



MASSACHUSETTS 01720

ACTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Acton Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2016
7:30 p.m., Acton Town Hall, Room 126

AHC Members Present: Bill Klauer (BK) - Chair, Victoria Beyer (VB), Doug Herrick (DH), Bill Dickinson, and Katie Green (KG) – BOS Liaison

Members of the Public Present: Fran Arsenault, Ripley Martin, David Honn, Anne Forbes, Barry Elkin, Carolyn Kiely, Corinne Hogseth, Michelle Semour, Terra, Friedrichs, Shawn Jennings, Boris Protopopov

1. BK called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm and opened the floor to comments and issues from the many members of the public who were present. Terra Friedrichs questioned the Commission's decision to permit the demolition of 296-298 Central Street in West Acton, proposing that all requests for demolition should result in an automatic delay instead of a hearing and vote by the Commission. BK responded that changing the current demolition process would require a bylaw change and that a key role of the Commission was to review and consider demolition requests based on a walk-through of the property.

Tara, Dave Honn, and other members of the public engaged in a spirited discussion about the need, and most effective way, to more aggressively preserve historic properties. One option discussed was a proposal that any property listed on the Cultural Resource List proposed for demolition would trigger a review by the Community Preservation Committee to possibly use its Community Preservation Fund to acquire and renovate the property. Another topic debated involved the requirement of the Massachusetts Historical Commission to automatically review any 40B proposal involving an historic property, and the role of the AHC to hold the MHC accountable for this review should it be overlooked. Concern was expressed that the MHC was becoming lax in its review of historical properties involved in 40B development. This triggered a discussion about the appropriateness of the AHC in holding the MHC responsible for doing its mandated job. An extensive discussion followed on the effect of the 40B legislation on the loss

of historical sites, and the targeting by developers of suburban towns like Acton with large-acreage historic properties. One approach suggested was for Acton to aggressively develop affordable housing itself to get its percentage of affordable housing above the 10% trigger, and thus have the town removed from any further 40B development. It was suggested that the Acton 2020 master plan could be such a vehicle for “spiking” the 40B developers. KG felt that the Acton 2020 master plan was not an appropriate vehicle to deal with this issue and a more effective approach would be to draft a housing production plan that makes an honest attempt to get Acton to the 10% goal. She said that this approach would give us relief from 40B projects for one year.

After a wide-ranging discussion about Acton’s municipal culture of developer-friendliness, the need for improved inter-commission communications and coordination, and the various competing agendas among town employees, office-holders, and constituencies that impeded historical preservation in general, BK tabled any further discussions as out of scope so he could proceed with the rest of the formal agenda items.

2. BK recognized Barry Elkin who updated the group on the proposal by the town of Concord to expand the Lake Nagog water treatment plant footprint. Barry offered to continue briefing the group on the activities of his group of interested adjacent homeowners and would continue to press for the required updated archeological assessment into areas not covered by the original site permit (wooded area for solar panels and expansion area). Barry stated his concern that the town of Concord was in violation of its own meeting and review policies on this issue, and stated he was not sure how to prepare for the upcoming proposal review meeting on July 18, 2016.
3. BK updated the commission on the 248 High St. property which is scheduled for demolition following a successful application for a 40B development. Dave Honn stated that the developer did not notify the MHC about the demolition permit and recommended that the AHC send a letter to the MHC requesting a review. Based on this new information it was proposed that the commission send this letter and the motion was passed unanimously.
4. BK updated the group on the 296-298 Central Street properties approved for demolition. He stated that the current owners were still living there, the town had not foreclosed on back taxes, and that the new owner had proposed a single unit design that was currently under review.
5. BK updated the group on the status of the 43 School St. property, currently \$275k in tax arrears. It is in a dilapidated state although salvageable. It has been officially condemned and sealed with the requisite “X” painted on the plywood to indicate no occupants should firemen or other officials be faced with a potential decision to enter this hazardous building.
6. BK reported that the Board of Selectmen requested that a member of the AHC participate on a committee to discuss and recommend a use for the Walker property on Main St. near Kennedy’s Landscaping that was recently acquired by the town. DH volunteered to represent the committee.

7. BK had no news to report on the drafting of the proposal to get the Forest Cemetery on the National Register.
8. Dave Honn updated the group on the plans to repaint the Town Hall with the \$160k funding. He is still working on developing a committee to review and propose paint colors. He intends to simplify the process by recommending 3 color choices to bring this effort to a close.
9. BK had no news on the 34 Elm St. property to report. Chip Orcott has not submitted an application for a barn demolition permit, which is required for him to move the barn.
10. BK asked for a review and acceptance of last meeting's minutes which was approved.
11. BK announced that starting in July of 2016, Bill Dickinson would be the new AHC chair. It was decided to defer a discussion of who would be the vice chair until the July meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Herrick

Cc: Town Clerk
Town Manager
Town Library
Historic District Commission