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Acton Historic District Commission
Meeting October 25, 2011
Minutes

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair Kathy Acerbo-Bachman.

Also present were Pam Lynn (PL), Anita Rogers (AR), Michaela Moran (MM), Ron Rose (RR) and David Barrat (DB).

There were no citizens' concerns.

Minutes of the 9/27/11 and 10/11/11 meetings were approved as amended by consent.

Pam Lynn has fixed the DocuShare SNAFU so that data can be uploaded and entered. She worked with Kaitlin Downer and Frank Ramsbottom to re-establish the pathway for program placement. Documents can now be uploaded. DB to work on procedure manual.

MM attended a public hearing held by the Historic Commission concerning 90 School Street. She reported that there was little documentation, no estimates of cost, no plans or other input presented other than anecdotal. The only issues considered were those raised by the applicants. There was no indication of due diligence by the Historic Commission. No home inspection. Applicants offered estimate that it would cost \$300,000 to repair the building. No figures were offered regarding the cost of tearing the building down and rebuild. Again, no verification of the factors offered by the applicant. Nor were there any plot plan, photos, engineering reports or reasons for replacement. Only conclusionary statements. HC would have a year to delay demolition of the property.

7:45 Application #1159: MM Liaison. Tenant at 583 Massachusetts Avenue wants to change the color of the awnings on the front of the building. She also wants to hang a projecting sign on the existing bracket. She has a right to hang a 6 square foot sign. Question; Are decals on the store front windows a separate sign? The proposed sign would be made of wood with painted letters without the trademark. We need to check with Town Counsel regarding what counts as a trademark. The sign would contain the trademark of the business. KAB The sign with the trademark would be much too busy. Compare this with signs in Concord Center. Take out the "Acton, MA," the bubbles that are a part of the trademark and the "LLC." If she wants to choose she can either put up a projecting sign or use window lettering but not both. AR The bubble must come out along with "Acton, MA." DB The sign should be able to display the trademark within reason. RR Bubbles are unpleasant. Maybe she could use the bubbles in relief but not painted. MM to call applicant concerning the commissions' comments. The matter will be reheard on November 22, 2011. Allowing window lettering constitutes a sign. Stores are only allowed one sign in the historic districts. Should these rules and regulations be changed regarding the number of signs allowed in the historic districts? MM There are no window signs allowed in the historic districts. But the town allows window signs up to 25% of the window area.

8:00 Application #1157 Public Hearing for Veteran's Memorial on Town Common. KAB read the notice of the public hearing at 8:00 PM. Many of Acton's citizens were in attendance. See the list of attendees attached to these minutes. Materials were passed out depicting the monument design, proposed location. John Murray (JM), Assistant Town Manager, presented a background summary. PL is the liaison. The monument will replace the Spanish American monument, which will be moved to the north side of town hall. Base material is unresolved. There has been a positive reaction to the design. The left side has a protrusion toward the top, which might present a safety hazard because of a crack in the stone. Discussion included concerns for the font used in the inscription, the size of the letters of certain words and the including of punctuation, the placement of the insignias of the various military branches. The erection of the ramp and the lighting will be discussed at a later time. The landscaping will be left until spring. AR prefers that the military insignias be placed on the bottom of the inscription area to avoid cramping the wording of the inscription, which uses 2" letters. Okay with crushed stone and will differ regarding the lighting issue.

PL Wording and emblems are crowded on the illustration submitted. If the letters were smaller, it would not appear so crowded.

KAB The inscription and insignias look crowded. Would prefer emblems on the bottom of the inscription face. Shrink the letters and take out the punctuation.

MM The entire face is way too crowded. Emblems would be better on the bottom. Why is the date so large? It needs more space around it. Lighting is very important but may be a safety hazard given the traffic around the common.

RR Lighting should be determined by those expert in the field. There are subtle ways to use lighting. The Copper Plate Gothic font may not work as well in stone as it does in other media since the letters are formed by sand blasting. Consider a change in the surface from smooth to rough. The insignias make it crowded. Roll them away from the block lettering and decrease the size of the lettering a little bit.

DB There needs to be a smaller font. Insignias are fine where they are with wider border and cleaner look.

The face of the monument will be 6' wide and 52" high.

MG Should not use a different size font for "people of Acton" and "11.11.11." Use of the lobed side is not being considered.

KAB It is too crowded.

James Norton-Great Road Emblem size larger. Looks nice, leaving the knob is a good thing.

Kathy Arnold, Bob Warren, Dick Krug, Tommy Rogers, R.C. Gyorgak: Glad to see it is finally happening.

Mike Farquar: Liked to poll the sense of the attendees.

Dick O'Brien, Jim Ettwein, Dave Brown, Bob Ayers, C. Aaronson, H. Ferris, J. Donahue, L. Fanning, J. Lynch, R. Testa, J. Martin, B. Kurtyka all support the monument.

M. Biales The text should be more poetic and offered his own text for consideration.

D. Callendrella Supports the text that is there.

The vote of the final wording is to be determined.

PL The wording experience took one and a half hours to listen and condense and to finalize.

JM Included in the wording what he thought he was hearing, what the predominant sentiment was. There was a lot of input over the years. Tried to maintain the sentiment.

M. Biales Please consider the alternate wording.

MG Let the wording stand. The veterans supplied the wording.

JN There has been a lot of participation and a lot of effort to have the stone ready by November 11.

