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Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes April 13, 2010 - Draft

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting called to order at 7:32 p.m. Scott Kutil (SK), Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), Michaela Moran (MM), Maya Minkin (MAYA), Terra Friedrichs (TF), David Honn (DH), and David Barrat (DB) were present. Nina Pickering-Cook was present representing Town Counsel. Ron Rose was present as a prospective HDC member and Selectman Mike Gowing was present as a member of the public. The meeting was held in Room 126 in Town Hall.

John Muyskens was in attendance and spoke during Citizen's Concerns. John discussed several projects that he was planning at his home at 461 Main St. in the Acton Center District. He is planning a small stone wall, a modification to the front door, and the first project he plans to do is to remove the siding from the house on the side facing Route 27, insulate, and put new siding back on the house. John said that another reason to remove the siding, besides insulation, is lead paint. MM said that sometimes you cannot get the same look with new siding and that siding can be an important part of the exterior appearance of historic homes. John said that he understood what MM was referring to and that the siding he wants to remove is not the old style. TF volunteered to visit John's property to inspect the appearance of the clapboards. John said that he plans to remove the pilasters, the 1950's era iron railings, and the storm door and plans to replace the storm door with a wood storm door. MM said that storm doors are out of our jurisdiction but the other projects need approval by the HDC.

MM said that WAVE project has an appointment tonight and will bring an application for 537 Massachusetts Avenue. She emphasized that the consensus of the Commission is that we would like to evaluate the entire project as a whole and with regard only to conditions remaining to be approved that were part of the two COA's that were granted in 2009.

At 8:10 p.m. the WAVE project appointment began. Michael and Matthias Rosenfeld were present to give the presentation along with Richard Utt, a staff architect with the Office of Michael Rosenfeld. Michael began by saying that he would like to bring the project at 537 Massachusetts Ave. as the first application. He said that the main house at 537 Mass. Ave. has not been changed since the spring 2009 application but they have added sign placeholders (for business signs) on the front of the house. The link between the moved wing and the main house has been changed to look like a small porch and the handicapped railings are wood. Lighting and signs are in the newest plan because WAVE would like to get approval for those items and in the moved wing they have added a bay window, which is a new feature since the 2009 application.

TF and KAB said that the handicapped railing looks too modern and asked if the WAVE team could soften the look. Michael replied that they already have softened the look by using the wood railing and added that he thinks it will blend in. KAB pointed out the drawings specifies a Hardee Board panel as part of the new porch style link and she would prefer wood. Michael replied that he would like to introduce contemporary materials to the project. MM said that the Commission would prefer to see the entire project, not just the changes at 537 Mass. Ave., so that the Commission members can evaluate the project in terms of the existing COA's. Michael said that this would be more costly and pose many difficulties for the WAVE team. Nina

suggested that the WAVE team apply for an amendment to the existing COA to do the work at 537 Mass. Ave. Several Commission members then made the case for seeing a comprehensive WAVE design. Michael asked the Commission members to consider that things can change in the future and it depends, to an extent, on the tenants and what they need; he added that the project might not be viable for several years and that will depend on the tenants and the success of the 537 Mass. Ave. building. MM said that the Commission would like to see an overall project view and then after that we can entertain an amendment to the existing COA to fill in the details for 537 Mass. Ave. MM scheduled an appointment for the WAVE team at 9 p.m. on April 27th. She asked for a review of the presentation that was given in the spring of 2009 and a discussion of the amendment to the existing COA. Michael Rosenfeld said that he wants to proceed quickly and DH said they should submit the amendment.

At 9:15 p.m. there was an appointment for the 62 River St. application #1012, for reconfiguration of the stairway. DH and KAB were recused because they are abutters to this property and left the meeting room. SK is the liaison for this application. The owner of the property, Mr. Hamilton, was present to discuss the application. Mr. Hamilton said that the deck happens to be higher than the first floor and so water collects there and causes damage to the siding. He wants to lower the deck in front of the door as a possible solution. SK motioned to approve the application as submitted and DB seconded. MM added the findings to the motion that the deck is minimally visible from our jurisdiction, that this modification will protect the house, and that the level of the railing will stay the same. The motion passed unanimously. Since the abutter notices need to go out and SK will be on vacation during the 10 day period, MAYA was assigned to be the liaison.

At 9:45 p.m. we discussed application #1011 for chimney removal at 498 Main St. Attorney Steven Murra was present representing Mr. Aaron Goff. MM said that this chimney is visible from the public way and is in our jurisdiction. DB said that he did not understand what can be seen from our jurisdiction. MM noted that the application is lacking some necessary information and that the Commission needs to look at the inventory form. MM asked the Commission members what additional information they require. DB said we need a photo of the chimney from our jurisdiction. KAB suggested a site visit and MM said that everyone should stop and look at the chimney from Main St. KAB said that the application mentions a complete renovation of the rear addition and MM said that Mr. Goff needs to inform the HDC about any exterior changes to the addition. MM rescheduled this application for another appointment on April 27th at 9:30 p.m.

MM said that we will notify the Town Selectmen about our recent elections, ask them to appoint DB to be a full member, and tell them that we want Ron Rose to be appointed as a full member as soon as possible.

KAB has rewritten the letter to the residents and she asked the members to review the latest letter.

The March 9, 2010 Minutes were approved as corrected.

KAB reminded everyone of the lecture on the 20th at 7:30 p.m. and she noted that the walking tour of South Acton is filled and that Anne Forbes has agreed to do another walking tour.

DH said that he has not yet met with Steve Su about the window violations.

DH called the engineer working on the dam repair at the Ericson Mill and explained that the engineering firm might propose something other than the stone rubble solution as an alternative for the repair.

Although we had an appointment on tonight's agenda for application #1005 at 82 River St. the applicant, Mr. Souza, failed to attend. This is an application to put a new pre-built shed on the property. DH and KAB were recused from a discussion of this application and they left the meeting room. MM said that she has contacted Mr. Souza regarding this application by email, phone, and letter but has not heard from him other than to receive a picture of the proposed shed. MM said that we must take some action on this application and she made a motion to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness with the findings that the applicant did not appear, did not answer the letter of March 22nd, and did not send a filing fee along with the application. MAYA seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MM said that because of the new policy on sign enforcement, Frank Ramsbottom is our sign enforcement officer.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.