

53 River Street Master Plan Special Committee Minutes

3-21-2018

Acton Recreation Center - 50 Audubon Drive

Prepared by Michele Holland

Present: Louis York, Bill Klauer (Vice Chair), Bob Whittlesey, Camille Duquet, Don Boyle, Michele Holland, Bill Alesbury, Peter Hocknell, Matthew Selby (staff)

Absent: Peter Berry (Chair), John Cook

Guests: David Honn, Kathryn Acerbo-Bachman

Selby called the meeting to order at 7:38pm.

Bill Klauer was unanimously elected as Vice Chair and took over running the meeting.

Minutes from the February 28, 2018 meeting were approved as amended.

David Honn, the Historic District Commission Chairman, outlined the process that would need to be followed for demolition and reconstruction to comply with HDC requirements.

The HDC is first in line to have permits pulled for any work on this site. He advised that first step would be to apply to the HDC for certificate (of appropriateness or non-applicability) to remove the cinder block building and the salt shed. The fill and large blocks forming material bins can be removed without a certificate. The fence is ok to stay and would be useful during construction. He advised that the normal process is to present the HDC with a redevelopment plan for the site before a certificate would be issued. The dam is considered a structure according to the HDC bylaws, so if it is decided to be removed or breached in the future, it would also need a certificate. The new dam is constructed over the original dam, and the cinder block building is on a slab that may be from the original Mill, and these may trigger oversight by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The site might be found to have archaeological interest as well, which may require an archaeological survey. There may also be ecological concerns discovered. David said if we do remove the dam, or breach it, the water flow may impact properties downstream. A visit to the site is recommended ASAP. He stated the HDC approval process is about 60 days, so we should get it started.

Bill Klauer suggested we do the site visit first then compile a list of town boards and committees that should be involved, and get the certification, which is good for one year, and can be extended easily.

Selby reminded the committee that the entire site is within the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission as well. At the site visit the committee can visit the building, but Selby notes it has dampness due to a leaky roof, and a smell of oil, and probably mold. The power was disconnected when the Town closed on the property.

Selby stated the Town had given the suggestions that are listed in the Conway School project proposal, and that the funds are available from his professional services budget. Conway School must have the contract signed by 3-22-2018. David Honn said that Conway's work will need to go through the HDC first, so efforts need to be made to see this happens. Selby remarked that the Walker property (348-364 Main St.) project had more time, but was declined by the Conway School due to the involvement of so many different town boards and committees who had their own interests to project. The scope of work was too broad as a result, to be successful for this group of graduate students and their adviser/educators. It was stated that profession landscape design can be in the range of \$20,000.

A vote was taken and unanimous consent was given to sign the contract and engage with the Conway School. April 18th is the kickoff meeting with Conway School, who will join us at the site and at a meeting following a site visit.

Kathryn, who is a former HDC chair, stated that the HDC oversees the setting as well as the buildings and can deny or grant as is appropriate to meet the plan of the Historic District. Selby will put the HDC documents into the Conway info binders so they will follow HDC guidelines.

Bob Whittlesey suggested that the affordable housing residents might be interested in maintaining the gardens.

The goals and objectives of the Acton 2020 comprehensive plan were reviewed, and the committee was reminded to keep these in mind as the project moves forward.

Engineering put up one flag to delineate the western extent of the property along River Street. Acton's DPW director is said to be interested in making River Street one-way from School Street to Chadwick Street, away from the strain station, to alleviate cars speeding to the train station.

Discussion of Open Meeting Law ensued. The OML is online, and we are reminded to keep OML in mind. OML requires that meetings are posted 48 hours in advance and no discussion by members outside of an open meeting should occur, including via email.

The April 4 meeting was cancelled due to Town Meeting. A site walk was scheduled for April 11 at 5pm; Selby will meet with anyone that cannot attend the site walk on another day.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 18. The meeting will begin with a site walk with the Conway School students at 5pm, and then continue at the Recreation Center, 50 Audubon Drive, at 7pm with the Conway School students as the first agenda item.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.