

Historic District Commission  
Town Hall, Room 126  
Meeting Minutes, 4 November, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM. Attending: Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB; chair), David Honn (DH), Ron Regan (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), and David Shoemaker (DS; note-taker), David Foley, Mike Gowing attending (Selectmen Representative)

Move to approve October 14 minutes by consent, and approved by vote.

7:31pm **Citizen's questions**

None.

7:33pm **Review of current issues**

**81 River:** DS to check on the status of a Fence.

Building department busy with move etc.; formal processes are moving slowly as a consequence.

Planning agenda for upcoming meetings. Choose to defer discussion of Sewers in West Acton.

MG notes that the warrant for the Spring Town Meeting closes on Dec 31<sup>st</sup>.

7:47

**Town Hall Paint Analysis:** Dean Charter. Brings example of old bracket and new one. Have received the completed study from Sarah Chase; the mustard yellow from painting was only used once in history of Town Hall. Original colors have now become clear from the analysis: Buff, light brown, and a green. A postcard from an unknown date shows colors very similar to the color scheme. A treatise around 1870 extolls virtues of choosing colors harmonious with nature. DC has put request into capital fund request. Painting will be needed in any event; demolition by neglect would be the consequence of a delay. The HDC will write a letter to the Selectmen in support of this endeavor, and will look into a public

information opportunity.

8:06

**Zoning in Historic Districts.** DH has requested meetings; MG notes that there may be email problems. Wish to present to Roland Bartle a presentation by Scott Kutil to cover the topics. Planning board also informed.

**Planning board:** DH reports. In South Acton and West Acton Districts, there is a category of 'indoor recreation'. Currently all 2000 sq ft or greater requires a special permit. Planning board proposes 5000 ft for West Acton, and extended to South Acton. DH indicates that there should be discussion in the HDC of the South Acton Village revised limit, where the FAR is significantly lower than in West Acton (note Exchange hall might be ~2000). The best approach may be to simply stick with the current special permit requirement. Discussion in the HDC; there are a variety of opinions on the issue. MG notes that a change in use can change e.g., parking needs. KAB notes that it could lead to a lowered threshold for current building. DF likes to retain some control so that if there is a change in vision it will be in check; and some control over the character of the use. AR and DS indicates best to stick with special permits.

**Non-conforming lots:** DH reports. Presently can increase by 15% without special permit. All special permits have been approved; Planning Board now wishes to move to 30%, for the entire town. DH argues this is a judgment that the planning board should not give up, and the work load upon analysis does not appear to be excessive with the present permitting rate. The Kutil presentation will help shed light on the consequences of changes like this, and may encourage an extension of this kind of analysis to more of the town. MG notes that GIS may be a tool to help automate the process.

**Historic New England Stewardship Easement Program:** In North Easton; worth a visit. Gift of property to Historic New England then provides for preservation and protection in perpetuity. Can lead to a tax deduction for entire structure donation, or an element of e.g., Windows, flooring, landscapes. Automatically prevents a subdivision. Part of the process is photography of very high quality and detail. For resale, the sale price is relatively unchanged although it can take longer to resell. Can live through the dissolution of HDC, and deals with things not visible from the right

of way (including interiors). HDC positively inclined to arrange for a visit from Historic NE, perhaps to the Library, and to open to surrounding communities; but will be important to show the kinds of benefits to homeowners. (Further information at <http://www.historicnewengland.org/preservation/preservation-easements/preservation-easements-the-stewardship-program> )

8:58 Move to adjourn; seconded; meeting ended.