MF It could be better but it would take forever. Let's go with it.

T. Rogers Agrees with MF Close the discussion.

PL Moves to approve accept a new Veterans Memorial monument on the town common at the locus of the Spanish American monument. The base to be crushed stone, inscription and final emblems and wording to be places on the smooth surface of the stone, letters to be smaller than currently depicted to increase the white space and have more distinct sections each for wording and emblems, the Spanish-American monument to be moved to the north side of town hall next to the cherry trees, keep the rough edge, retain the jaggedness and rust, remove the red paint possibly relocate the emblems to the bottom of the sentiment, the ramp is a temporary fixture, light retained at or near to the dedication markers near the monument. PL, MG and JM to observe and approve the final appearance in the shop drawings.

AR Also as part of the motion change of font size, compare "People of Acton" and date to be the same size as rest of the text.

PL "Veterans" should be slightly larger.

KAB Take out commas at the end of each line. This is consistent with historical monuments. Also take out semicolons. Leave periods in.

MM Tighten up the text, reduce the font size of "People of Acton" and date. "Veterans" and "Freedom" will look odd if left bigger. Should be the same size. Pam to visit and approve the final shop drawings and determine if they meet with the conditions.

RR Layout full size shop drawings. PL, JM and MG to observe and approve the final version.

KAB Need to see the full size mock-up. JM to work with PL.

RR Better with less punctuation. "Veterans" could be larger without negative affect.

"Freedom" should be the same size.

DB Remove all punctuation.

"People of Acton," "11.11.11" to be the same size as the text. Have reasonable breathing space be allowed. Exact space to be determined at a later time. Landscaping will be done in the spring of 2012.

The Spanish American War Memorial on the north side of town hall. HDC to be consulted regarding the landscaping for its new site.

Motion as presented was passed unanimously.

8:50 Public Hearing Application for 1156, Application for heat pumps at 554 Mass. Ave.

Notice of the public hearing read by KAB at 9:00PM. MM Liaison. Applicant met with MM.

The application was revised to reflect what was discussed at previous HDC meeting.

Pictures with application show portions of new heat system on the west side of the building. There is a wall-mounted condenser and a small amount of piping inserted into the wall taking up 6 square feet. Unit stands out 12" from the wall. Screening and landscaping to hide this is to be determined. There is screening by the fence but more is required to hide the wall-mounted condenser unit from the public way.

On the east side the equipment is not as visible from the public way. At least 50% of the piping is not visible. What is exposed will remain hidden under the eave and will be painted to match the siding and trim.

KAB This is the first example of a heat pump issue in a historic district. All conditions and restrictions must be explicit as they will be used as a basis for other subsequent applications to comply with.

PL What was proposed will be a good model for future similar models.

KAB This is a case of first impression. Applicant moved a lot of lines to the interior; should insist that all lines be moved to the interior wherever possible. Keep it minimally intrusive.

RR In Certificate of Applicability Consultation took place. Wherever possible hardware should be concealed.

MM They were going to use the outside of the interior walls for bookcases.

Motion to close public hearing at 9:15.

MM Moves to approve the installation of two heat pumps on the east and west sides of 554 Mass. Ave. Conditions include heat pump piping placed in the interior of the building in various locations as indicated which is different from original application. Piping relocated to the interior on west side of house. The pipes to be hidden on the east side of the house under eaves and painted to match the trim to hide visibility as it crosses the plane of the building. Condenser on the west side of the house to be concealed by landscaping vegetation. Seconded by DB. Voted unanimously.

9:15 CPC Applications: KAB Two applications are due tomorrow. One is to create a revolving fund of \$150,000. Similar to what is done in Arlington. There, property owners in Cultural Districts architecturally significant can apply for a loan. There is no need for hardship. Most loans are under \$7,500. The plan avoids a mortgage. Applicants apply for funding to the board of selectmen who have the power of veto. There has never been a veto in 20 years. The interest rate is 2.5% or one-half of the current prime rate. Projects that qualify for such loans include removal of aluminum siding, replacement of vinyl windows with wood windows. Maintenance projects do not qualify. The town of Arlington averages 12 applications a year. There are 300 properties that are eligible. Sometimes the loans go as high as \$20-30K. Most are under \$7,000.00.

Roland Bartl's suggestions similar to what we are looking for. No outright grants. All financing is through loans.

MM Go with it. Present it tomorrow the way it is. Compare this with the state loan system for new septic systems and the placing of septic system loan liens on subject premises. The state system also provides for a tax deduction.

KAB The second CPC application is for funding of the landscaping at the train station. This is joint with SATSAC. This has been sent to town counsel for clarification. We need to contact CPC for an extension of deadline to file.

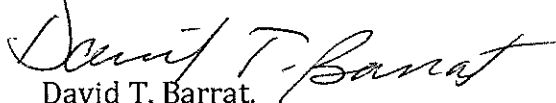
9:30 Historic New England(NE) Workshop summary. Effort to reduce energy costs, a push from many directions to green up many buildings. Historic NE Recommended that no new technologies be used on old buildings as they have their own ecology systems. Each

building has its own unique challenges. New technologies can cause deterioration from introduction of mold from wet insulation or other problems. Better to use an old remedy, oakum, to block holes leaking heat, rather than caulk, for instance.

There is an Acton 20/20 meeting coming up. RR and DB to attend.

Meeting adjourned at 9:54PM.

Respectfully submitted


David T. Barrat,
Secretary