



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

10/27/2020

7:00 PM

Online, Town Hall, 472 Main St, Acton, MA 01720

Present: David Honn (DH), Anita Rogers (AR), Ron Regan (RR), Fran Arsenault (FA), Art Leavens (AL).

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS), Dean Charter (DC) BOS liaison.

1. Opening

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:02 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

2. Regular Business Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – none.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – AL makes a motion to approve the minutes from September 22. AR seconds, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, FA – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 5-0.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – up to date, 18 Wright Terr submitted application for a generator, most likely will be a CNA.
- D. Upcoming meetings – Next meeting is November 10th, we will not have a meeting on the 24th as that week is Thanksgiving.
- E. Violations – 26 School St.- the tarp has been removed between the fence posts. Terra sent a letter about the fence at 612 Mass Ave., FA emailed a photo to the commission members.

3. New/Special Business [or other applicable agenda items]

- A. 2 School St. Exchange Hall – Pre-application Meeting – Condo Conversion by Glenn Berger, present

Glenn gave an overview – commercial property to be converted to 6 residential units plus one commercial in the basement. The property was renovated in 2010 (with CPC funds from 2008?) which may impact any potential changes. The windows need to be delead and restored, add storm windows. There are 53 windows. To use some of the ballroom/attic space for two-level duplexes want to add sky lights, 2 on the east side and 3 on the west, Velux 21”x45” to fit between the rafters. There will need to be venting for various systems that may need to go through the roof. When possible, venting will go to the north gable end. Considering adding shutters to all the windows, but not sure as cost may be prohibitive. There may need to be some changes on the west side regarding the stairs from the first floor to the ground. The run/rise doesn’t meet code now. If they need to be rebuilt he may need to convert the double doors to a single door to increase the run



of the stairs. The total rise now is 12 feet, so it may be possible to maintain a single run. Some of the doors will also need to be restored and repaired.

Three adjacent properties may be combined with Exchange hall as part of the condo complex.

As part of the CPC funds from 2008 the town was promised some space in the northwest basement, which hasn't been used yet.

DH – we don't have jurisdiction on how you use the property, residential vs. commercial, and on what you do on the inside. The 2008 CPC funds came with preservation restrictions, so you need to know what those restrictions are. For example, you may not be able to add skylights to the roof because some of the money was used on roof repairs. Not sure of the cost of building out the attic space to having a bedroom and bathroom. ~~and~~ It may not work without having the skylights.

There was discussion on what will be the governing way, either Main St. or School St. DH was initially leaning toward Main St. Michaela Moran commented that when she was on the HDC for the 2010 renovations, and School St was used as the governing way. Because this is a new application it was believed that we could use a different governing way, AL will check the bylaw and regulations. DH is thinking maybe School St. would be better so the north side would be out. Glenn commented that there is handicap access on the north side now.

DH did some pre-meeting research on skylights in historic buildings and found that Thomas Jefferson was the first to use them in the Americas at Monticello in 1796. If skylights can be added to the roof, something with a curb and copper flashing versus a low profile Velux would be appropriate. Michaela Moran commented that when she was on the HDC they denied skylights frequently.

Next step is for Glenn to find out about any CPC preservation restrictions, then work on design of first two floors to see if the project is cost effective.

No motion was made.

B. Changes to Rules and Regulations for Solar Panels

AL went over the changes to the Rules and Regulations involving adding a new section 3.2.14 regarding solar panels and renumbering the existing 3.2.14 to 3.2.15. This is in conjunction with the new guidelines concerning solar panels. DH asks for comments, RR, FA, and AR thinks the addition is good. FA makes a motion to approve the changes, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y.

The motion passes 5-0 and the changes to the Rules and Regulations are adopted. AL will investigate getting the online version updated with the changes.

C. Discussion: Preservation Funding Sources

FA shared a copy of a plan that Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann was working on to get low interest loans for owners of properties in the historic districts.



AR – Nina Pickering-Cook had worked with Kathy and may have more information.

DH asked FA to reach out to the Arlington HDC about which bank they use for their program. Before you can talk to town ~~council~~ counsel, you need to ask John Mangiaratti.

D. Discussion: Fees for Applications and Fines

AL did some research on fees and we are in the ballpark with other towns. There was a discussion to simplify/change the fee structure. CNAs will still be free. One proposal was a flat \$20 for all applications; \$20 for all except new construction, which should be \$50; \$20 for residents and \$50 for builders/commercial; finally, \$10 for all but new construction and \$50 for new construction. RR noted that we had discussed making HDC applications for historic plaques free, but never updated the instructions on the application.

AL also updated the instructions to correct the ordinary days we meet in the month and the instructions for a transfer of a COA to a new owner.

AL will update the application instruction sheet and added fee check boxes to the application form.

Regarding fines, it was noted that the Rules and Regulations say \$25 per violation and the bylaw says minimum of \$10 and maximum of \$300. It was decided to remove the \$25 amount from the Rules and Regulations and the commission can make a case-by-case fine determination based on severity of the violation.

AL will make an update to the Rules and Regulations for the next meeting to review and then vote the meeting after.

No motion was made.

E. Discussion: Utility Box Wrapping

Photos of the light control boxes in West Acton and South Acton were displayed. DH asked for comments:

RR – If the wrapping has a purpose like describing something historic nearby it may make sense, but otherwise no.

FA – I like the fact that the boxes fade into the background now.

AR – They have them in Newton, if they serve a purpose like a charity or train schedule, but I'd rather see nice landscaping.

AL – I don't care for them.

DH – It seems pointless to bring attention to the box when you have a building like Exchange Hall next to it. I will tell Corey York we don't want them in the districts.

F. Discussion: Violations

DH to draft a letter for 124 Main St. fan and 612 Mass Ave fence.



4. Adjournment

At 9:00 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Minutes from October 13th;
- Pre-Application plans for Exchange Hall;
- Draft HDC Application instructions changes;
- Draft HDC Rules and Regulations for Solar Panels.