

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2024-02-27

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent:

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:01 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

- A. Citizen's Concerns – Michaela Moran joins. Asks for a support letter for the Iron Work Farm chimney-restoration project to the MHC. Discussion scheduled 8:45 discussion. DH has drafted a letter for the CPC in support of funds for the project; it can be updated to serve for other needs. MM adds that she is happy to have 25-27 School Street remove the mudroom.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 13 February 2024: DS moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, ZT, AL DS approve. Minutes approved.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:
 - Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials
 - 53 Windsor Avenue #2402 (AR) DONE
 - 25-27 School Street roof #2406 CNA – DONE.
 - 5 High Street chimney repairs CNA – DONE
 - 17 Woodbury Lane #2407 – Public Hearing will be March 12, 2024. Legal Notice and 300-ft. property owners’ notices are done
 - 14 Newtown Road #2409 window restoration CNA written. AL notes that it is a repair in kind for which no COA is required. DH requests a photographic record of before, during, after to help future interests.
 - 25-27 School Street #2408 remove bay window & porch: scheduled for 3/27 discussion of the elevation.
 - 615 Massachusetts Avenue – update on windows & barn to discuss 3/12
 - HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD to be done.
 - 450 Main Street appeal status – BR has not seen any action on this matter.
 - AL notes: 94 Main St windows – appears to be following our guidance.

Much appreciated!

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Application #2401 544 Massachusetts Avenue (Continued). Continuation of the public hearing. BR reads the announcement. Eric (EK) and Meghan Kaye (MK), Applicants, join. Jeremy Souther (JS), Nupro sales representative, joins. EK: Recaps the application, and selected NuPro as the best choice of the vendors. No original windows; 42 windows in total, 24 visible from Massachusetts Avenue. NuPro offers 25 year warranty. Anderson offers a 5 year warranty at significantly greater cost. Currently storms – triple tracks – are on the windows, so the windows effectively hidden. Want to have a better, more historical look, within financial constraints. A greater range of choices would be great for all Historic District homeowners. Have offered addresses of installations of NuPro windows in Historic Districts. Nupro, Wright Window, Northwoods (a general contractor), and Renewal Andersen were interviewed. Northwoods recommended an Andersen window. AR: The price of Andersen? EK: some \$18k more than the NuPro quote, and the visit from NuPro seemed to indicate a deeper engagement and interest in the project. DH: Window vs. Labor costs? JS: Around 20% of the cost goes to labor, 80% to the windows. The windows specified here are around \$1500 installed. DH: Would like to compare these costs with windows we have approved in the past. We have approved Andersen Renewal, Andersen Woodright (400), Jeld-Win, Marvin Elevate Marvin Signature, Windsor Composite, Legends in the past. DH shares a sample photo of a ~1875 window that is historically appropriate. The two sashes are visible as distinct elements. BR shows photos of some of the other NuPro installations in Portland ME and Ipswich MA. AR: note the screen box projection beyond the rest of the window system. EK: Planning on white windows. DS: notes that the frame is of fixed width, and can feel more comfortable on larger windows. EK/JS: Some of the planned windows are smaller, others larger, in light of this observation. DH: Somerville example, showing photo. Notes that there is a wood perimeter that has an unfinished look, apparently designed to catch the original window wood storm. JS: A second phase is coming in there which will address these issues. EK: Capping will be done in a way that the HDC approves. JS: PVC coated aluminum is the preferred material for capping. AR: need to see all materials and the finished design or process. All capping that we have approved to date has been wood. Composite sills could be approved. The thickness should be 5/4 or 6/4 thickness to match the overall look. JS: That can be the approach, but the cost would be higher. AR: We evaluate each house as an individual house. JS: Lots of experience with other historic district commissions, and see that the specifics of a house – distance from the street, visual access – play a role as it does in Acton. AR: The picture is more complicated, and need to know more about the final installation. The screen box still appears to be quite heavy. EK/MK: Want it to be noted that it is very hard to buy a house these days, and one does not have a lot of choice! DH: Understood. On the side of the HDC, the role is to enforce a bylaw, and these details are central to the role of the Commission. AL: Context – HDC is dealing with a house of considerable historical significance. The MACRIS form #237 shows the house was built in 1865 by a prominent Actonian who played a “major role” in West Acton’s physical and civic development. The house is one of a row of houses built from the mid to late 19th century as part of the Town’s development in response to the arrival of the railroad in 1845. We

don't make decisions off the cuff. We follow guidelines. The Design Guidelines say that the windows are one of the most important elements. Wood is preferred, etc. The Department of the Interior's Preservation Brief 9, devoted to Historic Wooden Windows, provides that replacement of historic windows should begin by becoming familiar with the windows being replaced and that the replacements should reflect the period, style and technical development of those windows. This is why the photo of the circa 1875 window earlier shown is so important. The NuPro windows do not match the historical record. There are available, appropriate replacement windows that we have approved. For those reasons, I can't support the windows proposed by NuPro in this project.

DS: Less Expert. The heaviness of the frame is a function of the size of the window. We

do need to see the final installation plan to understand in particular how the frame will come across. ZT: We have used precedent to approve or deny certain applications. It was a big deal to approve a Windsor Hybrid, with a desire to give more modern materials in the list of possibilities. We are faced here with another window which requires an even larger compromise than the Windsor. The final casing is important. The black screen box with the black muntins worked better in hiding the heaviness of the frame – is that an option? The house is very close to the street, and whatever is used, it will be very visible. Reluctant to see this window become a precedent. DH: Hard time approving this window. Believe that there are 3 or 4 windows at a price that will be similar, and will meet approval of the HDC. The HDC must take the long view. EK: Warrantee of 25 years from NuPro is very important in the choice. If there is no approval of NuPro, may choose not to proceed with the project, or look at other contractors. Will need to look at the warranty as an important consideration. DH: Offers to help with some leads and try to support the additional research. Continue the public hearing for another two weeks to March 12.

