



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2022-08-09

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR), Art Leavens (AL), SB liaison, Barbara Rhines (BR) (Cultural Resource Planner)

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA), Zach Taillefer (ZT)

Opening:

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:04 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 28 June and July 12 meeting minutes. DS makes a Motion to accept; AL Seconds. AR AL DH DS all approve, AL abstaining on 28 June minutes because not present at that meeting.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – all ok.
- D. Chair Update:
- E. Outstanding decisions to be written and distributed: #2210 34 School Street garage door replacement; #2212 543 Massachusetts Avenue gutter replacement, removal of rear non-original chimney, and new ADA entrance; #2215 273 Central Street replace front window with insulating glass and trim modifications. May have questions on the structure. – AR sent all of these on 9 August to the Clerk.
- F. AR visited the Acton Town Hall and looked at the repair of the porch columns at 468 Main Street (COA 2211). It is not clear what process is being followed. We should follow up and compare before and after.

2. New/Special Business [or other applicable agenda items]

- A. 7:17 PUBLIC HEARING – 267 Central Street, Application #2218. Demolition of house and garage to build a new 4-unit residential structure. DH reads the Notice of Public Hearing. DH: This is the former Christian Science Building, corner of Central and Pearl. Applicants came in about a year ago, and asked for preliminary thoughts. HDC members toured the house. The main structure had been converted to office space, and then a ~1920's Garage was constructed. An application has been made that involves demolition of the present main building and garage. Mark Foster (Principal of Applicant) and Dan



Martin and Nicole Kirouac (Project Architects) join. MF introduces the project. A lot of different approaches were studied. The applicant's judgment is that the main building should be demolished, and have been unable to find a way to re-use or preserve the garage. DB: Brings a formal application at this time. Notes that it has been a year of study, and that there have been a number of tours. DB was the chair of the HDC in Groton and feels quite capable and informed on historic buildings. No original siding, trim, windows, baseboard, chimney, fireplace remain. The stone foundation remains, along with the garage. 1) Historic materials have been removed; a restoration would be a complete reconstruction. 2) Character-defining properties are the scale and position on the lot. 3) 20th-century garage is a nice structure, and would love to find a new home for that structure, but does not fit in the development plans. 4) Building commissioner acknowledges the problems with the current structure. Application: Took cues from the HDC and public, and has a responsible design approach. The 4-unit structure proposed is intended to be compatible with the neighborhood, and may improve the articulation of the backing. The proposed Barn is also compatible. Note that there are 2 site plans; the septic system offers flexibility to move structures several feet, or remain exactly where the existing house currently stands, and seek feedback. Intended to be a straightforward application. Heard comments that a contemporary design could be workable, but the application under consideration is more historic in character. DH: A good review of the design is needed for the public. DB reads the introductory text of the application. BR: did some research on the building, checking with MACRIS and Jenks Library. No photos were found. The State Library could offer something. DB: Map of the area. West Acton Village zoning. DH: HDC cannot reduce setback, but can increase it if indicated. DH: want to know if the garage sash is original. Notes that there was a new structure installed in the 1980's to make it compatible with requirements for a commercial building. Very little original lumber remains. The original stone foundation remains. The proposal calls to remove the stone foundation, reuse the stones for a wall, and to replace with a poured concrete foundation. Three two-bedrooms and one one-bedroom apartment are planned. AR: asks about the height from decking to top beam? DB: Attempted to reproduce closely. Columns are order of 7 ft; doors are 6'6". DH: The HDC will not want a rush to abandon the garage. Note that the HC has a 2-year timeline for resolving a demolition concern. Finding a home for the garage is critical. DS: likes the building that has been proposed. Not sure if we know yet if demolition is appropriate. AL: There is a strong presumption against demolition, independent of the building to take its place. It appears the applicant considers the current building of no historic value. The fact that a close inspection shows no visible original materials does not determine the building's historic value. But the visual appearance may still speak to the original building. Far from the threshold for demolition. AR: Suppose the new design were the historic structure. What would we think? Just because the building is of the overall size of the original and is on an old foundation, it is not participating in the neighborhood as a 'real' building. AR is comfortable with the idea of a replacement. Public Comments: Renée Robins: Thanks to developers for the return to the drawing board; vast improvement over earlier designs. From the view of the Pearl-Central corner it looks ok. The Barn though feels out of scale, is a bit taller than the house. Are there other houses nearby that have barns taller than the main house? Should not make this the first place. Are 4 units needed? Could 3 units be



sufficient, with a reduced scale of the overall building? DH: we don't address the number of elements, but can speak to the massing. DH finds the 'anchoring' by the barn of the parking lot is of value in the design. Asks for a rendering along Pearl St. to see how the barn feels. RR: A lot of the lot is given over to parking. MF: The lot serves also the commercial activity on Central St and Mass Ave. RR: Can you move the garage to the front left corner of the lot, and have an entry between the garage and other buildings, and use the garage as residential indoor parking? MF: Looked at a number of applications, and did not find a solution. Terra Friedrichs: Agrees that the high bar for demolition is appropriate. Finds the design basically good if it were an empty lot. Share concerns about the scale of the barn. Is the zoning by right? DH: Yes. TF: Is the porch the same as the present porch? Want it to be functional. DB: Very similar. TF: Is the height the same as the current building? DB: It is 8-10 inches different in height. TF: Will the trees remain? There are now rules for saving trees, and that should be part of the approval. DB: Will try to save trees, but some decisions remaining. TF: Sees that many details are needing detail. DB: Working drawings will be submitted to the HDC. TF: Is the setback different? DB: The corner of the house is exactly where it was; an alternative could be ~2 feet closer to Pearl. TF: Worry about the ridge line. DB: it is improved with respect to the current design. The steeper roof addresses this. DH: The improved pitch is a net improvement. TF: The upstairs window dormers have simple shed roofs; TF: does not like that style here. The parking lot door roof – is it flat? DB: No flat roofs. TF: The parking lot view middle door looks like a commercial door. DH: Can this application hearing be continued at the next meeting in two weeks? DB: Can the public hearing be closed? DH: No; we need to address specifically the demolition conditions, and understand the future of the garage. AL: We have one scheduled meeting before the expiration of the 60-day limit on HDC consideration of the application. MF: willing to extend. DH: We will forward to you for your signature a written extension of the 60 day limit and take this up again at 7:15, Tuesday the 23 August.

B. 8:15 53 Windsor Avenue, Application #2220 Relocation of window and replacement of shed with Reeds Ferry garden shed. Applicants Renée Robins and Brad Bodkin join. Application submitted and – the kitchen window to be moved a bit, to accommodate a workable kitchen design; and the addition of a shed, with discussion of the siding. The window will be replaced, with one slightly different than the current (non-original) window; the original windows are one-over-one. The exact window is not yet selected; Present is double-hung; a casement might be more practical and visually more practical. DH: will make some recommendations. DS, AL, AR, DH: finds this fine. AR is asked to send some recommendations; Marvin is a good company, Jeld-Win, Pella are fine. Wood window is much preferred. DH: lead times are very long. DH: Amend the application with the exact window once available for an HDC review. AL: notes that the 60-day limit might be an issue if window selection is delayed; DH says we wish to see at the next meeting one or a couple of window selections. RR, Shed: chose a salt-box to keep a similar appearance to the now-collapsed old shed. The siding material is still in discussion. Cedar siding increases the cost by a factor of 1.3. Vinyl siding was viewed at the vendor's site. The design would not have seams visible to the street of reference, and RR thinks it looks fine. DS: The shutters in photographs are all wrong, and the windows are four-over-one and should be one-over-one. DH: A trellis will remain that blocks the view from the



street. DS: If I cannot see it I can't object. AL: Notes that the bylaws support this approach given the distance and the trellis. DH: All wood shed at the end of Taylor Road – might ask about the fabricator to see if an alternative source could be taken. AR: This is ok. Ask to be credited to remove the shutters and simplified windows. Terra Friedrichs: Agree that the shed is ok, while preferring wood siding. AL: Is this within the footprint of the previous shed? RR: Yes. AL: Move to approve the shed, within the footprint of the previous shed, be approved.

AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS all approve. AL will be the liaison/scribe. RR to return for the choice of a specific window.

C. 8:30 75 School Street, Application #2221 Replace gutters. Emilie Connolly (Applicant) and Laryssa Gomes (Contractor) join. LG: Proposes to change 75' of gutters. K or half-round gutters are in discussion. Aluminum gutters in any event. Current installation is patently ridiculous, due to the angled fascia. There are hangers that are appropriate for this sort of fascia. DS: the slanted fascia will work better with half-round and a 'kick-out' bracket. Round smooth downspouts. AL, AR: Agree. EC: A fair amount of gutter is on the back of the house. If the half-round is more expensive, then K-style would be ok on the back; DH recommends all half-round if possible. If there were just one part being replaced, could continue with K-style reasonably. AL: reads the bylaw – if it is just repair, could leave it as is, but with a larger gutter and a change in the hanger it is not just a repair. AR moves that we approve the installation of 6" half-round gutters with kick-out brackets with round downspouts for all visible gutters. A non-binding recommendation for half-round everywhere.

AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS all approve. AR will be the liaison/scribe. BR: Notices have gone out.

D. 8:45 Discuss proposed Amendment to 75 School Street Application for fence, #2213, issued 7/13/2022 to add Arbor. DH: For the Arbor, we need a sketch to see where it will be. We will take it as an amendment to the fence application. No notice needed.

DH: Next meeting: We must be very clear about our reasoning for demolitions. Review the revised bylaw from the website; the informal demolition process summary developed and discussed during the revision of the bylaw to be sent to HDC members by AL.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:34 AL makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting



- 267 Central Street, Application #2218.
- 53 Windsor Avenue, Application #2220
- 75 School Street, Application #2221 and photos