



Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

04/13/2021

7:00 PM

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

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

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

1. Opening;

Chair David Honn opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

2. Regular Business

- A. Citizen's Concerns – DH congratulated FA on her Select Board win. FA plans to stay on the HDC if it is allowed. FA – the April 5th Select Board meeting had a presentation for Asa Parlin with two potential designs. FA shared some screen shots. DH is concerned that they haven’t come to us yet. AL noted that the latest copy of the homeowners letter is now on the website. FA – No new status on 615 Mass Ave closing yet. DH gave an appointment to the potential new owner for next meeting. DH and AR went to 82 River St to discuss their new garage; AR will prepare a couple of site plans. AR – there is a significant rise toward the property line that may make adding a two car garage difficult without substantial site work. DH will follow up; we need to formally reject the application due to lack of materials and have them submit it with new information. FA noted the application was submitted March 16th. We should take a vote to be official.
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes –AL makes a motion to approve the minutes from March 23rd. RR seconds, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, ZT – Y, AR – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 6-0.
- C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – no new applications; spreadsheet up to date.

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

A. Application 2103 New Garage at 82 River St. by Marcos S. de Souza

DH makes a motion to reject the application due to lack of materials and discussion at the last meeting to move the garage to the other side of the property than what was submitted. AR seconds. AL comments that what we are doing is documenting what happened at the last meeting in which the applicants withdrew their application in favor of a different plan. They aren’t on the agenda today, so we are voting to enable DH to formally communicate that they have withdrawn their prior application. With that understanding I will vote on it.



DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AL – Y, FA – Y, AR – Y, ZT – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 6-0. DH will explain the situation to the applicants in an email.

B. Application 2106 Exchange Hall Condo Conversion at 2 School St by Glenn Berger

Applicant present. Tom Douglas of Douglas Architects is the architect for the project. Tom gives an introduction of his firm and experience with preservation projects.

DH asks Glenn about the preservation restriction on Exchange Hall from 2013 which is in effect until 2028. Glenn has a letter from the planning board stating the restriction is in effect until April 2023. DH – according to a copy of the restriction it is in effect for 15 years from the date the work was completed, which was 2013. Glenn - I discussed with the planning board providing a space on the ground floor for meetings, which is the requirement of the agreement, and the planning department thought that would work. DH – to change the agreement will require approval by the parties, a public hearing, and approval by MHC. These are things that will need to be resolved.

Glenn goes into the project. Converting Exchange Hall into condominiums. The basement level will be maintained as Glenn's space. The first and second floors will each be one unit. The third floor and attic will be split into two multi-floor units.

Kevin Perrier of 5 Star Construction recommended that the slate roof be replaced. Real slate is expensive to maintain, and Glenn is looking at alternates. Tom commented that he worked on projects approved by the National Park Service where he was allowed to use man-made faux slate and has confidence in its longevity and look. Glenn has some samples of shingles at Exchange Hall; a photo of DaVinci Bellaforté Slate sample was supplied. It is a resin based composite material. Alternatively, Glenn would like to consider using asphalt shingles.

DH – The 2008 CPC award was primarily for fixing the roof; why does it need to be replaced now? Glenn – the company that did the repairs said the roof was in serviceable condition and did the repairs at that time. 5 Star construction management says the roof is in a state that will require lots of repair and often. It was possibly a mistake to not deal with replacing the roof back in 2008.

Want to add skylights to the east facing roof. Glenn referenced page 22 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation & Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Building: "Adding skylights or dormers on secondary roof elevations where they are not visible or are only minimally visible so that they do not negatively impact the building's historic character." Tom feels adding the skylights to this side, away from Main St., will have very low visibility. There is a hatch on this side of the roof that is larger than the skylights would be, and it is very hard to see. The skylight openings will be 1'-9"x3'-6", plus trim around.

DH noted that the rendering of the roof with skylights includes snow guards along the edge of the roof. Glenn said he would like to add them to the roof.

Second floor double door on west façade. The left-hand door can't be used because it swings out to the landing. Glenn would like to change the door to a single door. The door, porch and stairs were added later. Glenn showed a door on the 1st floor southeast corner as



an example of the replacement size. Glenn also wants to restore the door on the west façade north end first floor. The double door on the first floor of the south façade is original and Glenn wants to restore these doors. This will be used as an entrance. and a wooden and glass storm door will be added showing most of the door. DH asked if there was a way to add a windbreak vestibule on the inside, so you don't have to cover these doors? Glenn doesn't think that will work.

