

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2024-10-22

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent: Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison)

Opening:

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

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes –24 September Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, ZT, DS AL approve. Minutes approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- #2435 105 Main Street roof CNA (DH) - Done
- 95 School Street Windows COA - Done
- 14 Newtown Generator Fence COA. – Done
- BR: Theatre III has a problem with a septic system; since there is a stone wall they may come to the HDC for discussion

A. DH: The West Acton Library would like to put up a green directional sign. Discussion to determine if this signage is in scope for the HDC. BR: The signage initiative would not cover HDC signs. AR Reads from the bylaws, which indicates all within the district is in our purview. AL: Minimum size in purview is 6 sq ft. DH: request to see an image of the Sign and Post to offer feedback. We will give an informal opinion, as we do for paint color.

- DH: Our Historic District signage is in poor shape. We should keep it in mind for e.g., CPC funding.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

B. 7:15 Application # 2434 Public Hearing 105 School Street stone wall. DH, Applicant,

recuses himself; AR assumes role as Chair. BR reads the Public Hearing announcement. DH Presents the project. Driveway needs work, and this triggers the possibility of a parlor garden, 36x36, simpler driveway. The design includes a stone wall along the street. Old photos show picket fences; fences have suffered from cars. Informal stone wall is proposed – a farmer’s wall, with granite piers as termini. A graded entry to the terrace on side entrance, about 14” to get to the level of the door threshold. A fence will be re-installed at a higher level. A well was found and may have a circular wall put around it, or left invisible. Gates will be added, with white pickets. AR: Thinks it looks great. DS: Ensure the well is safe if opened. Strong approval of the informal farmer’s test. AL: 10 posts, 6 of which are attached to gates, and 4 at the corners of the garden. Likes it. ZT: Looks great. The elements in HDC domain look appropriate. AL: Moves that we approve the application for installation of the 10 posts, 6 of which serve as supports for gates, and 4 to define the garden; and the construction of a farmers wall; and the raise in height of a short picket fence to the right of the property. AR, ZT, DS AL approve. AL will write it up.

B. 7:50 Application # 2433 Public Hearing (cont. from 10/8) 82 River Street garage & apartment. DH, abutter to the property, recuses himself. AR assumes role of Chair. Applicant Marcos de Sousa (MdS) joins. BR reads the Notice and time extension. BR shares drawings. DS shares drawings. AR: there is a true 2 story addition with a roof skirt – of the width of the addition, like a massive dormer -- to make it relate to the 1.5 story cape. This is an approach which is frequently used, and is done correctly given the requirement of an apartment in the upper floor of the garage. The new structure is well integrated into the current building. DS: Looks ok. ZT: Helpful that the addition is at an angle. AR: New zoning code allowing a rental space, and this design takes good advantage of that law. AL: Can’t add much. The Design Guidelines for additions suggest that the addition should not overwhelm the building to which it is being added, and it appears this may do just that. But it does not set a precedent if approved. Finds this not ideal. ZT: Agrees the massing is on the border of problematic. Ensure Vinyl will not be used.

Current siding is cedar and the new siding will be cedar. The Drawings specify Vinyl; this should be corrected. The windows should be specified to have divided lites. Public Comment: David Honn joins as a citizen. Disagrees on the dormers. The bedrooms are generous, and does not think the lower and upper floors should be aligned as they are now. Would rather see the dormers pushed in even just a foot to create a façade that looks more typical. Or, extend the roof over the garage doors, and also the overhang on the ladder-like structure could be larger. Maybe more windows on the front façade. The garage doors should not be contemporary – could use the model employed on the houses across the street. Knows of no examples in the Districts that would have this alignment of the upper ‘dormer’ floor and the lower ground floor. AR: Agrees for the general principles, and it would be friendlier to the existing house. Pulling back the upper floor would be a very different construction and more expensive. House is of recent construction, as are those across the street. Capes do not usually have a lot of windows, so probably ok as is – a smaller dormer would help. AL: The pulled-back dormer would resolve the massing problem. MdS: Not expert in the design, just here to listen. Has had discussions with the architect. AR: The sense of the Committee is to ask that the upper floor be reduced slightly in scale to provide a better balance with the existing house. We would ask for an extension and then re-review for discussion. AR: We

will write something up, but also could talk with the architect, and can share the meeting recording with the architect. Some glass in the breezeway would be traditional and also perhaps more agreeable. The garage doors should indeed be specified. BR: we would need to agree to make an extension of the public hearing. MdS agrees to extension. BR: Continue the public hearing to the meeting of November 12. Will send written materials and the recording. AR: Our goal would be to make a decision on the 12th. Welcomes a true exchange with the architect. AL: should invite the architect to the next meeting if useful. DH returns to the meeting.

C 8:51. Discussion of COA template: Requirements are to send to a wide number of boards. Practice has been variable. A number of small changes in the form were discussed.

D. 9:00. Review letter for dumpster violation at Acton Congregational Church: BR shares a draft letter written by AL. 12 November seems like a good date. No public hearing should be needed. Add the dates for the 3 contacts after the word 'occasions'. Should add that a decision on a penalty will be made at that meeting. Send to the Board.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:10 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AL seconds. AR takes a roll call vote: DS, AL, ZT, AR, DH all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare