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Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Meeting Minutes, September 10, 2013 Final

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 6:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), David Shoemaker (DS), and Anita Rogers (AR). Mike Gowing (MG) as BoS liaison and Ron Regan as a future member.

6:30 PM Citizens' Questions:

6:35 PM Minutes: August 13, and August 27, 2013 minutes approved by consent.

6:37 PM Rescheduling of September 27, 2013 Meeting to early October.

Andy Brockway representing Acton 2020 wishes to meet with HDC for a discussion of how HDC and Acton 2020 can work together.

6:40 PM Discussion: Minimal Maintenance By-Law

David Honn related the history of a minimal maintenance by-law discussion in Acton beginning in 2009, brought forward by the Historic District Commission and the Historical Commission. In some towns such laws are sweeping and in others, specific. The HDC worked with the Historical Commission to bring the matter to Town Meeting, and the effort did not go beyond a Public Hearing a few weeks before Town Meeting because not enough public outreach had been done prior to the Public Hearing, and was not defined in enough detail to satisfy citizens' concerns. The draft by-law included properties in the districts as well as buildings on the cultural resources list.

Such a by law would need to be carefully written. David found material by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. The key issues would involve defining maintenance and correcting violations. In Somerville, the town makes repairs at the homeowner's expense if the violations are not corrected within appropriate time.

Charlottesville, VA. relies on the impact on a district, not just the condition of the individual property. A procedure for dealing with hardships is critical.

Courts have upheld these laws. MG wondered about other towns – whether they make a distinction between owner-occupied and non-owner status. KAB reminded the group that it had considered a low interest loan program to help owners comply. CPC might be approached to consider a grant program.

MG suggests that a fall town meeting might be the best venue. When asked about next steps, MG suggested the need for an outline that reflects the spirit of Acton. Acton's own zoning code has a twenty-five year moratorium on increasing the density of a property on which a significant structure was demolished.

7:00 PM 14 Newtown Rd. Appl. 1337: Proposed Change in Type of Window

David Shoemaker, the applicant, recused himself

This proposal represents an amendment to a previous amendment. The applicant has found examples nearby opening both inside and outside. These windows would open 180 degrees and so would not be prominent.

Unanimously approved the hinged casement windows from previously out-swinging to in-swinging pending abutters notification.

7:05 PM 12 School St.: Proposed Muntins to Cure Violation

Two CNAs for a stairway and foundation were generated by Anita Rogers. The issuance of a building permit is being held until the continuing window violation is cured with the installation of appropriate muntins.

7:10 PM 260 Arlington St. Appl. 1335: New Sign

Rob LaBelle, Mark Murphy, and Kenneth Howell, an Acton resident explained the nature of their business in Wayland which they wish to replicate in Acton. They contended that the cartoon-style dog is an important part of their brand to date.

PL shared that the original proposal was too busy, not sufficiently discrete.

AR indicated that she felt the proposed sign was too busy. KAB explained the process HDC follows. She shared that it was too busy and would likely need to be more classic. KAB suggested that an awning and a change of font might allow her to vote to approve.

DH explained that there is a long history of images being prominent. He suggested that the dog be made larger and the Inc. be dropped. A sign on a shingled building is best attached slightly away from the outer wall. The dog could protrude from the sign to further emphasize it even more.

KAB suggests that they consider Planning for a temporary sign.

7:35 PM 503 Main St. Appl. 1334: Roof Replacement

AR as liaison explained the applicant's wish to use the same roofing as previously approved for 507 Main St. Appl 1210 the applicant brought samples of the Timberline (HD) Architectural Shingle Charcoal High Definition.

KAB asked the applicant to check with the supplier to see whether there is a version that is not HD. AR will also check availability of non-HD.

AR moved to approve the use of GAF Timberlane Architectural Shingles HD upon the following conditions.

1. Ridge vent to be of low profile and carried to the gable end.
2. Drip edges factor finished or painted to match the trim.

