shed roof. The 'small House' would have one additional window. On the Barn, there are a handful of new windows. For the barn door, a black garage door is proposed. On the East elevation of the house, some windows are replaced with larger ones in somewhat different places. On the West elevation, windows are moved. The barn east and west facades have a total of some 8 windows added. A Jeld-Win 'sash-pack' is proposed with trim to provide a correct detail. The old sash might be re-used. No date is known for the connector construction. AL: Good presentation. Historical documents may have said there were additions into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century – should re-check. LA: The barn door on Arlington would be replaced by a garage overhead door. The barn door on the West side currently is in a fixed position, and will not be usable. On the West door, there is an additional window; AL finds that takes away a sense of 'door'. On the proposed demolition of the connector, LA said that, based on the structural engineer's report, rehabilitation is not practical given the connector's current condition. ZT: No additional questions. DH: There are a total of 2 units. Access to the barn? LA: The main door to the barn will be to the back. DH: What are the plans for the two nice chimneys and one boiler flue. LA: would like to remove the smaller chimney in the 'small house'. DH: have allowed this in the past when motivated. LA: Barn is asphalt roof. The Ell or small house has a slate roof. Wish to repair the slate. Wish to have new connector roof be asphalt and re-use the present slate for repair and stock. DH: important to retain the slate on the main house. The superstructure of the connector, seen in a visit, had some good wood and HDS wants that it be preserved and salvage where possible. A condition for demolition would be a plan for reuse. LA: will do. DH: The windows were fixed upper sash. A window expert recommended a technique for installing a spring balance in the lower sash. The muntin shows 1880-1900 profile – a very delicate muntin. Recommends that the main house sash be preserved with rework; new windows could be duplicates of the originals in 2/2. New windows can be found for the barn. Comments from the public: Glenn Dorfneilson joins. Concerned about a driveway swooping through, and hope old cars/RVs would be going. LA: there will be plantings to protect the view and screening. Naqi Heider joins. Curious about the fireplaces and barn have historic inscriptions and details – can these be preserved? LA: the interior will have the main fireplaces preserved. Was unaware of the barn beam inscriptions and would like to learn more. NH: hope that old house contents will be salvaged. LA: That is the plan. BR: Extension will be needed. DH: to discuss at a future meeting; a plan is made to meet on 7 October. With agreement of LA, the public hearing is

continued until October 7 at 7:00 pm.  
AR rejoins.

B. 8:13 Application #2529 (cont.) 56 River Street decks, steps & entry roof. DH, an abutter, is recused, and AR assumes the Chair. Ilana Liebert (IL), Owner/Applicant, joins. Plan is to withdraw the current application with an email to the Chair, and then resubmit the application with a new style of awning. A few sample images are shared. The deck is 42", and the contractor wished to have columns to support the awning. No roof would be included. A triangular side piece would be included. ZT: Looks ok. AL: Looks fine and better with the side pieces. DS: Roof pitch? IL: can be less – 30 deg. Looks fine. AR: Likes it. If the deck could grow to 48" it would be good. IL: can't go really much further out; it would be more visible from the street. AR: Not a problem that it be seen. IL: about 62" along the stair axis. AR: Trim on the wedge will be important. Because the 60-day limit is approaching, IL agrees to withdraw the application by email with the understanding that she will refile the application for consideration once the details concerning the entry roof are settled.

C. 8:05 Application #2531 62 Windsor Gutters (cont.) This Application is being withdrawn.

D. 8:30 82 River Street discussion (COA #2433) Stephanie Dendeneau (SD), Architect, joins. DH, an abutter, remains recused, and AR continues as Chair. The construction was not executed according to plan. The question is how to bring it to an acceptable approach. The mudroom-breezeway roofline could be brought back to the way it was. Any suggestions welcome. BR shares images. AR recaps. The middle breezeway is asymmetric. DS: Perhaps raising the Breezeway could lead to a solution. AL: Raising things could improve the balance, but then the house may become ungainly. Would rather bring things back down. ZT: Would like to see a solution that matches better the drawings. The garage feels enormous. AR: Could extend the rafters over the garage door so that eave terminates at a lower height. Public Comment: None. AR: Talking with the Building Department; structural details are lacking for approval. Unfamiliar terrain. SD should visit the site. Propose to discuss again on the 7 October.  
DH returns.

E. 9:00 612 Massachusetts Avenue fence discussion. BR shares photographs. DH: An old fence was removed without approval, and a new PVC fence was installed without approval, by the previous owner, and then the house was sold. Refrigerant piping can also be seen on the West side. AL: Difficult to impose the cost on the current owner. DS: Could try to convince the owner that it would be best to recover the historic value of the house with some modest changes – plantings could help. HDC should establish the permit situation for the HVAC and see to if the fence involves a permit. Should see if our guidelines on fences are sufficiently clear. AL: The Design Guidelines, p. 14, provide that “[f]ences constructed of chainlink, metal wire, plastic or other synthetic materials should be avoided in any location where the fence would be visible from the public way as they are incompatible with the character of the districts.” DH: Probably no retroactive authority. Maybe ask the owners for clarification. ZT: Zillow listing includes the fence in January 2025. BR will take a look at permits.

F. 9:30 Outreach for new HDC Members (7:10 due to target of opportunity). Resumes received to be reviewed by Chair and they will be encouraged to follow through with the process.

### **3. Consent Items**

None

#### **1. Adjournment**

At 21:27 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, DS seconds, several times. DS, AR, DH, AL, ZT all approve.

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

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare