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Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 121
Final Meeting Minutes, October 9, 2013

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), David Shoemaker (DS), Ron Regan (RR) Anita Rogers (AR). Mike Gowing (MG) as BoS liaison.

7:00 PM Citizens' Questions:

David Shoemaker recused himself as a nearby neighbor.

Adam Smith from 460 Main St. at the corner of Newtown Rd. came to ask about the placement of side venting to be installed by National Grid. Several Commission members concurred that there were likely few alternative architectural solutions and that appropriate screening would be important to an application.

David Shoemaker returned to the meeting.

7:05 PM Approve Minutes by Consent: September 19 and October 1, 2013

7:15 PM 108 School St. – Application 1338: Discussion Stone Wall

David Honn recused himself as a direct abutter.

Bill Proia attended representing the applicants. The applicant requests to remove a small portion of the stone wall necessary for new construction beyond the HDC boundary. The wetlands and site lines must be respected. The stones would be moved to a location to the west where there is currently a gate.

KAB asked about the proposal at the edges of the driveway. Mr. Proia indicated that the specific stones have not yet been chosen. She indicated that that specificity would be necessary to vote on the proposal. A mason's drawing or a photo would be required. DS emphasized that the solution should not be grand. BP agreed that the intent was to look as if the opening had been there for a very long time.

AR wondered whether there will be a light at the end of the driveway as part of the safety plan. If so, it would be in the district.

AR asked about whether it is known when the wall was constructed. The owner Pam Steven, the owner, indicated that it may be a retaining wall.

The application materials served as the basis of the conversation.

David Honn returned to the table and discussion.

7:24 PM 504 Main St. – Application 1340: New Addition

The Commission voted to take this discussion out of order.

AR recused herself as the architect for the project and then returned to the table as the presenter.

The issue involves the creation of a small addition which provides space for an ADA compliant bathroom and hallway and a lift to the 2nd floor. The program elements have been required by the MA Architectural Access Board as a result of the addition of the sloped walkway.

The discussion focused on drawings provided by AR dated June of 2011.

As the back of the building sits on the property line, there is very little room with which to work. Her solution is to raise the ridge so as to avoid creating a blocky solution while accommodating the lift.

DS did not see an alternative to the proposal but suggested there might be a way to break up the exterior wall just a bit.

DH has given this some thought and wonders if there is a way to get ten inches on the corner board rather than the seven inches AR has in the plan now. DH wondered if the placement of pilasters in the hallway might help the interior space. AR has considered asking the Architectural Access Board for a variance to reduce the interior width by several inches.

DS inquired why this small differential matters and AR explained her concern about the eave. DH suggested changing the material so as to be flush appearing to be a reveal.

DH and AR agree that it is essential to save the fantastic tree at the right corner of the lot near the proposed addition.

KAB indicated that it is too bad that the owners must incur this expense and accept this alteration to the building. KAB believes HDC will need to hold a public hearing. It seems wise to request an extension in order to have the application go before the AAB before HDC plans a hearing.

In conclusion, KAB asked AR to obtain an extension and to clarify when the CPC needs a letter of support from the HDC.

KAB commended AR again for the novelty of the previous solution to the need for a ramp.

AR returned to her role as a HDC member.

7:50 PM 537-541 Massachusetts Avenue – Application 0906AA:
Discussion about Windows (This property is formerly known as the West Acton Village Ecology Project.)

HDC voted to take up this issue early.

AR indicated that Mathias Rosenfeld, Javier Ramirez, AR, and DH had met recently to discuss the 17" sill versus the higher sill requested by the HDC.

AR read the memo of October 7, 2013, that had been sent to HDC requesting a reconsideration of how the 17" sill best connects the elements of the connected buildings. The use of wood and details reflect a historically appropriate solution. The plans have considered the elevation from which a pedestrian would view the windows. The windows are planned to overcome the distance experienced by a pedestrian.

AR feels that there is a consistent water table which meets the siding. Thus this increased elevation does not feel appropriate.

Sills within the West Acton District measure 20" – 27" but are very close to pedestrians on the sidewalk; for this project, the façade will be 25' or more distant, and so very different than this visual impact. AR has concluded she would support leaving it as originally proposed. It would be cleaner, and it was perceived that the additional piece would feel like an extra.

DH looked at buildings in Maynard including Riverside Building in a photo from 1868 before the meeting. To his surprise the windows were large and the sills were very low. The most persuasive feature was the grading plan indicates the buildings are above the street, up off the ground, like on a pedestal. Hence the additional sill height would look strange. This building is not like the Meade Block close by. AR added that in the drawing the texture of the building is not so apparent as it will be on site.

The Commission concurred that the memo demonstrated conviction appropriate to an agreement to accept the sill as originally proposed.

KAB reminded the group of the challenge to design an in-fill building which echoes the setting rather than the traditional OMR contemporary style. KAB emphasized that this new building should blend in, not stand out. KAB referenced Terra Fredericks' concern that there was too much of a contemporary feel that needed to be toned down. KAB questioned AR and DH whether there needs to be something that adds a little more of the New England vernacular. AR feels they have echoed the brown house; this does not feel contemporary. KAB reiterates that this is not a replica and not a contemporary building. Does it blend in well? Do these design elements help this fit in.

RR is concerned with the similarity of the window which look a little too Disneyworld.

KAB suggested that the Commission table this discussion until later in the evening.

8:15 PM 497 Main St. – Application 1342: Discussion Roofing

Rodger Hilbert of 497 Main St. requested an approval to replace his leaky roof.

AR moved to accept installation of Landmark Charcoal Black architectural shingles and seconded by DS. There will be no ridge vent added and the drip edge color should match the trim. Motion seconded by DS. AR indicated the shingles are similar to what has been approved down the street. KAB did reference a color but it is not within the HDC's purview. Accepted unanimously pending abutter notification.

8:26 PM 77 Nagog Hill Road – Application 1339: Discussion of Garage Doors

Karen Murray has applied to replace rotting garage doors. DS explained the application. She provided photos, 1-3 of which were part of the application and the additional photos were of her neighbors' garage doors.

DS feels they have proposed an appropriate solution. DH cautioned to insure that the paint allows the doors to still look like wood. He also cautioned that the hardware often looks fake because it is thin.

DH suggested that there are other companies including Acorn which make faux hardware that looks more authentic. The applicant is willing to consider leaving off the strap hinges hardware.

KAB was concerned about the impact of the paint color.

DS moved to accept Application 1339 to replace the model selected without the black hardware except the grip. AR seconded. A recommendation was made to consider repainting the doors black when next painted and that the lift handle be from Acorn Company. Accepted unanimously.

8:49 PM 260 Arlington Street – Application 1335: Discussion Sign

AR reviewed the application and reminded the applicant of the need to heed size requirements. AR expressed reservations about the scroll and/or phone numbers on the proposed sign.

KAB has trouble with this sign as a flat sign. She would prefer a projecting or guild sign arrangement.

PL was not as troubled with wall sign and would suggest a finding about why such an informal sign would be okay on Arlington Street but not Massachusetts Ave.

DH suggests shrinking the font size so there is more white space. The telephone number should not be bold if the name is or lighter if both are not proposed as bold. He does not have trouble with a wall sign but it should be attached away from the wall itself.

AR suggests deleting the diamond.

DS is interested in the blade size option. DH added that it could be seen from Central Street.

AR suggested that before a vote, the artwork should be updated with the changes in font. The simplest thing would be to sign an extension and vote at the next meeting at 7:05 PM on October 22, 2013. The sense of the meeting was that a wall sign would be accepted but that the applicants might find the projecting sign style would be a more effective sign.

9:10 PM 537-541 Massachusetts Ave. – Application 0906AA: Continued discussion

AR is concerned about making a change the impact of which may not be fully understood.

DH noted that the building will be more about scale than design.

KAB is concerned about the repetition of so many large glass panes. Would it be possible that two windows be paneled instead of glass. Might molding add differentiation? AR believes it will feel like a lot of wood and glass but the HDC has to remember what tenants do to the glass.

DH wonders if the salvaged brackets have become too cute and the bases now seem inappropriate.

AR moves that HDC accept the doors, window, and sill elevations on the middle building elevation dated October, 7, 2013 OMR Architects.

Seconded by DS. The motion passed with one negative vote.

The Commission agrees that the brackets should be removed and perhaps be placed inside. The Commission accepts the opinion of the architects and AR and DH concur to leave the sills as originally proposed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Lynn
Secretary**