Approved unanimously pending abutter notification

8:00 PM Discussion: HDC Procedures: Work Flow, Abutters Letters, Timing of Actions

HDC is strongly bound to the sixty day clock. HDC can only go beyond that limit with the written okay of the applicant.

The biggest hurdle is obtaining the abutters list quickly. MG clarified that the field card plus the determination of direct abutters.

The group reviewed the obligation to send the abutters notices within the time limit. MG suggests that the request for town help might be well served by shifting the waiver of public hearing notices to the Building Department staff with a notice also being sent to the liaison. KAB will determine whether a COA or CNA and who will be liaison.

KAB explained how liaison assignments are made. The group concluded that it would be wise in the future to automatically hold a public hearing for institutions or public properties.

8:30 PM 3 Concord Rd. and 54 School St. Appls. 1331 and 1332: Installation of Stand-by Generators

DS visited the sites and Dean Charter brought drawings to determine visibility from the public way. In South Acton the generator will be visible but at some distance from the public way.

In Acton Center the generator will again be visible from the public way but removed from the street. Dean Charter has proposed to install them and have HDC determine whether they are too visible.

The units are so tall because they have a diesel tank to allow operation for up to fifty-six hours. Natural gas has not been deemed appropriate for the most critical public buildings. At 50 kw these generators are more in line with the requirements of these buildings.

DH asked about the location of the South Acton site to which Dean replied the placement tried to respect the residential properties.

KAB suggests that we make a motion to accept pending abutter notifications.

DH and AR expressed concern about a need to provide extra shielding at the South Acton site where the generator will be more visible to pedestrian traffic.

DS moved to accept the applications 1331 and 1332 which was seconded by PL. After further discussion....

KAB suggested that the HDC table the motion and received an extension from Dean Charter from October 4th to October 15th.

8:58 PM Continuation of the Work Flow Discussion

MG reiterated the need to be specific about the concrete steps following an application for a COA.

KAB requested that PL and MG create a document about abutters letter.

KAB explained a Certificate of Hardship as a result of failing to fulfill the time requirements or a failure to have a quorum for a vote.

MG clarified Findings, Conditions and Recommendations
A recommendation is non-binding and a condition is binding.
A finding is a fact.

**9:15 PM Discussion: Public Hearing for Acton Congregational Church,
12 Concord Rd on September 19, 2013**

The public hearing will be in Room 46. The goal is to let abutters know what the proposed changes are and to weigh their reactions and feedback.

KAB reviewed the structure of a public hearing for the newest members.

9:30 PM **Discussion: 541-560 Massachusetts Ave. Design Updates on Lighting for Appl. 0906AA (formerly known as West Acton Village Ecology Project (WAVE))**

AR explained the discussion of lighting so far with applicant.

Will continue to talk about recessed lighting in the center section.

Terra Friedrichs had previously had reservations about the sconces proposed for the sides of the building. KAB asked whether an alternative would be school house lighting. AR indicated that it would be best for the HDC to find substitutes for the fixtures that are in question. The School House, Rejuvenation, and Circa lighting lines might have better alternatives. AR thinks they are leaning toward white fixtures that would be unobtrusive.

There will not be lighting up under the soffit. Existing tree will not be saved.

The smaller opening at the parking garage will have fencing added to help it look more pedestrian. The tongue and groove boards where noted on the elevations will be square-edged. The gutters will be half round in profile.

KAB was concerned about the failure to integrate in the more commercial window treatment than currently appears on the facades, specifically a raised sill height.

DH would favor raising the sills. DS asked for clarification of why he feels it is necessary. KAB feels that following nineteenth century features should be referenced. PL expressed a strong reservation about the failure to raise the sills. KAB focused on the large size of the windows.

AR and DH discussed the sill heights of the store front windows in the middle building and determined hesitation that OMR...

KAB moved to require that OMR must include the raised sills as previously recommended...seconded by Anita....accepted unanimously.

Granite from the brown house will be used for benches.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Lynn
Secretary**