

Historic District Commission

Meeting Minutes

2025-05-13

7:00 PM

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

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

Absent: Zach Taillefer (ZT)

Opening:

David Honn opened the meeting at 7:01 pm. DH read the “remote meeting notice” due to COVID-19.

1. Regular Business.

A. Citizen's Concerns – None.

B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – April 22 Minutes. DS moved their adoption, seconded by AR. AR, DH, DS in favor. AL abstains. Approved.

C. Review Project Tracking Spreadsheet / Chair Updates:

Outstanding and Completed COAs/CNAs/Denials

- 77 Nagog Hill #2509 (AR) Decision deadline is 6/9/25 – 14 May complete
- 554 Massachusetts Ave. #2510 fence CNA DONE
- 445 Main Street #2513 roof CNA DONE
- 10 Newtown Road #2514 roof CNA DONE
- 592 Mass. Ave. – application to come for 5/27 meeting
- Application for Interpretive Sign at Meeting House Hill to come
- Proposed amendment requests for already approved interpretive signs –
 - Adjustments for ADA Compliance
 - Meeting Hill application is anticipated
 - There will be discussion of different placement of the boulder. Determination if a withdrawal is required to be made at a later time. The Town Manager has determined that the HDC approved place is not appropriate. We will ask for official withdrawal of the previous Application, put in a new Application, and start over. We will choose

a Public Hearing for this time around. There may be difficulty with a quorum given the proximity of HDC members' homes to the likely placement; the rule of necessity may be needed.

- New application for Minutemen Monument
- Follow-up on 111-113 School Street Violation. AR: The new railing is in place. AR will write a letter to close the issue.
- Proposal that a photo at conclusion of any HDC project seems appropriate to keep track and have a sense of closure. A reminder letter after 3 or 6 months; closing out a building permit serves this purpose. ~~Evidence of poor repairs and missing beams were shown.~~

2. New/Special Business or other applicable agenda items

- A. 7:15 Application #2511 Public Hearing 48 School Street barn. BR reads the public notice. Matthew Killam (MK), Tim Hess (TH), Applicant/Architects, join. Slides are shared. Modification of the barn is the scope of the project. A tour of the current site and building status is given. External professional opinions, one from an independent, licensed structural engineer and the other from the project's builder, who is experienced in post-and-beam barn restoration, were shared, and indicated that repair of the current structure would be impractical. Evidence of poor repairs and missing beams were shown. Powder post beetle damage is demonstrated to be extensive. The North gable end appears to be in better condition than the rest of the structure. TH thus proposes dismantling everything but the northern gable, while preserving any lumber that have structural integrity. An 'austere' replacement exterior is proposed; specifically, not an effort to reproduce the historic façade. A set of renderings of façades is shown. Cut sheets of specific materials are shown. An exposed stainless-steel stove pipe is proposed. DH: Notes that we have run out of time for this evening on this application. DS: The public comment is important. BR checks; no public comment. AL: This is really a two part application; could we deal with the demolition question, and then move on to the new design at another meeting. DH: proposes we return to this application for the demolition aspect this evening.
- 21:12 MK and TH rejoin to discuss demolition. AL: There are two parts: demolition of the 'West wing', said to be of no historical value. AL tends to agree. The larger question is an effective demolition of the Barn, said to be impractical. We requested support from an independent engineering professional, and you did this. The builder also supports this perspective. Thus, AL thinks the presumption against demolition has been overcome and thus does not apply – pending approval of an appropriate replacement. AR: Agree; the powder-post videos were quite convincing. DS: agrees. DH: Complements on the clear demolition presentation – a good model for the future. The 3D modeling was communicative and compelling. For the North gable some temporary bracing will be needed. TH: The sheathing will be reused in the measure possible; the assessment is pending. Milling for flooring has not been discussed. Rafters may be worth reuse. DH: at the next meeting we should discuss the building to replace the current barn; we will put 1.5 hours aside. DH: Motion to continue the public hearing. AR Seconds. AR, AL, DS, DH approve.
- B. 8:20 Application #2512 562 Massachusetts Avenue sign – Q Nails. Vy DQNails, Applicant, joins. Proposed sizing is 2'x 8'. DH: 6 square feet is in the Bylaw, but larger signs

have been approved by the HDC. AR: This is 16 sq ft. The font of the proposed sign is not so welcome; feels too modern and too heavy. Is the phone number useful these days? AL: 6 sq ft is minimum size where the HDC jurisdiction comes in. Finds the size too large. The current sign could be acceptable. Making the lettering stand out could enable the smaller sign to work. DH: letters are too big – there is insufficient border. The phone number is really not needed. Using the current size (2' tall by no wider than the windows under which it now sits), current font (with serifs), refreshed, with no phone number and better centered, feels right. Wood or composite board. DS: Agree. AR: A gold border would be a possible addition. DH: Will vote on it at the next meeting, the 27 May.

- C. 8:15 Proposed Amendment to #2407 17 Woodbury Lane windows. Thomas Begin (TB) and Deborah Robinson (DR), Applicants, join. TB: Some of the previously approved windows are presenting challenges; there are some alternatives to propose. DR shares screen images. Previous approval is that the 6 front windows are to be restored. The North and South windows were to be replaced with new windows ‘to match the existing’. Planned on Marvin Ultimate. Some added details are needed to come close to the existing windows. The contractor claimed that the storm panel on the window (or at least the metallic receiver for the glass) may not be removed without voiding the warranty. This did not seem acceptable aesthetically. Marvin has now said it can be done. There is also a question if restoration glass is required by the HDC. Marvin could install it if required, but there would be additional cost. An alternative is to have custom windows made, but it would be expensive. AR: Thanks for this attention to detail. Custom windows do not seem necessary. Eliminating the energy panel, its seat, and making the stop bigger would be welcome; want to avoid places water can sit. Other manufacturers would be possible. DB: could add in putty to re-create an appropriate transition from sash to glazing. AR: Restoration glass does not seem necessary. Don’t need to pretend this is an old window. DS: agrees with AR’s perspective. DH: recommends asking Marvin to make the modified stop. The HDC feels the issue is resolved with no amendment or vote.
- D. 8:30 9 School Street Pre-Application discussion (Canceled)
- E. 8:45 Discussion: State Solar Guidelines for HDs (Defer to next meeting)
- F. 9:05 HDC letter to HC concerning proposed demolitions of 54 Great Road and 457 Massachusetts Avenue. DH: Two demolitions are under study. Discussion leads to a consensus that the HDC should write a letter to try to preserve these buildings. The HC can impose an 18-month delay to demolition, intended to provide an opportunity for alternatives to be developed. DH will prepare a letter for the meeting which will be on 14 May.
- G. 9:15 Review HDC outreach letter to Architects. BR shares the draft; the HDC membership likes it.

3. Consent Items

None

1. Adjournment

At 21:29 DH moves to adjourn the meeting, AR seconds. DH takes a roll call vote: DS, AR, DH, AL all approve.

Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting.

- All relevant Applications and Documents, in Docushare