

**Historic District Commission  
Town Hall, Room 121  
Final Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2014**

**MAY 21 2014**

**TOWN CLERK  
ACTON**

**Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), David Shoemaker (DS), and Mike Gowing (MG) as B of S rep.**

**7:30 PM Citizens' Questions:**

**7:31 PM Unanimous Consent to accept February 25, 2014 Minutes.**

**7:32 PM Question Concerning Violations at 102 Main St.**

**AR brought a question from the Building Department on the timing to address existing violations at 102 Main Street. The HDC determined that a discussion of the issue will be held at the March 25 HDC meeting, with the owner's participation welcome; a vote will be taken and if indicated the violation must be addressed within 30 days of the March 25th meeting.**

**7:38 PM Historic Sign Maker: 186 School St.**

**HDC recognized that the structure is outside the district and the application will be returned to the Historic Commission.**

**7:40 PM House Keeping Issues**

**DS offered to take on all abutters notifications going forward.**

**DH shared a conference on March 29 given by Historic New England. The HDC voted unanimously to reimburse DH's attendance at the conference.**

**PL brought up the recent issue that documents are currently unable to be submitted to Docushare. MG suspects it is a result of an introduction of a new software program which should streamline the permitting process.**

**8:00 PM Amended Application 1405: Review of Proposed New Window, 603 Massachusetts Ave.**

**DH reminded the Commission of the specifics of both the original application and the amended application to remove and replace chimneys and change and relocate windows. With drawings, the owners explained how the installation of a stove is driving the window issue. An existing window on the second floor is a problem and they would like to remove it. AR suggested they consider how the stove will be vented. They had already thought of a remedy for this issue.**

**DS asked about the need for venting. AR explained how such vents are placed. As this is a cathedral ceiling the remedies are limited.**

**AR doesn't mind losing the window. She wondered whether the window could be reduced in size to avoid losing it entirely. AR also commented on the appearance that the single window is not the same width as the two related first story windows.**

**KAB agreed with AR that the three remaining windows should be the same width. She could accept the loss of the second story window but would suggest considering a way to keep a smaller version. AR suggested in response a four lite barn-like sash. DH explained how such a solution might work.**

**PL and RR could accept letting the second story window go. The applicants indicated that sky lights are planned to deal with the need for light. DH thought that the retention of the second story window would be desirable. He explained how ductwork could be placed to save the window.**

**The applicants have chosen Brasco windows.  
AR indicated that the relevant models would require storms.**

**Shifting to the chimney issues. The applicant provided samples of the quarter inch brick veneer material to replace the chimney on the main house. DH asked whether HDC has ever accepted such a solution. DS and KAB are concerned about the treatment of the corners. How**

would it look as a three-dimensional object. AR knows an address in Concord that might serve as a visual model and will try to provide photos.

DS and AR can accept the solution in principle. The details do truly matter. KAB is open in principle, too, but needs to see a three-dimensional example to insure the sense of authenticity.

RR asked about whether there is any detail that should be a concern. As there is not, he would consider the veneer solution.

DH stated he is a purist and so would wish to consider an authentic way to save the chimney before accepting this solution. He suggested talking to Aaron Goff at 492 Main St. to see a similar authentic solution.

The applicants will return for the next meeting to discuss the chimney solution with photos or examples. AR indicated they will need to measure the existing windows to insure matching the casing and sills.

**8:30 PM      Citizen's Question (Devon Voake) on HDC Process and Guidelines**

Devon explained their thoughts on how to expand 542 Mass. Ave. if they were to purchase it.

KAB explained that the comments would be non-binding as she is not the current owner.

DV shared photos and her conception of the addition they might propose.

DH asked whether she had gone to the Zoning Dept. to check the set backs.

RR suggested that the addition should be smaller than the original house. PL appreciated her attention to the comments made during their conversation.

KAB commended her for considering the charm of these homes and supports RR's suggestion. She emphasized the value of keeping the original house as the clearly main structure – the New England vernacular with details being more elaborate on the front house. DH suggested that different materials might be wise to keep the sense of a "main box." He might avoid making the addition into another red box.

9:00 PM Discussion: Receipt of Application 1406 to Demolish 17 Woodbury Lane

KAB cautioned MG that he would need to be silent during the discussion but he left the room as the conversation began.

KAB explained that there are two pathways to consider. The first would be to automatically send a letter of denial because there is not sufficient information. Then Dean Charter would need to reapply.

KAB suggested that a better strategy would be to schedule a public hearing allowing interested individuals to ask questions. Counsel has suggested that the BofS voting the property as excess does not convey a right to the BofS to carry out a demolition. What is within the Commission's purview is to preserve the building. Structurally the building is stable and will be for some time.

KAB suggests the Commission think about whether it could be demolished without knowing what would come next and in an important location without concern for screening.

DS asks whether we should be "blind" to what will be put in its place. If DC were to propose an alternate plan for the location, he would need to submit a proposal as an amendment.

AR reminded the group of how little area has been maintained around the building plus the issue of creating a septic system. KAB responded that the vote could be that the house could not be demolished but could be given away and moved.

PL expressed concern of the abutters at previous public meetings.

RR, having read the report, suggested that the solution proposed remains the logical one: Tear down the newer elements and keep the original portion which could be maintained as a non-functional 'shell'. He has a strong feeling that the core building needs to remain due to the impact on the entire "campus" area.

DH feels to demolish would likely lead to more parking spaces. It is apparent that the town bought the property with no master plan for the building itself and no will to maintain it. DH expressed the sentiment that demolition by neglect must be avoided for all historic structures in the town.

KAB emphasized that the key criteria is to consider whether the building is contributing to the district.

Adjourned at 9:24.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Lynn, Secretary