The railings on both decks are too low to be safe (not compliant to current building codes). Glenn would like to replace the door on the second level porch with a window that matches the other windows on the same level. DH asked if the railings will be kept as they are now? Glenn - I think it is critical to keep them the same. Tom offered that a cable rail could be added between the columns, it would still be visible. Glenn said to get occupancy the building department sent him a letter that because this is a historic building you can leave the railings as they are, but the building department is not accepting any liability.

DH asked about the closed in window on the third level. Glenn thinks it was closed in when the stage was added. There may be a window underneath.

DH asks for comments:

RR – having the skylights only on the east face is better. As far as roofing I would really like to see samples of the faux slates. I'm okay with making the double door on the second level a single door as it looks out of place. Glenn – it was added as a second egress. Replacing the door on the south façade second level with a window is probably okay.

AL – I understand that slate is expensive to maintain, but considering the preservation restriction agreement, which we must take seriously, I will need to be convinced that the roof needs replacing. The proposed skylights are inconsistent with the historic nature of this building, which is an iconic landmark on the national and state registers. If the roof needs to be replaced the faux slate is more appropriate than asphalt shingles. Will there be an exterior emergency egress for the third floor? Tom – no, it will all be on the interior.

AR – Is the attic end gable window operable? Glenn – yes. AR: If the slate roof is not repairable, the composite can be a good substitute. I don't think asphalt is appropriate for this building. I don't like the idea of changing the middle door on the second balcony to a window; having a balcony that you can't get too seems peculiar to me.

ZT – I agree with the comments from AL and AR.

FA – I agree with AL and AR about the roof. I'd need to see a sample of the faux slate. I'd prefer to keep the double door on the west and the single door on the south of the second level.

Tom gave details on adding cable rails to the porches to make them safer. The primary concern is for safety. AR – if there is a way to enclose the porch behind the railing, like screens, but without concealing the details behind.

Tom will try to get locations that have the faux slate for HDC members to see.

DH – let's continue this to our next meeting April 27th at 7:15 PM. DH will contact Kristen Guichard of the planning department about the preservation restriction.



No motion was made.

C. Pre-Application New Multi-Family Building at 9 School St by John Perkens

Applicant present. Chris Dallmus introduces Patrick Guthrie who will be the lead for the project moving forward. Chris gives an overview – We last presented a site plan and hand drawn front elevation on February 9th; today we are presenting all elevations, floor plans, and list of materials for exterior elements and features. Chris goes through the plans. On the site plan you can see the driveway access to the site is on the east side with parking behind and underneath the building.

The new elevations are more precise, including measurements. The central two units are set back 18” from the end units. The shutters have been removed. On the basement plan, the entire back is open for parking, no garage doors. There will be decks extending out about 6 feet from the back of the units over the garage level. On the floor plans the units are basically identical except for the bay windows on the end units. All units have a hooded entry supported by brackets and no posts. The other elevations and quickly reviewed, and Chris goes over materials - The foundation is exposed asphalt, The side walls are hardy-board planking to be painted, windows are Harvey Majesty – an aluminum clad window, trim is wood. The decorative brackets at the frieze and the brackets supporting the entry-way roofs will be painted Fypon, a high-density urethane foam. The bay roofs will be aluminum with a weathered zinc finish. The front doors will be wood by Simpson or equivalent; the rear doors will be Anderson. Gutters are aluminum. Down spouts are corrugated galvanized and painted. Recessed lighting in the covered entry ways. Exterior decking in the rear will be pressure treated wood to weather.

DH asks for comments:

RR – Overall I like the look, the setback center, the detail around the windows. Will the Fypon be painted? Chris – yes.

AL – You mentioned asphalt for the mansard part of the roof; would it be possible to use cedar shake or something like that? Chris – maybe there is a non-wood shingle more suitable. I think a split three-tab may be more appropriate than an architectural shingle.

AL – I would prefer something that looked more like a cedar shingle, even if it is not wood. I thought in the last meeting you mentioned using fiberglass gutters. DH added we use fiberglass ½ round with smooth round down spout. AR – a galvanized ½ round would be appropriate; we’ve allowed fiberglass for a wood crown appearance. AL noted that they used fiberglass at 3 Wood Lane. One final concern is the aluminum windows.

AR – I’d like to see where the gutters and down spouts are located and how they attach at the eave. Are they a K-shape? Chris – we haven’t decided at that level yet. AR -- We have only recently approved a clad sash in a wood frame that was minimally visible. I believe the Majesty is a clad sash in a clad frame; we would need to see a sample of how it will be cased in a way to obscure the clad frame. Chris – would it be possible to defer the approval of the windows until we get into construction and can mockup an example on site complete with the trim, crown, and sill. AR – It would be acceptable to have two window options, one that we know we would approve, along with what you’re proposing.



John – I'll see if my dealer could put together a sample. Chris – We've used a 6/4 stock and rabbeted out a section to override the frame of the window.

I'm concerned with the amount of exposed concrete foundation. Will there be a parge coat? Chris – No. DH – Traditionally there would be a granite foundation.

For lighting I'd rather see something prismatic and not recessed lights.

Weathered pressure-treated wood for the rear-deck railing and decking is ugly; I'm not sure how much will be visible from School Street.

The two little porches close together in the recessed center units don't have the weight/massing that the bay windows add to the end units. Could they be combined into a single porch or have larger porches. Chris – looking at the floor plan, maybe we could reposition the doors away from each other.

FA – I like the massing of the building for the lot. I agree with the comments about the foundation and gutters. Is the mansard part of the roof going to be shingles? Chris - The hip roof will be EPDM; the mansard walls will be shingled; we are proposing to use asphalt.

ZT – I agree with the other comments. I have a question about the flat section of roof for mechanicals that was brought up in the last meeting. Chris – looking at the site plan, there is a T-section along the back where the roof transitions to vertical walls with doors.

Looking at the rear elevation you can see the doors; that will be a flat section. DH – maybe there is a way to put a railing along the back to block the view of mechanicals.

Plan on public hearing for May 11th.

No motion was made.

D. Application 2104 Porch Post Repair at 43 Windsor Ave by Scott Kutil

Applicant present. Scott goes over the details – There are two posts on the front porch and one post on the rear porch that are rotted and need to be repaired. The bottoms of the posts will be cut off and a new piece of red cedar added to each post using a scarf joint. This is the same type of repair made to one of the front porch posts a few years ago. DH are you going to paint everything? Scott – yes. DH decides that this will be a CNA and will prepare the certificate.

E. Application 2105 Replace Door at 273 Central St. by Marc Foster, FFD LLC

Applicant present. AL Liaison. RR indicated that the abutters notices were mailed out on April 26th. Marc goes over the project – The existing 9 lite door needs to be replaced; I want to replace it with a door that looks more like the other doors on this building with a single lite, using a door similar to what we did for the Cut Above salon on Mass Ave. For hardware I would like to use a thumb latch handle ¾ lock set. I looked at using a single plate, but I couldn't find a small one. The door on Mass Ave is a lot larger and that lock set was too big for this door. The door is ¾ lite with a raised panel. DH – The door at 275 has a single plate lockset; could you use something like that? Marc - I couldn't find



something similar that would fit the smaller door. AR – Is the hardware you selected a mortice set? Marc – No. DH asks for comments:

RR – Will this be just a slab or a full frame door? Marc – This will be a full frame. RR -- The existing threshold is a silvery metal; could it be replaced with wood? Marc – I understand the metal is not desirable; is there an alternative? AR/DH – Something dark, like a bronze color aluminum. RR – will you be adding a mail slot?

AR – If you want to use a mortice set, if you supply it to the company making the door they should be able to install it for you. The door on Mass Ave has a wood sill and I think it looks nicer than the metal. I don't feel any compulsion to have these doors to match each other. If they were different, I would be satisfied.

FA – The door on the Mass Ave side looks great; this seems like a smaller version of that.

AL – Our Criteria require repair if possible, but given that we allowed the single lite replacement on Mass Ave and that this will look more like the doors around it, I'm okay with it.

ZT – I have nothing to add.

DH – the quirkiness of the building is helped by different style doors. I could go either way, match the existing 9 lites or the single light.

DH Makes a motion to replace the door as per the description on the application using a wood or dark colored metal sill. AL seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AR – Y, ZT – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 6-0.

4. Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m., AL makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, AR – Y, ZT – Y, FA – Y, AL – Y, DH – Y, the motion passes 6-0.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting

- Minutes from March 23rd,
- Application 2106,
- 9 School St pre-application drawings,
- Application 2104,
- Application 2105.