



## Historic District Commission

### Meeting Minutes

2023-02-14

7:00 PM

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

**Present:** David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), Zach Taillefer (ZT), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

**Absent:**

### 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 – January 24 Meeting Minutes: DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve. Minutes approved.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
  - 1. COA/CNA – discussion of certificates in work. 96 Main has some repairs-in-kind, appropriate for CNA.
  - 2. 16 Mead Terrace Update – DH: Parcel subdivided from 615 Mass Ave. The owner of 615 was able to purchase that parcel. A barn may be proposed for that land; discussion at a follow-up meeting.
  - 3. 94 Main Street Site Visit – DH: Desire to replace windows. Email with owner. A visit is planned for the coming Saturday.
  - 4. AL: Section 3.2.3. has been integrated into the more complete document. Comments on typographical errors were solicited; none were forthcoming.

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

- A. 7:15 Continuation of Public Hearing for App. # 2218, 267 Central Street: Demolition of a house and garage to build a new 4-unit structure. Discussion of modes of continuation. Extension of the 60-day time period for a decision is complete to March 31<sup>st</sup>. DH: Opens the public hearing. Owners are not yet ready to discuss. Terra Friedrichs contributed a



letter, urging careful consideration of the massing, and hardship conditions. DH moved in favor of a continuation of the hearing until the February 28 meeting, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve.

- B. 7:30 Application # 2302: 3 Spruce Street Signage – Keith DuBois (KD), the signage contractor, joins, Michele Rice (MR), for the owner, joins. KD: The Acton School of Ballet wants to place a carved sign and directional sign on the front of the building. In addition, a small sign near the door would replace the current sign. At the rear, instructions to access the entry and parking direction is desired. DH: HDC only has Jurisdiction for what is visible from Spruce St, so only sign ‘A’ is in the jurisdiction. KD: new sign is about the same size as the current sign with the additional parking direction panel. Sign will be carved; high-density urethane, mimicking cedar. AL: Is the sign painted? Looks fine. KD: yes, all painted. DS: looks fine, nice design. AR: Letters are painted silver, as are the horizontal lines. A bit concerned about shininess. KD: it is a brushed aluminum, or mill finish; not excessively shiny. ZT: Likes it. The hanging sign is the same? KD: This is an aluminum panel with a solid print over the entire surface of the sign, like a giant decal; smooth. Digitally printed vinyl graphic is the technical name. No illumination is planned. ZT moved in favor of the signage to include a main sign per the application, and a directional sign also as described in the application, seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve. ZT writing certificate.
- C. 7:45 Application # 2223: 75 River Street Solar Panels. – DH: House is next to one we have already approved for solar panels. Jessica Fenton (JF), Venture Solar, the contractor, joins. JF: Electrician said that it is not feasible to carry the wiring inside the house to hide it from view. Wishes to use the approach the 77 River St house used. DH: we are unsure what we told 77 River, but the situation is understood. AL: Confirms view is from the street of reference. DH makes a motion that the re-entrant corner will be used for the conduit leading from the Solar panels to the services. It should be painted to match the surrounding. Seconded by AL. AL, AR, ZT, DS, and DH voted to approve. AL writing the amended certificate. DS: should check on the conditions of installation for 77 and the conduit path recommended; it should be painted.
- D. 8:00 HDC Discussion: Proposed Concord Road Historic District – Anne Forbes (AF) joins. DH: Recall that we discussed Morrison Farm; Select Board did not want to pursue a conservation condition. The Historical Commission has proposed an additional historic district to include Woodlawn Cemetery and Chapel, Robbins house site, Ice House, and Morrison Farm along with several other properties. AF: Has been advising on these issues. 1) Which designation gives the best protection to the Morrison Farm buildings in particular? 2) What time frame is possible? National Register Nominations are taking a very long time – 5 years. Local historic districting can offer more protection and be faster. DH: Local HD would give perpetual denial of demolition. Single building districts have been discussed in the past. AF: The paperwork for the original Historic Districts was done by the Committee. Property owner objections may arise. A majority of property owners need to be in favor (the town may be just one owner of multiple properties in this sense). The timeline for approval would be shorter than for a National Register. An article to Town meeting is needed, after passing through the study. The HC would play a role. Inventory forms have already been made for the majority of the structures. The HC would like to have the former Railway station site included, which is on the east side of



the rail trail. MHC will need to perform a review and approve. AF will dig up information on the process. DH: Work on both local and national districts in parallel. AL: likes the idea of starting down the road. ZT, DS, AR the same. DH: Could hire a consultant to help out. We will keep it on the agenda, and we request from AF any background information. FA: Is this a collaboration of HC and HDC? AF: it should be the HDC for the local District; the HC could focus on the National Register, and the split could take various forms.

- E. 8:15 HDC Discussion: Annual Town Report Draft – BR shares on screen. DH: Drafted the report for 2022; 40 applications this year. Contents reviewed. BR: Rewrite of the Notice of Waiver to abutters should be added to the text. DH invites any further comments.
- F. 8:30 HDC Discussion: Annual Letter and Flyer – DH: Not yet sent. Contents of the letter and flyer have been discussed and are approved. BR: seeking a good list of owners. FA: The list can be obtained from the Assessor. Target the end of February to go out.
- G. 8:45 HDC Discussion: HDC Violation Procedures – AL: Reminds the committee of the 5 drafts of potential notices of violation and requests for enforcement circulated. Discussion of violations and how to address them. AL drafted letters that could be models for notes from HDC and/or Building Department to a property owner. AL noted that there are several cases: the draft shown is a notice of An alteration of the building without permission. The draft letter speaks of ‘an apparent violation’, and invites the owner to join an HDC meeting to discuss the situation. A second draft would apply to a COA which was not followed correctly. It appears that \$25 a day is the value consistent with several instructions for penalties. Draft letters to the Commissioner were also presented for communication to the Building Commissioner if the HDC determines that a violation is in fact in place. The HDCs determination will lead to obligatory action by the Commissioner. DS: we could choose to work through the Commissioner. AL suggests that maybe one round with the owner could be best. The letter should carry some formality, and then the more informal discussion can be undertaken at the meeting. DH: We do have the responsibility in the bylaws to handle violations. Past experience demonstrates that the HDC can actually work with owners to correct errors even when there is expense involved. ZT: Most all folks comply, and those who do not comply should be told clearly that the errors must be addressed. DS: Finds the drafts appropriate after discussion. AR: some folks purchase homes in districts and just be unaware of the conditions, and we want to be gentle with honest naïveté. AL: E45 stipulates \$25 daily for the Commissioner who is the enforcing individual, which is within the range of the bylaw that indicates \$10-\$500. We choose to leave the wording as is. FA (and others) find the inconsistency odd; we should contact others in the Town government to resolve the tension. AL will ask Town Counsel. Some possible violations will be discussed in coming HDC meetings.

### **3. Consent Items**

None

#### **1. Adjournment**



At 8:58 AL moves to adjourn the meeting, DH seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AL, AR, DH, DS, ZT all approve.

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

- #2218
- #2302
- #2223
- Town Report draft
- Draft letters on violations