

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2024-11-12

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator). Zach Taillefer (ZT) joins at 19:10

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:06 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

- A. Citizen's Concerns – None
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes –22 October Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, DS AL approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 105 School Street COA (AL) DONE
- 105 Main Street roofing CNA (DH) DONE
- 72-74 River Street roofing CNA (AR) DONE
- 2 School Street #2439 roof repair (Exchange Hall) – determine type of certificate; wish to replace some slate tiles. Sample will be provided; Chair will determine the path forward
- 49 Windsor Avenue will be submitting applications for 2 CNAs and 1 COA (windows) -- Waiting for applications. Discussion of logistics. Target first meeting in December (no meeting 26 November)— or Christmas Eve, 24 December).

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Application # 2433 Public Hearing (cont. from 10/8) 82 River Street garage & accessory apartment. DH recuses himself as an abutter; AR will chair the discussion. Silvia de Silva (SdS), Applicant's spouse, joins. BR reads the continuation notice. BR

shares revised drawings. AR: In the prior meeting, we wished to have the dormers pulled, and the sidelights taken away, the ADU more like a back door. See a number of the changes made. The windows are described as simulated divided lites. AL: Newer version addresses most of the suggestions/complaints previously given. Still a pretty massive structure, which is a bit problematic given the Design Guidelines' provision that the original building's proportioning and character should be maintained in the addition. DS: Agrees with AL; the way the rendering is drawn may make the addition appear more important. ZT: agreed. Asks if windows are as we want. AR: It looks like the detail on the addition's revised drawings did not pick up the request to shorten the dormer to allow some of the steeper roof to appear. 24 ft for the ground floor; want 22 or 20 even for the dormer's width. The dormer's face is moved back 18 inches; 2 feet is a bit of a standard (e.g., for Newton). The cheeks are still co-planar. ZT: The garage could be made wider to match the upstairs roof, and this would get the dormer to be comparatively smaller than the 1st floor roof as designed. AR: The ADU has a maximum size and this could be a limit, and the distance to the property line must be maintained. Can propose the two solutions and they can pick. AL: The mass of the addition seems out of proportion; are we making it worse? AR: The appearance of mass may be moderated by having a stepped façade. The current drawing looks like a hat that is too big. AL: The garage doors should remain centered. AR: We provide dimensions (again) for the inset – either by reducing the width of the dormer, or by increasing the footprint of the ground floor. AL: would like to see actual reductions in the dormer's size. DS: the siding and roofing will be uniform for the current house and the planned addition in reality, unlike the drawing. Public Comments: DH requests to contribute as a citizen. Likes either solution discussed by the committee. Could consider the dormer exterior wall in T&G or other approach to break up the big mass of shingles. AR: could also ask that the face of the dormer to be further pulled back, beyond 18". BR: the extension currently is to November 22. AR: How to proceed? AL: We should see it before we vote, and so should see at the next meeting. Should extend the hearing to Dec 10, and extend the application to 17 December to allow the decision to be written up. AR offers to make a sketch and to talk with the Architect. The dormer should be 4 feet narrower than the garage. Will also ask that the dormer be set back a full 2 feet as well. BR: Need to ask that the extension will be agreed by the applicant, for a meeting on the 10th and a decision 17th. SdS agrees to convey this to the Applicant. Paper will be sent out.

DH rejoins and retakes the chair.

- B. 8:00 Application #2436 250 Central Street (Theatre III) demolish landscape wall. Linda Minkoff (LM) and Diane Zimmerman-Decker (DZD) join for Applicant. BR shares the application. LM: The Health Department has indicated that there is a cesspool that may need repair or replacement by a septic system under the rock wall, but not sure until excavation is accomplished. This requires disassembly of a rock wall. Historical photos of the building do not show the rock wall. Accessibility requirements as part of the CPC application lead to the need to 'do a Title 5'. DH: nice to hide the septic fields. HDC should determine if the wall is original. AR: The provision of the wall contributes to the design, but the specifics of the wall do not seem crucial to the historical accuracy and completeness of the site. DZD: If a septic system is required, it would probably be on the other side of the building, so perhaps no mound would be there – and a ramp attractively

designed. AR: A ‘sloped walkway’ is the desired description for purposes of the Code. The Acton Women’s Club is an ideal approach. AL: Under our Demolition Guidelines, it is not clear that the wall is of historic value. Demolition for Public Health and Safety is allowed in any event. DS: Important to pursue the historical value through the photos we hear exist. ZT: The initiative sounds very attractive. DZD shares historical photo, which shows no rock wall where the wall in question exists. DH notes that the manner in which the wall’s stones are laid suggest that the wall is not historic. The stones are valuable; great to re-use. We would like to have another meeting to discuss the plan for the site later, but there is a consensus that the Commission can approve the demolition. Motion to approve the removal of the stone wall, with recommendation that the stones be set aside for further use; agreement to return with the plan for the future use of the site after discovery. AL Seconds. AR, AL, ZT, DH approve. AL to write it up.

C. 8:23. Application #2438 12 Concord Road dumpster. Sheri Ryder (SR) joins on behalf of the Applicant Acton Congregational Church. SR: The church sold the two houses adjacent to the church, and the dumpster needed to be moved onto Church property. An Eagle Scout volunteered to build the enclosure with minimal supervision. It is not liked by the church, and understands the objections by the committee. Not clear what a good solution would be. BR shares a photo of the current situation. SR: The dumpster needs to be near the top of the parking lot so cannot be moved much. The previous enclosure for the dumpster remains, and is not in apparent current use, but it is on the property of the house at 20 Concord Road, which the church sold and is now privately owned. AR: Acton Town Hall has a transformer inside a wooden enclosure and could be a model. SR: Perhaps just a fence could suffice? BR: Planning says that a full enclosure is required. DH: if it could be 3-sided that could work. Ask at the Planning Board what requirements they have; could discuss with the dumpster folks what ideas they have, and watch them collect once. DH: Our next meeting will be 10 December; that would be great for an update. BR: December 29 is the deadline for the application.

D. 8:36. 149 Central Street plans (Courtesy review as property is not in an historic district). Ulrika Shepardson, Jason Bowers (JB), architect, Barbara Carlson (BC), administrator, join. BC: CPC application being made, with multiple presentations to succeed in the application. In current location since 1997, and the heritage of the property is important with a desire to restore the farmhouse as part of a master plan. Built by a Faulkner, then occupied by a Hapgood. JB shares screen and gives a walkthrough. AR: Fun to see, happy to hear of the desire to preserve and restore. AL: Lovely facility. DS: Likes it a lot. Do work on getting the windows back to their original state, and either put up proper shutters or take them down. DH: If it were in the district, a visit would be made on the windows – renovate wherever possible. Concentrate on the front if needed. What is the state of the slate? JB: not in horrible condition and may be ruining the structure due to its weight. DH: not uncommon to find a slate roof on a wood shingle underneath. Wood shingles might be considered. Very happy to see capable and engaged architects.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:12 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. AR takes a roll call vote: DS, AL, ZT, AR, DH all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare