

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes
2024-04-09
7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Zach Taillefer (ZT), Art Leavens (AL), David Shoemaker (DS), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator),

Absent: Anita Rogers (AR), Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:03 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – Linda Minkoff (LM) and Ruth Bendig (RB) join. Members of Theatre 3III Board. A church is used, 250 Central Street. A steeple was changed some years ago with HDC approval, and a weathervane was also placed. Some time in March it was seen that the weathervane was tilted, and subsequently flew off to the ground. Some part of the system is broken, and the roof has an opening to carry the weathervane. Wish to resolve the opening, but do not wish to repair/replace the weathervane. Wish to know of any HDC-related obligations. RB: nothing salvageable; of wrought iron and copper, very heavy. Not obvious that it is original to the building. DH: HDC should look for the documentation of 15 or so years ago. LM: would put up a weathervane if one was available and the cost was reasonable. There are other (non-cosmetic) needs for funds. Don't think anything is leaking based on a drone inspection, but a cap is needed. DH: HDC will check the paperwork from the COA to understand the obligation at this time. The application was placed in November 15, 2010. AL: if just replacing it is outside of the jurisdiction of the HDC. DH: it is not in a condition to re-install, unfortunately. RB: no photos exist of the previous weathervane. ZT: Good to look at the Google maps image to see what may have been there. LM: will send the original application and a photo of the remains of the weathervane. Diane Zimmerman-Decker joins. Concerned that replacing it would lead to another breakage and loss.

Pastor Ken joins. Discussing Exchange Hall. Wish to purchase, and use as a church. Wish to replace the hardwood floor in ballroom with a carpet; installer wishes to remove the flooring, and to modify the stage. There is also a balcony with low headroom. The attic would be fit with offices. Other hardwood floors would be replaced. Exterior painting would be done. Heat pumps would be installed, away from Main St. An LED sign on the front lawn is planned. DH: Talked with Kenneth. If the purchase goes through, we will want to see those things in our jurisdiction. Recommends to look at the HDC Bylaws. AL:

There is a preservation conservation restriction that is more restrictive – should contact Kristen Guichard. DH: Also, the painting may have been done with CPC funds and may be on the present owner to complete the proper painting.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 26 March 2024: DH asks for correction of spelling of a name. DS will fix the spelling, and moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, ZT, AL DS approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 17 Woodbury Lane COA (DH) – Done. Anticipate amendments.
- 615 Mass. Ave. Amendment to COA (DH) -- Done.
- 49 Windsor Avenue (applications # 2412 and # 2413 CNA (DH) -- Done.
- 25-27 School Street East/West/South Exterior Materials CNA (DH). Not yet done; AR to provide some information.
- 12 Concord Road Roof application #2411 (determine type of certificate & schedule meeting) – DH to do a CNA. Re-roofing of all the non-original roofs.
- 544 Massachusetts Avenue PH cont. to April 23, 2024 (Need to reschedule. See quorum issue below). Discuss May 14th.
- Theatre III pre-application discussion (invited to call at 7:00 today; see above discussion in Citizens' Concerns)
- 590 Mass. Ave. mural placement (no application yet)
- 28-30 School Street gutters (no application yet)
- West Acton Baptist Church shed (no application yet)
- Reschedule 2nd April meeting (April 23 will be canceled due to lack of quorum) Gardner Playground Public Hearing will be May 14, 2024. BR to ask for a concrete application; public meeting with legal notice.
- 111-113 School Street Building Permit legal question for Town Counsel. DH: useful to have Kristen Guichard, Town Counsel, and AL meet.
- Inquiries about sale of Exchange Hall; see above discussion in Citizens' Concerns.
- HDC Letter to HC (DH) Re: Concord Road HD

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:30 Application #2410 68 River Street EV charger. DH recuses himself as an abutter. Applicant not present. No quorum, thus we cannot vote. The application does not show the unit that is anticipated, or a plan view that shows where it will be installed with respect to River Street (and thus its visibility). The next meeting with a quorum will not be for another 5 weeks (May 14th). An extension for the date will be required. DH returns.