- B. 8:17 Application #2135 Gardner Field: Status Update. Corey York, Director of Public Works, (CY), Ron Headrick, Landscape Architectural Consultant (RH), Jamie Falise, Architectural Consultant (JF), join. DH: Introduces topic, recaps. RH shares screen and summarizes the latest proposal, which among other things proposes removal of the top course of concrete blocks that are a part of the arena-like steps and substitution of a stone wall for a proposed wood-rail fence along the front of Gardner Field. AR: Joyous. Feels much better. AL: Agreed. Are plantings proposed for the East side – 8ft fence side? Shade tree? RH: Yes. Shrubs. A legacy maple or similar. Linden likely. DS: like it. Shrubs hiding the remaining concrete block? RH: yes, 18" or so. ZT: Looks great. Really softens the overall look. DH: Likes it a lot. The minimal approach is quite successful. How is the wall held together? RH: the Rock Wall will not show the mortar. DH: Need to find how to show that the earlier filed notice of violation has been satisfied. AL: At least an amended COA, or a whole new application with a COA, seems appropriate. DH: Let's have a new application, with a public hearing. The shed for the Farmer's Market would be good to take into consideration in the application. AR: the funding group and fans will want to participate.
- C. 8:39 Application #2404 25-27 School Street – window and shed removal. Adriana Miranda, Applicant (AM), joins. DH: Roof is set; CNA issued. Will the skylight go back in? AM: Do intend to put it in a Velux. DH: will amend the roofing application and re-

issue it to include the skylight. AM: The side and back needs discussion. Has the photos of the building as it was. Shares screen to show a photo from some time ago, with a very regular repeated window motif on the side façade. DH: Removal of the shed is the first question. AR: Ok that it go away, and happy to move the windows to be two rows of 3 aligned and identical in size. AL: Agree on the windows. For the shed, it is demonstrated by the historical photo showing that it was not part of the original, historic building and is thus of no historical value, so under the Demolition Guidelines ok to demolish. DS: Agree. ZT: Also agrees. DH: The historic photo has capitals on the windows, carriage returns, and a waterboard. AM: would like to build back some detail that would give a better appearance. Is composite ok? DH: Making the windows look bigger with more trim would help. Wood is what we usually prefer, 5/4" thickness. AR: Composite with paint could be approved. Fypon or similar firms may have a product that would give the appearance that would be acceptable. DH: Because the siding is vinyl, this could be acceptable. AM: 3 layers of siding; may complicate the installation. DH: Windows same size, some significant trim. Water table board feels necessary, and some trim. AM: May use Marvin Elevate. AR: Will look at the 'tilt right' Windsor 400 series window to see if it could be acceptable. AM: happy with either. DH: Moves that we wish to make all three windows on the West side the same on the first floor, same header heights. Marvin Elevate as the window. A water table board shall be installed. Windows will be trimmed out, 5/4 routed as needed, with composite material. Head casing and sills or cornice to be fabricated out of composite components. Vinyl siding to be repaired and painted. In addition the shed may be removed. AL Seconds. AR, AL, DS, ZT, DH approve. AR to write up the certificate. BR: Can add the back stairwell to the front Façade application? AM: Building in the back will be a topic for later. AR: The stairtower is pinched up against the windows. If possible moving the rear windows if the windows could be moved a bit. AM: I moved them already!

D. 9:11 Iron Work Farm, Inc. CPC Endorsement Letter. BR shares a screen with the draft letter from DH. Consensus is that the document is fine and with slight alterations also fine for the MHC.

E. 9:30 14 Newtown Road Preliminary Discussion. DS recuses himself. DS, along with co-owner Virginie Landré, returns for a preliminary discussion of their proposed restoration of the wrap-around porch on the front and south side of their house. DS shares photos of the current appearance of the house and its earlier appearance (including the wrap-around porch sought to be restored), of drawings depicting the proposed project, and of photos of spindles that are part of the current porch and will be part of the restored porch. DS/VL asked for advice on the following issues:

1. The restored porch (which will rebuild the part of the porch that an earlier owner converted to interior space, restoring it to its prior appearance) will require many more spindles for the extended railing. Should they keep the current, old spindles, making copies for the new spindles, or discard the old spindles and make new copies for the entire porch? DH and AR cited the pros and cons of each, saying it was up to them. AL suggested that any new spindles would mimic the existing ones, including the material of which they are made, and thus would constitute "like-kind" replacement that under Bylaw P does not need HDC approval.

2. The photo of the original part of the porch that needs to be restored shows three supporting columns, one at each end of the porch and one in the middle. Would the HDC require sticking with that or could the restored porch have four columns, evenly spaced? Given the length of the restored part of the porch, DH and AR agreed that either would be acceptable but that four make more sense, structurally and aesthetically.
3. There are currently no gutters on the house, but the photo of the front part of the porch shows a small-scale, wood gutter. Could they leave the gutter off of the restored portion of the porch? They do not plan to put a gutter on the main roof, and they fear that the rain water from the main roof, coupled with that of the porch roof, would overwhelm any porch gutter. DH suggested no porch gutter, suggesting instead installing for the length of the porch perforated PVC piping about 18” below ground, under a porous bed, connected to a dry well. This should collect the run-off water from the porch roof and carry it to the dry well where it could be absorbed.
4. The contractor with whom they have been working suggested EPDM for the porch roofing. DH and AR agreed that, while EPDM would work, it would not be appropriate for this roof. Instead, DH suggested rolled roofing.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 10:05 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: AR, DS, DH, AL, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare