



MASSACHUSETTS 01720

## ACTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Acton Historical Commission  
Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2008  
7:30 p.m., Acton Town Hall, Rm. 204

AHC Members Present: Peter Grover, chair (PG), Anita Dotson, Victoria Beyer (VB), Kimberley Connors-Hughes, Bill Klauer, Bill Dickinson, Brad Maxwell

1. Minutes from August 2008 meeting were reviewed and approved.
2. Peter Grover (PG) called the meeting to order and commenced a follow-up discussion of the proposed signage for historic homes and structures. The Commission agreed to try to time the signage program to coincide with the Town's 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and to begin the program in January 2009.
3. Next discussed was the content of the proposed changes to the demolition delay by-law (18 months delay, 4 year penalty, etc.). The Commission approved the by-law as revised, to be presented at Town Meeting in the spring. In addition, the Commission resolved to pursue other possible by-laws for the spring Town Meeting, including demolition by neglect, tax incentives and modifying the cell tower by-law to apply to targeted historic landscapes outside of historic resources.
4. The Commission discussed potential requests for CPC funds, and decided to request funds for the following items/projects: (a) Area Forms for Wright-Holden Farmhouse (WHF) and historic survey to determine National Register (NR) eligibility; (b) NR nomination for Morrison Farm; (c) searchable database for Cultural Resource List; (d) evaluations (architectural, etc.) of Vallaincourt House.
5. Next proceeded a discussion of the recent developments in the effort to preserve the WHF. Anne Forbes (AF), Carol Dwyer (CD), Georjess Burrow and Tom O'Neill participated in the discussion. PG related the details and outcome of his meeting with the Acton building inspector, Margaret Bacon of the Department of Corrections (DOC) and John Larson (JL) of NECC. JL had a crew at the WHF, and offered to have NECC crews help with labor wherever possible to stabilize the house. The inspector reached a similar conclusion to the Commission's evaluation for stabilization and rehabilitation costs (approx. \$500,000-\$700,000), which includes \$200,000 for lead abatement, although DOC estimated that it could complete the lead abatement work for \$60,000-\$100,000. Plywood donations (delivered and pledges) are now sufficient for the stabilization of broken windows at WHF, but chimney repair remains an open item. The issue was raised as to how to accept monetary donations, as the Town of Acton has expressed a preference not to set up a bank account for that purpose; possible solutions include setting up a charitable "friends" group (Preservation Mass might have recommendations) or getting Concord Lumber to set up a separate account to be used towards materials. With respect to leasing the property, the Town likely will not have an interest in taking on the property itself, but AF recommended looking at how this was accomplished in Shirley and investigating the DCR Curatorship program as possible alternative structures. CD noted that Jaime Eldridge was interested in the WHF preservation effort generally and in attending an upcoming meeting. It was agreed that getting a NR eligibility

determination would also help the cause and AF suggested communicating directly with Betsy Friedberg, the National Register Director.

**WHF Action Items:**

- a. Finish plywood donations and installation (HC, NECC)
- b. Find labor and materials to stabilize roof (HC, NECC)
- c. Determine how to hold donation money (HC investigating, AF asking Preservation Mass)
- d. Review DCR Curatorship program and applicability (HC)
- e. Contact DOC re: Shirley experience/example (HC)
- f. Contact Shirley historical commission to discuss process and experience with DOC (HC)
- g. Invite Jaime Eldridge to attend future meetings (CD)

6. The Sidewalk Committee invited HC members to participate in their upcoming meeting(s), and PG and VB attended the September meeting, at which they discussed HC input on the Committee's 6 top priority projects.

7. The final item discussed was the Conservation Commission's interest/effort to acquire 1 or 2 parcels in the vicinity of Piper Lane to expand the Great Hill conservation area.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Brad Maxwell, clerk pro tem*

Cc:      Town Clerk  
          Town Manager  
          Town Library