B. 7:45 Application #2408 (Continued) 25-27 School Street Discussion of front (North) façade design and materials. Alexandre Mota (AM), applicant, joins. AM notes that the photo of the house at the last meeting was incorrect. Wishes to establish the point of

departure. Notes that the building was moved to the current location, and multiple modifications made over the years. DH: In agreement on the right photo. HDC received correspondence from neighbors with a wish that the façade be more ‘domestic’. Want to establish the historic reference point. Could reproduce what is seen in the ‘shop-style’ photo, or something more like nearby houses. AM shows 48 School St image as a possible façade to emulate. BR shows several emails from neighbors. AL: Appreciates the underlying concern and willingness to discuss. However, believes the governing documents make it outside our purview to make a choice of a design based on factors other than those set forth in the governing statute and Town Bylaw. We have one photo of the building dating back to the 19th century, showing the building that is described in the MACRIS inventory form. Both the photo and the MACRIS inventory description show that the awning, deck and bay window belong. DS: is friendly the idea of removing the awning for the reasons given by neighbors, but keeping the bay window. Does the structure tell us anything about the epoch of the construction? AM shows photos of interior framing. ZT: What is the integrity of the awning? Age? AM: Looks like it was added. The wood is rotted. ZT: Hears AL’s point. Believes that the awning was significantly modified from the photo. Without an image to restore to, would tend toward keeping the bay window but removing the awning. The sign has historical value. DH: If the porch area could be restored, would be in favor of keeping the awning, but this is not possible now due to the change in the street height. The photo cannot be recreated. Finds the bay window important to the façade, as seen in the neighboring houses. Elements on the façade are needed for the large scale of the building. Some entry approach with a porch over the new entry door will be needed. AL: This was a commercial building, and does not see the logic to return to a domestic, residential building as the model for its renovation. DH: On the other hand, the depth of the original porch deck and roof would just not work given the change in the streetscape. Public Comments: Lisa Bullock (LB) joins. Lives across the street. Applauds AM’s efforts to restore the building to a useful state. Spoke with neighbors; found porch and awning unattractive. The function of the building has changed multiple times. Finds that with a door close to the bay window will look awkward. Believes there is nothing historical to preserve in the bay window structure. DH: The HDC needs a legitimate, detailed set of architectural drawings to move forward. DH shares 615 Mass Ave drawings as an example of a useful drawing. 25-27 School St has come to the HDC several times; hopeful it can move forward this time. DS: not inclined to remove the bay window. AL: The bay window is in the photo and is described in the MACRIS documentation. ZT: Agreed, the bay window seems a fixed element in the design over epochs. DH: Bay window stays. Awning and porch could go. Some real drawings of one or a few options needed. The entire front façade, including the upper gable, should be in one material; siding would be best. AM: Timeliness is important to success with the building, and costs are growing. Finds it odd that there is only one bay window. Sees difficulties with the columns needed for an entry portico. Concerned about the delays in the HDC processes. Concerned about the costs for the bay windows. Public Comment: LB joins again. If it is to be similar to 48 School St., there should be some separation of the bay window and the front door. This is a Greek revival building, one of 3 or 4. Feels the building shown in the photo is unattractive. DH: Agrees more separation of the door and the Bay. AM: Unfortunately the door cannot be moved. AL: We have a building which has existed as it is currently for some 150 years.

The HDC does not have authority to redesign at will. DH: perhaps the roof/awning could be shortened to just protect the door. Get the bay window more or less in the middle of the remaining roof. Public Comment: Heather Morton (HM) joins. HM: History moves on. This property has been derelict for 20 years; maybe that is an indication that it is time to move on. AL: We should not abandon our statutory mandate to preserve the historical record. A reconstruction of the roof with posts would best serve this purpose. DH: In our review and decisions concerning this property, the HDC has already many compromises. The shortened roof over the door and the bay window is about where it needs to go. Posts are needed. ZT: Many ideas have been tossed around. Reluctant to have anything cut or removed from the building before we have a drawing, perhaps by hand but to scale, to show what you plan to do. A vote is needed to make this possible, and an application is needed for a vote. AL: 615 Mass Ave may be a good example. A tour was made with some sketches as a way to ensure that the removal and reconstruction of the porch is appropriate. AM: A repair of the porch roof could be made on short order. DH: A repair of the porch roof with like materials does not need HDC approval, but the materials and design must remain the same. During the repairs, posts could be used to support the roof for a period of time, and other repairs would be allowed. AM: That seems like the best way to go. DS: Notes that temporary posts will need to be removed upon completion of the repair unless an application is made and subsequently approved for permanent posts. BR: April 21 is the deadline for the current application. DH: Should extend it and ultimately amend it for the posts. AM leaves. BR/DH discussion of the already-approved application scope.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:27 AL moves to adjourn the meeting, DH seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS, DH, AL, ZT all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare