

Historic District Commission

RECEIVED
OCT - 4 2012

Meeting Minutes, August 14, 2012

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 7:30 pm in Room 126 of the Acton Town Hall. Kathy-Acerbo-Bachman (KAB), David Honn (DH) Pam Lynn (PL) and Anita Rogers (AR) in attendance. Dick Calendrella, Nancy Dinkel, and Derrick Chin of the EDC also in attendance. Mike Gowing, Selectman liaison, arrived shortly thereafter.

Citizens Concerns – None

7:33 Minutes of the July 10th, 2012 meeting approved unanimously.

7:35 Application #1217 Eagle Scout Project minutes taken by Anita Rogers

Connor Summers – Eagle Scout flagpole landscaping project.

Mike Keiranda – Scout Master

Phil and Cathy Summers – parents

Professional landscaper Bruce Davis has assisted Connor in the design for a renovation of the Quimby Square Flagpole at 3 School St. near the intersection with Route 27.

Mr. Davis will also help Connor with the implementation.

Per the sketches included in the application, native fieldstone from the property will be used to form a wall around the flagpole to level the grade. Connor will purchase the mortar. Connor also has proposed a walkway of broken bluestone and landscape plantings. An upright fixture with a solar panel that would provide 24 hour illumination is also included in the application.

KAB – questions the use of the broken blue as the walkway material.

DH – Height of wall?

CS – 12” or so.

DH – Agrees that the broken bluestone is more of a 60’s material and not so appropriate to the HDC. Would prefer to see the walkway made of flat top fieldstone. Pole is near the Civil Defense Building and the site is currently an eyesore. Since the intersection there is very wide DH would like Connor to discuss moving the curb line with the town engineer (Cory York) so that the flagpole site could be enlarged. Although it would take some pushing to make that happen it would really improve the visual impact with that corner which includes Exchange Hall.

DH – how tall is the pole?

CS – 20’ or so.

DH – shares concern that the solar light will not provide adequate illumination – that will need to be studied carefully. Also recommended that the solar panel be remote from the base of the flagpole both for appearance and to avoid vandalism.

MG – perhaps light function would be improved by mounting it higher up on the pole rather than at its base and the wire can run down the back side of the pole?

KAB – We can vote tonight on the base, pole and walkway. Since the lighting requires more study we can review that again at a later date. She recommends that Connor look for some illuminated flagpoles to find some successful examples.

Application # 1217

Motion to approve CS's proposal of a native fieldstone base retaining wall around the existing flagpole location. The wall will be around 12" higher than grade at its highest elevation. The walkway will also be made of native fieldstone set in stone dust. The final lighting proposal will be reviewed at a later date.

7:58 Update on EDC's effort to write a clear statement concerning the steps involved in the sign approval process.

EDC hopes to make the process less confusing and as it involves the HDC, wishes to have the Commission's reaction. KAB inquired what would be the most important outcome of this visit. Does the process meet your requirements? ...should be one page only. Derrick Chin (DC) shared the concern that EDC recognizes that some feel that the town is not sufficiently business-friendly.

The group looked at the one-page revision. KAB suggested that Step 1 and Step 2 might be reversed. That might save time and frustration by knowing early that applicants are or are not in the district. Then they would move on to reading and understanding the Zoning Bylaw which is more complex. HDC offered clarifying language for determining HDC jurisdiction. ND and DC asked about the location of HDC's language on signs. AR suggested the need to consult language in three different locations - HDC Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, and Design Guidelines.

KAB also suggested the value of inserting an additional aspect in Step 1 - suggesting scheduling a preliminary meeting time with HDC very early in the planning process.

Step 3b. clarification of the appropriate type of drawings. AR indicated the phrase "sketch" would be appropriate language to indicate this is a preliminary step. Final art work is not required at this stage. KAB recommended separating out of 3b filling out the application and the process it triggers.

KAB clarified the difference between the HDC and Building Department's role mentioned in Step 4. AR asked for further clarification of what steps are by the Building Department and when does the Planning Department become involved? AR clarified that the Planning Department has more impact on the sign than the Building Department which primarily insures that the HDC has issued a Certificate of Appropriateness. KAB clarified language about notification of abutters.

DC suggested eliminating Step 5 and shared concerns expressed by clients about the frustrations of sign makers concerning the HDC process. DC shared confusion over the Planning Department “permit” which does not say permit on the certificate document. AR suggested clearer language for input of Zoning and Building Department concerning the near final design.

DH suggested adding a graphic rendition of the steps to clarify the steps similar to that of the HDC.

8:31 pm Mathias Rosenfeld (MR) and Javier Ramirez joined the group to discuss progress on WAVE. AR brought the group back up to date. She has tried to contact Belle Choate unsuccessfully. KAB focused the discussion by asking what would they wish to accomplish tonight and could they share proposed schedule. MR has worked with the HDC’s most recent feedback focusing on the middle building. They would like to come away with a greater focus on detail and want to move forward due to availability of potential occupants. It would be optimal to agree on solutions during the fall.

Thinking forward KAB and MR discussed the need for a public hearing during the process – the tradeoffs of when to have it during the process.

MR summarized the last meeting including separate buildings – blue house except roof/porch, middle building was lacking, especially the dormers and the need for a center gable, a less flat first floor, and the barn should have eaves lowered, a continuous dormer and the too modern windows also needed revision. It had also been suggested to remove the central window and try to replicate mill building feeling of West Concord. As space is to be retail, frontage needs to be open but not an aluminum treatment.

JR started discussion of revised plans focusing on the large easternmost section. They had altered the dormers and windows. The most difficult element had remained the central building. Having tried to echo the school that once stood across the way, they realized it was too big.

KAB appreciates the effort to add DH’s comments about the easternmost building. She is concerned still too modern, windows are still too boxy. She states the middle building now blends in more but the second story windows seem awkwardly scaled.

DH asked about materials on easternmost wall – would look best as a lintel. Effort should be made to keep the surface as flat as possible to give the “big box” a place to sit. JR is trying to get as much height and light as possible. DH prefers middle building new version #2 as it feels more in character with the newer version of the easternmost building. DH looked for balance behind the three main elements and likely use of solar panels. Suggested to make sure the cupola is big enough. DH would like to see more detail in the central courtyard next time.

PL shared concerns about top of barn windows.

AR prefers version #2 of middle building – a good bridge between blue house and barn. Seeing more roof in front of second story windows of middle building would enhance second level. KAB emphasized a hierarchy of levels pulling vision to the center rather than the two windows. Adding a foot under the third floor windows on the barn would be a possible suggestion to de-emphasize the dormers.

The WAVE discussion concluded with scheduling of future appointments, one each meeting going forward, including a public hearing Oct. 9th at 8pm. To expedite progress KAB suggested that MR and JR meet with AR and DH before the next meeting to anticipate reactions.

9:18 Wrap Up

Ron Rose will be leaving Acton in October. HDC will need to recruit.

498 Main St. Abutters Notices

Lothrop Mill fence – concern about application extension

24-26 River St. recent application for roof – Anita will be liaison

Moved to adjourn at 9:45

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn
Vice Chair