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Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Final Meeting Minutes, November 26, 2013

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Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), Pamela Lynn (PL), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR) and David Shoemaker (DS). Mike Gowing (MG) as BofS rep.

David Honn was not present.

7:03 PM Citizens' questions: None.

7:04 PM Approved Minutes by Consent: November 12, and 20, 2013.

7:10 PM Application 1345: Fence at 61 Windsor Ave.

Ron Regan as a resident of Windsor Ave. chose to recuse himself and left the table.

Peter and Charlotte Ott, the applicants, and neighbors John and Carol Pavan joined the table for discussion. CO explained that there has been conversation with the direct abutters since their last visit.

As a result of the conversation with the Pavans and the Locheries, the applicants have begun to consider an aluminum fence also on the property line between the two parties.

KAB summarized that the applicants are also now considering an electric fence as an alternative. KAB explained that HDC has no purview over electric fences as they are invisible.

The Pavans are comfortable with the aluminum fence option. KAB explained that the chain link fence at the back of the property was approved because it was barely visible.

KAB suggested an amendment for Application 1345 for the fence at Windsor Ave. keeping the pending approval which assumed that the

existing wire fence would be replaced by a chain link fence in the existing location. The wooden fence at the back of the property would remain supplemented by wire at the bottom and the aluminum fence may be selected as an alternative to the chain-link fence.

The homeowner also has the option of installing an electric fence which is invisible which does not require HDC approval because no portion is visible from the public way.

The homeowner also has the option of extending the aluminum fence around the perimeter of the property.

Seconded by AR. Accepted unanimously.

Ron Regan rejoined the table.

7:35 PM **Letter of Support for Town Hall Paint Restoration**

KAB explained the proposal. AR would wish to be completely confident that the proposal was historically accurate.

MG explained that Dean Charter described the painting that has served as the basis of the plan. KAB indicated that she would require a paint analysis in order to be assured of the propriety of the proposal.

DS inquired whether there could be consideration of colors that were in use at the time. KAB suggested that either the original color or the current color would be the only historically appropriate colors to consider, and stressed that the color choice should be made based not on artistic representations but instead on a paint analysis. AR concurred that the goal should be to be objective, not subjective.

MG explained that there is a state match on CPC funds which can qualify as historic preservation. KAB emphasized that it is a preservation principle that it must meet Secretary of Interior requirements. KAB suggested that we might invite DC to answer these questions about a paint analysis. AR asked whether Exchange Hall is its original color and KAB indicated it is currently.

Andy Brockway, the new chair of Acton 2020, joined the discussion. He views there to be two parts of the plan – a roadmap and a long list of objectives and goals which are broad in scope. He thinks it is important to think more broadly than this list.

It is not a physical plan but instead makes the strategic suggestions that the town should look to develop the village centers and protect open space. The roadmap ties into this physical plan. There is an awareness that taxes hit disproportionately on residential properties and seniors may be less likely to stay as a result of the existing housing stock. Maybe a change in housing stock clustered in the centers would encourage more mass transit.

AB thinks it would be wise to focus on infrastructure or look to planning, then to housing and then to stand alone issues such as a North Acton fire station or a senior center.

KAB expressed concerns about viewing the districts and centers as all the same. Each is unique and would need to be dealt with accordingly. She expressed concern that there is little actual room or in-fill in the historic districts. KAB feels that to be true of Acton Center, in particular.

PL focused on the development in West Acton that has not turned out to be commercially viable with the ground floor shops empty.

AR focused on the issues at Kelly's Corner and the recent issues on Windsor Ave.

RR, who lives in West Acton, believes that the businesses that are there are not such that will bring many people there. KAB clarified that smart growth would suggest more housing in the West Acton area.

DS, who lives in Acton Center, suggests that rather than building up, the Fire Station could carry a collection of smaller stores, meeting local resident needs. He has thought about how to create a greater sense of place to which people come. Anything that can be done to control car circulation should be a primary goal.

DS suggested that Kelly's Corner needs a way to sequester cars. It needs to get rid of people using cars.

AB responded by suggesting the potential for creating a street front in Kelly's Corner. Acton differs from Concord and Lexington which have the civic and commercial centers united.

AB suggested the value of studying zoning and HDC regulations to understand the overlap. He believes that Acton 2020 might be able to help HDC with future planning for instance. MG suggests a strategy of identifying buildings in West Acton that do not fit the historical model and encouraging new construction that fits and accomplishes identified goals.

DS asked what type of resources Acton 2020 has available. AB hopes to bring human resources together to create a vision.

KAB described strategies for both South Acton and West Acton in which agreement emerged about the spirit of these two districts. For instance, South Acton might try to create a tie in to its agricultural roots.

PL suggested considering the role of the library as a programmatic focus in Acton Center. KAB returned to a potential focus on recreation in South Acton especially as the rail trail comes in.

DS restated that development is antithetical to the nature of the historical centers.

PL expressed concern about density such as the new construction in Kelly's Corner including the Orange Leaf and expanded Sorrento's.

MG described functional planners versus artistic planners from his overview of the region. MG views that the first emphasis on Kelly's Corner is wise. Good to start there first. Without functional planning, what goes up goes up without an overall vision or plan. In order to make progress a vision of what is possible is needed.

KAB suggested that Acton 2020 should focus on obtaining the services

of a good landscape architect as a part of the strategy for improvement.

AB asked what are the HDC's major issues? KAB returned to the issue that much of the work is reactive as there is not the ability currently to focus on a minimal maintenance bylaw. Often homeowners do not have the resources to put in the betterments that would enhance their properties and the districts.

MG suggested attempting to have a conversation with property owners to mutual benefit to enhance the area in West Acton. Not everything in West Acton is historic or an asset. For instance, would it make sense to convert the West Acton Fire Station into housing.

KAB thanked AB and invited him to keep in contact. MG suggested a large meeting of the DRB, HDC, and Acton 2020.

9:00 PM Letter of Support for Town Hall Paint Restoration

Returning to the conversation DS asked about CPC funds.

AR recused herself as KAB described how the Acton Women's Club is an example of CPC funding. AR returned to the table.

KAB will invite Dean Charter to a future meeting.

9:25 PM Discussion of Public Hearings

KAB and PL reviewed the three major steps of arranging a public hearing.

KAB reiterated that there will be two public hearings on Jan. 14th.

Adjourned at 9:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn