

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-02-11

7:00 PM

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

Present: David Honn (DH), Art Leavens (AL), David Shoemaker (DS), Anita Rogers (AR), Barbara Rhines (BR) (Acton Cultural Resources Coordinator). Fran Arsenault (FA) (Select Board Liaison).

Absent: Zach Taillefer (ZT)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:06 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – 28 January Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AL. AR, DH, DS, AL in favor. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 565 Massachusetts Avenue #2502 Mural at Acton Pharmacy (ZT)
- 53 River Street #2327 Renewal (AR)
- 48 School Street – Two pre-application discussions. No application yet.
- Town Meeting Report update – Due 2/28/2025 (see below)
- Rules & Regulations Public Hearing will be 2/25/2025. – BR: March 11 appears to be more likely due to delays in publishing the public notice and a problem with a link.

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

A. 7:15 Application #2422 (cont.) 49 Windsor Avenue windows. Ben Glazer (BG) joins, shares screen with some Marvin Window quotes. AR: Clarifies the multiple options – true and simulated divided lites (SDL); some glass sandwich units with grilles between the glass (which would not replicate the look desired). Anticipate that the lower sash will be ‘beefier’ due to wind resistance requirements. Wish to have clear glass. There appears to be a single piece of glass with applied muntins. The quote is for a ‘full frame’ window.

Discussion on the visual appearance of a SDL vs. true divided lites. Discussion of storms (not in the HDC jurisdiction); more subtle storms than triple-tracks are available. Allied is one firm offering this approach. AR: We require that there be an identical match of the exterior trim to the existing windows. AR: Moves that we approve the installation of wood windows, single glazed, SDL per the quote. To be installed with exterior cases and sills to match. AL, AR, DS, DH agree. AR to write it up. BR: Deadline is Feb 20.

- B. 7:30 Application #2503 5 Concord Road – Isaac Davis Acton 250 Revolution Commemoration interpretive signs on Common. DH: Moves that we approve the installation of the interpretive sign, as mocked up, near the Horse Trough. AL Seconds. AL, AR, DR, DH approve. DH to write up.
- C. 7:45 Application #2504 17 Woodbury Lane – Monument (memorializing the Acton “Minutemen” participants in the 1775 line of march) in front of town hall. DH: Bob Davis, representing Acton 250 Revolution Commemoration Committee, discussed with DH the Monument placement. DH: Summarizes the consensus that developed in the HDC visit to the site. DH proposed in front of town hall. Bob Davis (BD) joins. Contact has been made with the Garden Club to coordinate and optimize the installation. Encouragement to make something that feels more natural and garden-like. A horizontal face of a rock seems best with a plaque, near the sidewalk. The rock would be in roughly in line with the fountain and the Town Hall front door, and elevated a bit. DH: forms a continuum with the other war related monuments. AL: Very much in favor. AR: just the right solution. DS also in favor. DH: Moves that we approve the concept of the plaque on an appropriate naturalistic boulder, placed in the semi-circular garden. HDC to preview the final artwork to ensure a good visual balance of rock to plaque. AL Seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH approve. The other interpretive sign will move away from the Asa Parlin house, to the line of march marker at the corner of Minuteman and Woodbury. This may be just beyond the limit of the HDC and not in our purview.
- D. 7:50 PM Application #2505 452 Main Street – AC Coil. Kris Ellicks (KE), Applicant-Owner) joins. New unit in the L formed by front and back builder. It is a condenser to be attached to an existing forced hot air system. DH: The HDC takes it as a point of departure that vegetation can disappear, and it can be required by the HDC to hide the unit. AR: free-standing unit with no visible piping, on a cement pad. AL: Shrubs? KE: all existing, currently in place, not evergreen. AL: would prefer an evergreen that maintains its leaves year-round to screen the unit from Main Street. DS: agree, need to ensure year-round vegetation to hide it. DH: proposes some additional plantings to help ensure it is well hidden. Public Comment: Ali Odom— neighbor – finds it just fine. AL: Moves that we approve the siting of the proposed air conditioner unit as described in the application, to be screened in front and the side with evergreens to hide unit from view. DS seconds. AL, AR, DS, DH all approve. AL to write it up.
- E. 8:00 Pre-application Discussion 9 School Street – Renewal of #2326 by new owners. Michael Rego (MR) joins, Developer (Hudson). Purchasing 9 School St, with a hope to move forward from the concepts that have been discussed previously. Instead of one 6 unit building, have it be 5 units, split as a 3 and a 2 unit building. The separation carries a

driveway and provides some shielding between the buildings. The objective is to optimize the attraction to potential buyers. Also wishes to move from the Mansard roof to a gable roof to manage snow load. DH: This is a different project. The previous one had a few years of invested effort. The separate building approach had been proposed before, and was not acceptable to the HDC. A review of the previous notes and consideration would be of value, but it seems unlikely that the split approach would be workable. DH notes that the section of School St feels commercial in the built environment, and the separated buildings would not be a good fit. The Mansard roof was intended to echo the safety building roof to prevent the orphaning of the safety building. The previous scheme is worth reconsideration. MR: believes that it will be difficult to succeed financially with that design. AR: Needs some thought. Can the upper part of the Mansard have enough slope to shed snow? The look was right with Mansard. Maybe there is another variation on this thought. MR: Height restrictions limit the design choices. DH: The HDC should produce a record with the thought processes to help with communicating the previous design and the constraints that led to it. AL: Recalls the earlier discussion, and a roof that carried slope to the rear and no discussion of snow removal. DS: Nothing to add to the discussion. MR: Is there a vision with two buildings with a Mansard roof? DH: The scale of a single large building really seemed right. A large mill building style could have potentially worked. Want to move the driveway far from the intersection to aid with exiting with traffic. Hopefully residents would use the train and walk to the station. DH: will send all the material we can and then we can continue the discussion. Note that the Acton HDC does not have jurisdiction over colors.

- F. 8:23 PM Proposed Changes to HDC Rules & Regulations Vegetation language and correction to section numbering. AL describes the history and motivation of making crisper more complete language for the way vegetation is handled. The rules and regulations dictate that the proposed wording will be presented in a first meeting; and Chapter P then states that at a following meeting, a 2/3 vote in favor of the revision will be required to conclude the process. Concord's Rules and Regulations were a good reference. The MHC Guidebook also provides clear and unambiguous guidance. The proposed text reflects these inputs. DH: The design guidelines may vaguely address the issue to ensure it is consistent with any changes made. AR: no additional comments. DS: Internal consistency of our documentation is important. BR: Note that we sometimes ask for screening. AL: appearing elsewhere, and seemed best to keep things separate. Public way is the standard description for the roads around the building, with the 'relevant Public way' is the key legal phrase (where we have sometimes used "governing way" informally). AL notes that some renumbering is needed. Continued to March 11 meeting for further review and possible adoption.
- G. 8:34 111-113 School Street Railing Violation. DH Recuses himself; AR takes the chair. AL notes that the violation has not been addressed. BR has reminded the owner multiple times over many months that this had not been addressed without response. AL has drafted a letter to be sent to the Owner, reviewing the history of the apparent ongoing violation and inviting the Owner to a meeting to formally determine whether there is a violation and, if so, to decide what penalty is appropriate. If the HDC votes to impose a penalty, the Building Commissioner would then take action to enforce that penalty. The text was reviewed and all present found it satisfactory. A meeting date will be sought when we will have a quorum, given that DH is recused.

DH returns and recovers the chair.

H. 9:00 PM Review of Draft HDC Town Report. BH shares the draft Town Report. The HDC reads through and makes a handful of minor suggestions for accuracy and completeness.

9:09 Property Owner Letter Review: BR notes that there has not been progress on this, and it will be taken up at a later meeting.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 9:10 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS, AL, AR, DH all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare