

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes
2024-05-14
7:00 PM

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

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

Absent: Zach Taillefer (ZT)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:03 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 9 April 2024: DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR abstains; DH, AL, DS approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- Results of zoning article votes affecting South Acton from Town Meeting: 3 articles pertaining to South Acton (minor impact to South Acton HD). MBTA, Master Plan, and Powdermill.
- Upcoming Public Hearing for 80 School Street 5/28/2024, 7:15 p.m.
- #2417 592 Mass. Ave. (West Acton Baptist Church) storage donation shed to be discussed 5/28/24.
- 68 River Street #2410 EV Charger determined to be a Cert. of Non-applicability. AR wrote it up and it is done.
- #2415 250 Central Street (Theatre III) exterior door CNA, done
- HDC membership (Charter changed at Town Meeting & Vote to 7 members; Anita Rogers appointment is expiring, but we hope she renews by June.
- HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD – not yet done.
- Violation discussion re: 111-113 School Street (Chair recused)

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Application # 2414 Public Hearing (cont.) 530 Massachusetts Ave. Gardner Playground. Corey York (CY), Director of Public Works, and Ron Headrick (RH), Landscape Architect Consultant, and Jamie Falise (JF), Landscape Architect Consultant, join. Slides are shared. AR: Appreciate the improvement achieved. The DPW-style wall seems fine. AL: Terrific job in finding a solution that responds to the concerns. A net improvement from the initial design. DS: Likes it a lot. Asks about the East wall interface. JF: Plantings on the playground side of the fence. Multiple layers of plantings; lower plantings will absorb noise. 15' height when fully grown; 3-5' at the time of installation. The Town will establish the plants. DH: Agreement. The fence is cedar? Yes. Natural finish is the consensus – to weather naturally. Proposed timber wall will be removed from plan. Public Comment: Marjorie Norman (MN), immediate abutter east of Gardner Field, joins. MN: Looking out from the upper floors would love to see 15' tall trees along the fence. How tall will the 'Legacy Tree' (Silver Linden) be? RH: starts at 10-15 feet, and quite tall when mature. MN: would like to see the arborist report on the old silver maple that led to its removal. DH: Issued a denial letter last year. Need to find a procedure. AL: The letter was to be a spur to action. If the HDC approved the planning in response, that should suffice. Notes the really positive approach to addressing the challenge. AL to draft a CoA for the new application, noting fence finish and rock wall style. DH makes a motion to approve the design as communicated by the presentation, with fence finish and wall style. AR Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH approve. CY: removal of concrete blocks this Spring, then to move to order materials; late summer is a goal for completion. Fall planting. AL notes that we should rescind the original COA. DH moves to rescind the previous COA for Gardner field, allowing the new COA to take precedence. AL, AR, DS, DH approve.
- B. 8:00pm Application #2401 Public Hearing (cont.) 544 Massachusetts Avenue windows. Extended to July. BR reads the public hearing notice. DH makes a motion to extend to July 23 2024. AL seconds. AL, AR, DH approve.
- C. 8:01 Informal discussion on violation of order to remove wooden railing at 111-113 School Street. DH recuses. BR says Kristen Guichard spoke with Town Counsel. Encourages the Owner to get involved. AL: Suggest Letter inviting the owner and the applicant to a meeting on a specific date, as a public hearing, inviting a discussion concerning whether there is a violation and, if so, how to cure it. If there is a vote confirming a violation, the penalty would be recommended and sent to the Building Commissioner. To note, the Denial included a recommendation from HDC to have a discussion of the fence, which the Applicant has declined to do. BR: for a meeting we need a quorum and 14 days notice. July 23rd appears to be the first time we may have a quorum (given DH recusal). A vote on the letter may be needed. BR to ask Kristen Guichard who pays for the public meeting announcement.

Break to maintain the published schedule

- A. 8:45 Application #2408 25-27 School Street removal of bay window; replace secondary door with a window, remove front porch and renovate stair tower. Alex Mota (AM),

Applicant, joins. BR reads the public hearing notice. AM recapitulates the last discussion. DH: for the back, painted brick will work well. AR is writing a CNA for vinyl siding and water table, and a 3rd item. AR will plan to take a photo to document that the vinyl siding is being used as a repair of a vinyl-sided house. AM: has implemented a number of the recommendations in AR's planned trim. AR: A COA is drafted for one side of the house; it could be extended. DH would like to take this approach. DH would like to focus on the front of the house for this evening. AM: Has started repairs of the porch roof, and preparing for posts. EDPM roofing appears to be necessary due to the low pitch. The porch will have a couple of steps; no railing will be needed by code and by choice. DH: wants the trim in the old photo, and the simple posts that are seen in the photo. Could start with a PT 4x4 and trim with wood to give it the right bulk. Square columns have usually a 'baseboard' of nominal 8" height. On the head there is some sort of cap. AR: good to find a photo of what we are recommending. Trim on the top and nothing at the base would be fine. Trim style should match that of the Window. The number of posts and their placement is important. 4 evenly spaced posts are seen in the historic photo. The railing to the left of the door is interesting – and since not required by code, it could be lower and purely decorative. Since there are three risers, a handrail is needed by code. Need to establish if it needs to be on both sides; ask the Building Inspector. Recommends a 3' deep platform that stretches the length of the building. We should not try to make it look like a house – it can look like a storefront. A platform at the height of the bottom of the water table would work, perhaps. AM: planned to have a short platform around the door, and the posts coming down to the ground close to the sidewalk. AR: Thin brick could create a platform; would like the bay window's base to appear to sit on something; it is important that the posts should not come down to meet the sidewalk. AM: Putting in deck now would be financially difficult, but can perhaps plan to do this in the future. DH: agrees that the bay window should (appear to) sit on something. AM: The sign is open for possibilities. Would like to do something with the back building. 5-6 units would be possible with current zoning. AL, DS: Delighted that things are coming along. Agree that the posts are odd meeting the sidewalk. DH/AR: could wrap a future deck around posts, creating the appearance that the posts rest on the deck. Good to look along School Street – e.g., 79 School St – for examples. Posts and some handrail stock will be ok for the stair; balusters if needed. AR: proposes to take a photo and do a sketch in collaboration with DH. AM to send a photo of the door. AL: The application is to remove the porch and bay window. This should be denied (and AL offers to write this up) and with a recommendation saying to what we have agreed (to be drafted by AR). AR moves to deny the application requesting removal of the porch and the bay window; and move to instead recommend restoration of porch roof and bay, removal of kick supports, and the addition of 4 porch posts across the front, with appropriate support. We recommend the future addition of a platform (ideally dark in color) at the height of the water table across the front of the building. The Bay window to have the appearance of support with a lattice or brick. AL, AR, DS, DH approve.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:44 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS, DH, AL, AR all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare