

The Meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB). TOWN CLERK, ACTON Also present were members Pam Lynn (PL), Michaela Moran (MM), Anita Rogers (AR) and David Honn (DH). Ronald Rose (RR) arrived later, as did Board of Selectmen Liaison Mike Gowing (MG).

7:30PM Citizens' Concerns:

DH shared a copy of a Mobile Alabama newspaper regarding the use of Federal Block Grants in regard to the HDC application to the CPC for a program for a loan program for building maintenance and improvement of registered historic structures in Acton. KAB added that Arlington utilizes this method. AR stated that Roland Bartl told her that this would be too complicated for Acton.

MM provided update on the Asa Parlin project: selection of an architect is progressing, firms include Karle Packard of Red Hawk Studio.

7:35PM: The minutes for the January 24th meeting were approved unanimously.

7:40PM: South Acton Congregational Church sign & lighting

HDC Liaison to the Church AR said that after a period of "hurry up" the matter has been "slowed down". She noted that the sign has been installed and that it has been pushed back from where it had been approved by the HDC. At 72" in height, the Zoning Officer would not allow the 60" approved setback for placement. AR asked if a floodlight approximately 3"x8" is OK.

The 9:00PM CPC Updates were taken out of order at 7:45.

Loan Program

KAB reviewed the situation regarding the CPC and the proposed loan program. It will not be taken up by the CPC this year because of the question of whether a municipality can have a loan program. Acton would be the first town in Massachusetts to have such a program. The question must be reviewed by the State Department of Revenue (DOR), and it will take 5 months for them to complete a review and produce the necessary letter. If the DOR concludes that a loan program would not be allowed under state law, the Acton would need to create a program along the lines of the one in Arlington. (add to CPC-Loan Program)

KAB noted that there is a plan to form a working committee including: S. Ledoux, the Town Counsel, S. Anderson, J. Murray, and J. Adachi. Other possible members include: (there are two names written that I cannot decipher). Other legal considerations include the fact that the HDC cannot solely oversee the program. Provisions must be made for some combination of the HDC, HC, and the CPC for the review and approval of applications for loans. Further development should be known this summer.

CPC South Acton Train Station Landscape

KAB stated that the CPC will not be including the proposal to fund additional landscaping at the South Acton Train Station in the package put up for a vote at the upcoming Town Meeting. The CPC is not certain if the project is legal. KAB questioned the Town Counsel on the matter and... yes, the question must be forwarded for an opinion from the State Department of Revenue (DOR). This will also consume approximately 5 months, at which point their opinion will be given in a letter. The matter is complicated by the fact that the station is not yet constructed. It has been described as a modest structure, and the CPC questioned why more extensive landscaping is required to "mitigate its negative impact on the surrounding areas. DH mentioned that 800 or so feet of double platforms 4' above the ground are not modest. KAB noted that in regard to the State's view of the station's negative

impact on the South Acton Historic District, of approximately 8000 applications for consideration, this was 1 of 12 that were judged to having merit.

MM proclaimed “kudos” for Ms. KAB for her intrepid effort.

Peter Ashton has raised the matter in regard to securing other avenues of funding. DH noted that for a project of this not a large amount of money. It is (a significant amount), and it isn't (in comparison with similar projects). MG stated that in reviewing projects for consideration of inclusion in the Public Meeting Warrant, the CPC looks at any amount of private funding or contribution to a project as a positive factor. MM said that while the Station is not a Town project per se, it is a public project of significance in Acton. She noted that the MBTA is already doing \$60k of landscaping as a part of the project. KAB or MM will approach Peter Ashton regarding the matter.

DH noted that the good news is that the schedule allows couple of years to figure things out. When the site is prepared and the building is under construction, people will begin to understand the size of the project. The platforms will be installed first, and their size will shock the neighbors. The Town Tree Warden, Dean Charter will be involved. While not in the district, the station still has negative aspects that require mitigation in regard to the buildings and townscape of the South Acton Historic District. Of the current members of the CPC, none appear to take any interest in this application.

8:00PM: Continuation of Public Hearing - Changes to Signage Laws

KAB reopened, and then moved to close the Public Hearing at 8:02pm, because changes will be part of the subsequent HDC Bylaw changes. MM seconded the motion, vote was unanimous in favor.

8:05PM: Discussion of Signage Changes/Bylaw for Town Meeting

KAB reviewed the 23 February 2012 memo from Nina Pickering Cook of the Town's Counsel, Anderson Krieger. The memo recommended a two-part process to move the HDC's signage laws from the HDC's Rules & Regs to the HDC Bylaw. A general discussion with input from all HDC members followed. Concluding that the necessary schedule to complete the work necessary to include the Bylaw changes on the Warrant for the upcoming Town Meeting would require the completion of the HDC's proposed changes by the end of the week. This is not possible. Special Town Meetings occur at various times during the year as matters requiring action by the Citizens arise. The HDC's Bylaw changes for signage could “piggy-back” on a future Special Town Meeting arranged for another matter. MM will begin “fleshing out” a draft to be reviewed by the entire HDC and then reviewed by the Town Council for generation of the final version to be voted on by the Town. This will not be on a “consent agenda” and likely be presented to the Town Meeting by the Town's Planner, Roland Bartl.

8:30PM Application 1202: Twin Seafood Sign

Liaison AR presented images of the preliminary proposal for the Twin Seafood sign.

The sign will be wall-mounted, 2' high by approximately 8' long, and utilize existing building-mounted lighting. A general discussion ensued regarding sign size, fonts, lighting, wall-mounted vs, projecting signage and the logo on the sign. It was felt by a number of HDC members that the logo needed work, including comments that from a distance it resembled a pair of human lips (Man Ray!) rather than the intended twin fish. AR will convey the HDC's informal review and opinions to the applicant so that they may create iterations of the sign design for their appearance at the next meeting.

8:50PM Application 163: 510 Main Street Sign (Meeting House Hill)

Liaison PL reviewed the design and HDC input regarding previous images for a sign design to identify Meeting House Hill. Members of the Acton Garden Club were not present. Their latest design was presented. It reflected much of the previous input of HDC members.

DH said that the typeface for the date needs to be confirmed. He will provide the name of the appropriate font. He noted that the portion given to the text regarding maintenance and the Club still seemed to large and dense and should be reduced. RR suggested leaving the line Acton Garden Club as is, but reducing the size of the font in "Garden maintained by" line in order to reduce its density and give Acton Garden Club relative importance. Many noted that the Town "meatball" and the line "Public Welcome" needed to be raised.

A motion to approve a Cof A for the sign was made by MM and seconded by RR. It was approved unanimously as a painted sign, black lettering on white wooden panel per submitted plan with modifications to reduce size of "maintained by" raise Town seal and "visitors welcome. Font for date to be Caslon Old Face Italic. Supported on wood post with iron bracket in location to be approved by Municipal Properties. Modifications to be review by the Liaison prior to fabrication.

9:00PM: WAVE

Discussion of an upcoming application for the second phase of the West Acton WAVE project was moved forward as the applicants were not intending to attend.

KAB reviewed the status of the WAVE project and current application. The initial approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for WAVE was intended to be "in concept". It was an approval with limited conditions. The project has been divided into two phases, the first of which received a COA and is now built. The upcoming application is for a second phase that will complete the entire project. Apparently, the applicant was initially advised to obtain a Site Plan Special Permit from the Board of Selectmen by Town Staff in order to beat a deadline to avoid changes in (or required by) State Wetland laws.

Liaison for the application AR reviewed the planning strategy for Phase Two, which involve the relocation of all the remaining structures on site in order to provide space for parking access at the east end of the development. She also reviewed the condition of the various existing structures to be part of the phase: irregular and insubstantial framing in the "Brown House", the severely deteriorated condition of the "White Barn" and the relatively good condition of the "Mansard House". HDC member RR, MM and AR reviewed these conditions on a walk-through of the buildings with consulting structural engineer Jon Buhl, applicant Mathias Rosenfeld and OMR staff. AR reviewed the current OMR position desiring to demolish existing buildings and "recreate" new versions of them in contrast to their original proposal to relocate and restore the existing buildings.

Comments by HDC members:

AR The applicants strategy in planning and design appears to have involved meeting a schedule for approvals (save structures) vs. loss over time (cost of restoration or "renegotiating" with HDC).

KAB The current application appears as if one is starting over due to (recently discovered) circumstances.

MM It is apparent that the applicant is now trying to force demolition of building that they initially proposed to move and restore. The discussion at the walkthrough of the replacement of both buildings and a large number of building elements provokes dismay.

KAB The original arrangement was to establish a footprint for development and reuse of existing buildings, not to allow for a "wholesale" replacement of building and materials. The current application is an opportunity to rethink the design.

DH It would be better to withdraw the current design and start over. The initial design volume and form was generated to house a theater. Since this has changed, an opportunity is available to propose new buildings that have a sense of traditional forms appropriate to the context, such as mill building forms.

9:15PM: 497 Main Street: Questions regarding proposed changes from a potential buyer

Mr. Adam Smith, a potential buyer for the Acton Center property at 497 Main Street appeared to inquire about the Commission's reaction to possible changes to the house and outbuildings.

Mr. Smith reviewed the background of the potential applicant as having experience and skill in projects similar in character and scope to one involving changes to the house at 497 Main Street. He noted that the existing house's interior headroom is very restricted. Less than 7' on the ground floor and something like 6'-1" upstairs. The upper floor bedrooms could be opened to the attic to create more headroom. He noted the deteriorated condition of the foundation and discussed increasing headroom at the ground level raising the framing above the floor and a new foundation, increasing the structures height. He stated that this appears to have occurred at nearby houses in the district. He also reviewed possible demolitions and additions.

After the potential applicants presentation, KAB explained the HDC's jurisdiction relative to visibility from the public way. AR and DH discussed the possible 'raising of the house over the foundation and it's impact on the appearance of the house. RR noted that any raising should be 'nominal', and in the existing house, an interior ceiling height of 7'-6" would be more attractive than one off 8'-0". AR and other members discussed strategies for additions to the house considered by previous potential applicants, and that these are on file.

Mr. Smith also discussed the condition of the existing barn, and asked about the HDC's reaction to an application for either it's demolition or relocation closer to the house.

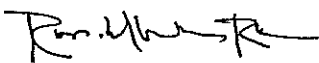
DH noted that it was historically commonplace to relocate existing structures, barns and houses, to new locations. DH and other members mention that the loss of historic barns has diminished the character of the town, and that the Commission would reject an application to demolish this barn, which is in relatively good condition.

MM mentioned various advantageous financing programs for improvements to historic houses, including FHA 203k.

KAB noted to Mr. Smith that AR will be the HDC liaison for any Application concerning the property, and that as she is an architect with significant experience in this type of project it would be wise to consult her in regard to potential changes.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Ronald Rose