

**Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 121
Final Meeting Minutes, May 29, 2014 Draft**

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), and Ron Regan (RR). Mike Gowing as BofS rep.

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS) and Anita Rogers (AR).

7:30 PM Citizens' Questions and Questions

David Foley of 643 Pheasant Hill attended out of interest in joining the HDC.

7:31 PM Approved Minutes of 5/5/14 and 5/13/14 by unanimous consent.

7:32 PM Application 1411: Revolution Community Yoga sign

KAB asked the applicant, Kyra Manno, to review the proposed color and reinforced her view that the darker would be better for readability from the road.

With regard to the lettering the applicant described the sample that had been given to Anita Rogers, the liaison.

RR commented that, although the applicant had not brought a copy of the new design to the meeting, he had reviewed the digital copy sent out by AR. He thought the changes in spacing and the text in the arrow looked good.

KAB moved to approve Appl. 1411. Seconded by DH and approved unanimously.

7:37 PM Application 1417: LaBelle Roofing – Request for a Second Sign/Awning

Diane Metzger and Rob LaBelle attended.

KAB explained that the request to put "Velux" on the awning is not the usual purpose of a sign which is to note the business itself, not one of its products. KAB asked what would be the name of the second business.

Diane Metzger explained the relationship of the Acton office to the original shop in Wayland. The major purpose of the Acton office was to showcase skylights and that is why they wished to put "Velux" on the awning.

KAB felt that a case could be made for the text "Wayland Skylights" versus kristinmharrison@hotmail.com, wmathison@msafdie.com, dorens@msafdie.com

DH agreed with KAB about the advertising point just made. He asked whether the

awning was already purchased. DH and AR when walking by wondered whether the applicants had thought about extending the proposed awning over the door, as well as, the window. DH suggested putting the text "Wayland Skylights" on the centerline of the flap of the awning in order to give the text maximum visibility.

DH suggested a sandwich sign out in front of the store with the "Velux" text. MG noted that there is a maximum of 30 days to display sandwich signs within an entire calendar year.

KAB agreed with DH and AR to have a longer awning.

RR agreed with having the "Wayland Skylights" text on the awning flap in the suggested location.

PL concurred with the previous comments.

KAB moved to accept Application 1417 for a fabric awning extending over the door as well as the window with its centerline aligning with the gable centerline. The ends of the awning should be centered at the midpoint between the corner boards and the window trim. The text should be "Wayland Skylights" located on the front awning flap. The font type, size, and spacing to be determined by liaison Anita Rogers pending abutter notification. The applicant will verify the required height above the sidewalk with the Planning Department.

Seconded by RR.

KAB reminded that the HDC that color is out of its purview. It was recommended that the awning fabric color be black.

The motion was accepted unanimously.

8:00 PM

Application 1406: Continuation of Public Hearing, 17 Woodbury Lane (Asa Parlin House).

KAB resumed the public hearing on application 1406 – demolition of 17 Woodbury Lane (Asa Parlin House).

KAB reviewed the events of the previous public hearing session. This evening the continuation is being attended by three members of the public.

KAB reiterated and clarified the authority of the parties involved:

The BoS was within its power to vote the building surplus town property. Dean Charter, within his role as the Director of Municipal Properties, has the authority to file an application with the HDC requesting demolition of the building. Under its statutory authority, the HDC can vote to reject the request for demolition of the building but it cannot compel the town to repair or restore the structure. It was noted

that Acton currently has no “minimum maintenance” or “demolition -by-neglect” by-laws.

KAB requested that HDC members express their opinions concerning this application:

DH noted that, regrettably, in regard to a viable private use, the town has backed itself into a corner regarding this property. The property is located with an R-2 (residential) zone so the structure cannot accommodate a private business use. It also cannot be resold as a private residence because the lot is non-conforming and the property lacks a septic system that could be separate from the public town hall/library system. There does not appear to be a logical reason why the ZBA would grant any zoning relief given that the town created its own hardship (in 1996).

DH noted that even if the property was transferred to a private entity such as a non-profit by means of a gift or token sum paid to the town, without the addition of restroom facilities and/or a kitchenette, the property has limited use possibilities. All of the above circumstances have led him to conclude that the structure should be treated as an historical artifact similar to several of the houses at the Minuteman National Park. He went on to note that the incremental cost of making the building into an artifact is reasonable given that in the demolition scenario requested by the town’s application, the costs of hazardous waste abatement, demolition and landscaping are fixed, unavoidable costs. If an agreement was reached within the commission that the 1960s and 1970s additions (approximately 2/3s of the existing building) should be demolished that would result in a building about the size of a large two car garage or carriage house. If a non-profit entity owned the property they could apply for additional CPC funds. A private entity would be able to leverage the funding to a greater extent since they would be exempt from public bidding and prevailing wage laws. DH referenced Barretts Farm in Concord. It was recently preserved as an artifact building which is open several times a year.

DH emphasized that it is essential to have the mass of a building occupy the site; a mass and presence that cannot be replicated with landscaping alone.

KAB asked for clarification whether DH was suggesting demolishing the 2/3 and saving the “core” and partnering with a non-profit to preserve the shell and agreeing the inside would not be done. Perhaps in ten to twenty years there might be a solution for the septic system. DH concurred.

DH expressed frustration that the town apparently purchased the building in 1996 without a clear idea for its reuse and then allowed it to deteriorate.

KAB took a long view concerning the building. It is difficult now with the septic issue. She agreed with DH about having a structure to maintain the streetscape. Demolition by neglect; there hasn’t been any attempt to maintain the building. It could have been painted or the shutters repaired. HDC would be in a tenuous position to allow a demolition by neglect to happen because the owner can’t come up with a

use. Then any home owner could come back with this precedent leading to potential problems in the future.

KAB was leaning toward demolition but recommend that the structure be preserved, if not mothballed, and that at a future point have a non-profit partner to find another purpose.

PL reiterated concern for the streetscape.

RR agreed and would be willing to accept the architects' plans or to leave what is there. The house does have interesting angles that would not be done now. He would recommend to do whatever can be done minimally now to stop deterioration. He definitely agreed something needs to be there. To take it away would fundamentally change the Woodbury Lane area.

DH indicated if one portion of the structure is saved, it becomes critical to design and implement a high quality, useful landscape scheme. The landscaping should be more than just screening for the parking lot. There are good programmatic opportunities for site use as the property is bounded by three well used facilities-town hall, the library and the playground.

KAB stated the town did purchase it twenty years ago knowing it was a historical building. It has neglected to be a good neighbor with regard to this building. There should have been minimal maintenance. Minimally there should be painting and roof repair. If kept in toto to demonstrate vernacular architecture or taken down to the core, nonetheless it should be maintained.

DH does not want to let the previous HDC and HC off the hook. Their job was preservation of the district and apparently this responsibility was neglected in this instance.

KAB reminded the members that HDC has limited power. Use is not within its purview and it cannot compel maintenance.

KAB clarified that the application was for removal either by demolition or removal.

DH moved to deny removal of the building. Seconded by RR.

DH recommended that the application be resubmitted with removal of the 1960s and 1970s section and retention of the core part of the building as described in the architects' report. Removal automatically compels hazardous waste abatement.

DH made a recommendation that the town proceed with minimal maintenance to stabilize the exterior of the building or the town sells or gifts the building to a non-profit which will then apply for CPA funds to take care of stabilization, renovation and maintenance of the original portion.

DH added a finding that the building is zoned R-2.

Findings:

The building has no septic system.

Due to the lack of a dedicated septic system, the property cannot be sold and occupied as a residence.

If sold to a private entity, the property cannot tap into the septic system of town hall or the library.

The most logical conclusion of the above findings is that the building would be best preserved as an artifact as there is not apparent use for it.

Landscaping alone would be insufficient to preserve the integrity of the streetscape; at least a small anchor building is required.

That the building, although not an embodiment of Acton history, is an example of the vernacular domestic traditions in Acton.

The Asa Parlin House is a humble vernacular building but it is important. It is emblematic of additive, domestic, do-it-yourself 19th century house construction in Acton.

Acton 2020 has placed a high priority on historic preservation.

The district as a whole is on the National Register.

HDC does not have the power to enforce a remedy of demolition by neglect.

The building has been awarded \$100k from CPA funds, of which 20k has been expended on the architect's study, leaving the remainder of the funds for abatement and demolition of the more recent additions.

KAB reminded the group that decisions should not be hasty or whimsical. The HDC's findings and minutes always have the potential to be the basis of a challenge.

Additional Findings:

Historically there has been no push by the BoS for additional parking as indicated previously by Dean Charter.

There was a request for a removal of the building but there was no plan for what would replace it. Accepting this process would be a precedent for the HDC.

Total removal would cause an adverse effect to the district because the streetscape would be adversely altered without the building.

The buildings must be abated for either total or partial demolition.

KAB clarified that the vote is to deny the removal of the building at 17 Woodbury Lane with an extensive list of findings and recommendations.

MG mentioned that the cost of maintenance of the building would be expensive. Could the monies voted by the CPC be used for maintenance going forward? Could these CPC funds voted for demolition be viewed as being used for restoration?

Finding: There might be two possible paths – Follow the recommendation of the report and apply the CPC funds as they were awarded (abatement and demolition of newer section) OR divert the CPC funds to exterior restoration of the entire existing structure.

CPC funds for demolition and abatement could be used to stabilize the existing building. An application for additional CPC funds could be submitted.

MG clarified that the CPC money is secure and since the CPC funds have been partially expended (for the architect's study) then the funds cannot be rescinded.

Unanimous vote to deny the application to demolish the building.

KAB asked DH to write the denial as David Shoemaker is away.

9:00 PM

Application 1419: 71 School St. Roof Replacement

KAB explained the difference between a CNA and a COA to the applicant Irene Elsinovsky, her neighbor at 69 School Street Alissa Bozian and their roofer John Normandie.

KAB explained the value of a roof that does not call attention to the roof versus the house.

The roofer explained why he prefers the architectural shingles instead of three tab shingles: There are fewer potential wind lift lines on architectural shingles.

The applicant and her neighbor have had issues with squirrels and propose cellular crown molding made of PVC.

DH asked about how the molding is attached. Drip edge will cover the rake board.

AB asked about the possibility to do the same to her side. KAB suggested amending the original application to save time.

IE asked about gutters and KAB explained the amendment process again.

KAB mentioned the existing violation that PL had observed when visiting the location. Muntin bars are missing from the windows on the eastern façade. The windows with muntin bars were part of a previous HDC COA. The violation will need to be corrected before the roofing work can commence.

DH moved Application 1419 for reroofing 71/69 School Street with IKO architectural dual Black Cambridge model asphalt shingles with a PVC crown molding.

Conditons:

Drip edge to match trim color.

Any ridge vent to be of low profile carried to the gable ends.

Crown modeling to be cellular PVC painted to match trim.

Chimney flashing is to be lead. Aluminum flashing is prohibited.

Two windows in the eastern gable to have wood exterior muntin bars installed according to the previous application.

Seconded by RR

Unanimously accepted pending abutter notification.

Adjourned at 9:56 PM

Respectfully submitted by

**Pamela Lynn
Secretary**