

Historic District Commission
Meeting Minutes January 12, 2010

Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m. Scott Kutil (SK), Michaela Moran (MM), Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB), David Barrat (DB), David Honn (DH) were present and Maya Minkin and Terra Friedrichs were absent. The meeting was held in room 126 in Town Hall. Anne Forbes was present as a member of the public.

During Citizen's Concerns portion of the meeting Anne Forbes recommended that the HDC become involved in a Section 106 review of the proposed MBTA train station. Anne said that since the proposed train station involves federal money it is worth contacting the Federal Transportation Authority (FTA). Anne said she had contacted Jonathan Patton from the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) and that he told her that the HDC should contact the FTA and he also said that the MBTA has not sent a plan to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for the Section 106 review of the proposed station. Anne said that the Regional Director for the FTA has an office in Cambridge, MA and the HDC should write him and ask if there has been a Section 106 review or when it is planned. Also, the letter should state that the Acton HDC would like to participate in the process. She also cautioned that in the letter the HDC should focus on the adverse affects to Exchange Hall, Jones Tavern, and the South Acton Historic District. MM said that the Directors of Iron Work Farm and Glen Berger, the owner of Exchange Hall, could contact the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) with their concerns about the proposed train station. DH volunteered to write a letter to the FTA on behalf of the HDC in which he will present arguments for preservation, ask if the MBTA has submitted a project notification for the station design, and say that the Acton HDC wants to be involved in the process.

The discussion then turned to the 40B development at 111-113 School Street. KAB and DH were recused because they are abutters to the property. The developer will be presenting to the Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) on the 14th of January. Anne Forbes said that, again, since state permits are involved we can ask the MHC about a Section 106 review of this plan, this time under Massachusetts Ch.9, sect.s 26-27C. Someone commented that the Listserv did not know of a 40B development in a Massachusetts 40C historic district that included a demolition. Anne Forbes mentioned that the 40B behind this property on River St. was built on an empty parcel.

The owners of 14 Newtown Road have written the HDC a letter asking for an amendment to the Certificate of Approval (COA) for the design of the cupola. Since their COA included a condition that the HDC review the cupola design, MM was unclear about why they are asking for an amendment. However, in the letter, they ask for an amendment so that they do not need to install true divided light windows in the cupola.

MM said that the West Acton Baptist Church sent the HDC an email saying that ZBA said that the HDC has the authority to approve a sign that is five feet high. MM moved to approve a five foot height for the West Acton Baptist Church. The motion passed unanimously.

DH said that the HDC should respond to the email by Roland Bartl on the subject of temporary signs. MM said to make any comments available to her. DH has already sent his comments to MM.

The Town of Acton has sent us a description of the documentation that must be provided by the HDC for inclusion in the Acton Comprehensive Community Plan (Master Plan). KAB said that this information was also required for the first Master Plan that was done ten years ago.

KAB was designated the liaison for the application at 10 Wood Lane. DB was designated the liaison for 65 River St. and SK for a new application at 11 Chadwick for an addition. SK will contact the owner and visit the property to see if the addition qualifies for a Certificate of Non-Applicability (CNA).

KAB said that the HDC retreat will be held Saturday March 13th at the Acton Memorial Library and on Saturday March 20th the window seminar will be held at the Windsor building. The seminar will be co-sponsored with Acton Municipal Properties and it will include a short workshop geared to restoring historic windows. MM asked if the seminar could be videotaped and KAB said she would check with the Jade Mortimer, the instructor.

MM said that she and Terra Friedrichs met with Brian Mullen to discuss a hardship definition for the HDC. Brian gave MM some of the forms used by the town to determine hardship for abatements and social services. Brian offered to screen anyone who applies to the HDC for a hardship exemption and this was approved by Steve Ledoux, Town Manager. DH asked if the HDC needs to change the Chapter P Bylaw or the HDC Rules and Regulations prior to letting Brian Mullen screen hardship applications. MM said that was not necessary and that this would be part of the formal process for assessing hardship.

KAB attended last week's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and wanted to report that Theatre III will ask for CPC funds for the complete rehab of the Theatre III building, not just piecemeal repairs. She also mentioned that the Open Space Committee requested CPC funds to buy parcels in South Acton and that both of these requests for CPC funds will require letters of support from the HDC.

The sign violations at Graphic Connections and Sweet Bites in West Acton were brought up. MM will send a letter to Graphic Connections. And a letter to Sweet Bites will be send explaining that the Town will not reimburse the cost of bringing their sign into compliance. DH will contact Steve Su at 14-20 School St to assess the type of repairs needed to cure the window replacement violation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.