



## Historic District Commission

### Meeting Minutes

2022-04-26

7:00 PM

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

**Present:** David Honn (DH), Ron Regan (RR), David Shoemaker (DS), Fran Arsenault (FA)  
BOS liaison, Anita Rodgers, (AR), Zach Taillefer (ZT).

**Absent:** Art Leavens (AL), Barbara Rhines (BR) Cultural Resource Planner

### Opening:

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

### 1. Regular Business

A. Citizen's Concerns – Ellen Spero: Visit again to discuss windows. House was built in 1926. A sun porch was added at a later time. All sash carry a single main pane, some with a series of top smaller panes. with rope counterweights. DH: proposes a visit of some HDC members. Can't recommend vendors, but can note some vendors who have done work in the past. Usually the sash is removed for rework, with the sash and potentially a second level of temporary weather protection. We request times that work for owner. DH will propose some dates and times.

Arron G.: 498 Main. Front door which is not original – old, however. Needs extensive repair. Proposes to build a ‘storm’ door with a wooden frame, strap hinges and then to leave there in permanence. Will also help with road noise. House is from 1817. DH: other houses along Main St. may have similar doors. We request an application.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – DS makes a motion to approve the minutes from 12 April 2022; AR second, DH takes a roll call vote: RR – Y, DS – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y AR – Y. The motion passes.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet – Up to date. One extension to wait a bit for closer to the expiration date.

D. Chair Update:

1. 53 River Street Dam Letter to Commonwealth : Town Conservation Department is applying for a grant to support the remediation. HDC via DH has offered a letter of support.

2. HDC New Owner Postcard: BR has made a draft; consensus that it is a very good indeed. FA: no recent sales in the districts, but several houses have recently come on the market.



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

A. 7:24 8 Concord Road Demolition/Reuse Public Hearing. DH reads the Notice. Mac Reid and Bruce Greer, and many in a shared room, join. The owners/representatives speak to the slides prepared by the owners/representatives. DH: Thanks presenters. Procedure is to discuss among the members, with Q&A; offer opportunity to the public to ask questions. The path is not linear. A decision may or may not be possible by the 9pm end of the planned discussion; it is likely that we will need to continue to a future meeting, and that would require an extension. A few comments:

**Significance** of the building: DH perceives a misunderstanding of the Historic District. There is no desire to 'freeze' the time, and simultaneity of the building of the house with the Church – or the fire station – is not particularly relevant. Finds the significance of this building very clear; it tells a story of the parcel. A collection of buildings establishes its significance. AR: agrees that it is an important part of the context. From every view there is a presence. RR: Shows the MACRIS page, discusses the history. Connection to the Fletcher shoe factory. DS: would be sorely missed for the character of the town center. ZT: What maintenance has been undertaken? Church: best that we could. Minimal funds were available. Roof, heating system, and mold removal and repairs. No more funds will be expended. No professional managers. ZT: effectively the building has not been maintained? Is #20 being maintained? DS: how long has the building been the Church property? Church: no one knows, but a long time. DS: Is the maintenance for this property in some way proportional for maintenance? Church: there are funds, and they managed.

**Authenticity** – DH sees that many details are authentic and original, to a very high degree. This makes it in some measure 'one-of-a-kind'. AR: Would like to know how this building was separated from its septic system. Asa Parlin was a victim of divorce from its septic. Was the separation at the time of the expansion of the Church? Church: the separation was much earlier. Could the HDC help with a variance for the Septic? AR: Yes, that can be discussed. Maybe good to put up 8 and 20 as a package? Church: this could be an interesting path. DH: While partnering is not a legal requirement, it is our intent to help find a solution that suits all parties best, consistent with our mission. Looking at the Plot Plan, the sum of the properties appears to form a 20,000 sq ft total. Don't see a 1-foot area or in any event a problem that prevents a legal lot. Church: will look into this. DH: Appears an addition could be made if a legal lot can be constructed, making the house more salable. The concern for an exit door? We believe that you are code compatible. Church: there is a drop-off that makes it difficult.

**Building:** DH: could simplify by removing the 'laundry room' and the garage. AR: agrees. RR: House is much more valuable. DS: no additional input of value on this. DH: A 'gut rehab' is probably not at all needed to make the building livable, and it does not need to be brought to 2022 standards. Church: \$375 is to put into excellent shape. It is selling it for \$20,000 that it is hard to swallow. The Congregation felt it was unsafe – did not want to take the risk. DH: Good to try to identify an investor partner to bring it to a rentable standard. Church: has sought arrangements. It did not work out. FA: On the real-estate side of things: as a realtor, this house should sell for more than \$20,000. DH: Back



to Septic system: Exploring possibilities for a proper septic. AR: a proper survey is needed by professionals to determine practicality. DH: asks to know the Escrow asked for by the Town. Church: the plot plan and septic system design has already been expensive to pursue. DH/AR: the property value would appreciate significantly with a septic. RR: We would like to get a verbal agreement for the extension. Church: not sure that an extension is of value to the Church. How would a delay help in the process? Hope not to miss an opportunity to sell. AR: We should consider the alternative that the Church has raised of demolition and landscaping.

Public Discussion: Anne Forbes sent a comment by email, read by DH. Arron G: The Church is essentially a commercial situation. 8 Concord is not appealing as a residence. Could it serve a commercial application? DH: Minuteman national park has buildings that are artifacts, but where the interior is not used. DS: Taxes? Church: yes, when occupied. Michaela Moran: This building is important for the Town Center, but is not apparently appreciated by the Church; proposes sale of the two for housing (as AR mentioned). Expects the building could be sold for \$200-300,000. It appears to communicate a preference. Alyssa Nicol: speaking as an individual. Would love to see the building preserved. Excited by the idea of selling #8 and #20 for any application. The Church may not want to be homeowners, but they are, and the responsibility needs to be taken on. CPA funds could be available. Encourages a solution which does not lead to demolition. DH: would like to agree to make this the focus of the next meeting in two weeks, and can expect a resolution at that meeting. AR: Proposes a non-binding vote. Makes a motion to take a straw poll on the plausibility of demolition of 8 Concord Road: Demolition in entirety. RR: Seconds. RR: not convinced; would need to hear from health or building department. Would be open to removing Garage and lean-to. RR, AR, ZT, DS, DH: non-binding No to demolishing the entire building. ZT: good to hear advertising of the building for sale. DH: Explore sale of the combined 8&20. AR: History of the divorced septic and re-creating a septic. Escrow account. Church: does not anticipate that any of these pursuits will change the unanimous vote against demolition. AR: Indeed, yes, probably no change in AR's opinion. DS: Agree for my perspective. Coming back in two weeks will get our best effort to help find a better solution which does not involve a full demolition. AR: Rental to e.g., an attorney might be inexpensive for the repairs. RR: may be most efficient to vote now.

AR: Make a motion to vote on whether or not the HDC should approve the demolition of 8 Concord Road owned by the ACC. AR: no RR: no. ZT: no. DH: no DS: no.

B. 9:00 537 Mass Avenue Gutter Repairs and New Side Entrance: Matthias Rosenfeld, Marcelo Arjona. Working on the next application for this building. On Mass Ave, in-kind repair work. On Eastern Façade, Three areas: 1) install a gutter to eliminate future water damage. 2) Chimney on rear of the building; mason indicates that the mortar is not safe, and not functional; would like to remove it. 3) Wish to place a doorway and a patio. ADA-compliant entry with a gentle slope up from street sidewalk. Entry canopy with some lighting to be discussed. Doors need to leave room for structure to support the wall. Doors bronze or similar. AR: where does the water go from the gutter? MR: slope throws discharged to the right. AR: prefer to see lighting is not flush, but with some copper/glass. Recessed lighting is not awful, but it is not interesting. MR: Signage to be determined



once a tenant is found, but a blade sign might work. There maybe several tenants. Gutters will match the old gutters. Considered that a vertical muntin would lead to too much verticality. DH: likes bronze as a material. But may be expensive. No application yet. Would like to have a section of the gutter in front, and definition of the handrail.

Hardware needs to be ADA compliant; would like to see photos of the hardware in the application. MR: looked at divided lites on the doors. Not as conducive to retail tenants, and not in keeping with the rest of the building.

C. 22:07 HDC Demolition Decision Draft Guidelines Discussion (Continuance) – continue to next meeting. AR: In our guidelines, make the context more clear – the building scale and how it participates in the texture of the built environment. s

### **3. Consent Items**

None

#### **1. Adjournment**

At 22:10 DH makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS – Y, RR – Y, DH – Y, ZT – Y, AR - Y; the motion passes.

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting**

- 8 Concord Road presentation by owners
- MACRIS page for 8 Concord Road
- Anne Forbes email to HDC.
- Draft HDC Demolition Decision Draft Guidelines
- 537 Mass Ave Presentation materials