

Belmont Historic District Commission MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 11, 2023, via Zoom

Staff Present: Gabriel Distler

Commission Members Present:

Carol Moyles, Co-Chair

Carl Solander, Co-Chair

Michael Chesson

Jacqueline Appel

Stefan Ahlblad

Drew Nealon

Matt Schonewald, appointee designate

Absent: Meg Reilly

- **Others Present:** Chris Ripman (for Case 23-03 and 23-04), Lisa Harrington (Building Conservation Associates for Case 23-05), Dave Blazon (Director of Facilities Town of Belmont for Case 23-05 and Case 23-06), Judith Feinlieb (town resident and on the Benton Library Board of Directors for Case 23-05), Yar Laakso (TGAS for Case 23-06)

1. Meeting Called to Order at 7:03 pm:

1. C. Moyles and C. Solander presiding

2. New Public Hearings:

- a. **Case 23-03 and 23-04:** 711 Pleasant Street – Facade Restoration (23-03) and Retaining Walls (23-04).

Case 23-03

- Application for facade restoration project, represented as deferred maintenance, with the goal being to restore the property to its former condition. Project scope to include replacement in kind and paint-to-match various existing exterior rotted wood: front porch (except roof); replace siding and trim (northeast facade, limited area at tool porch first floor); rear wood gutters and trim boards; basement door and window; trellis over deck.
- There is a possibility that when the front porch is torn apart, some metal might be required.
- Photos, plot plan, and site plan were attached.
- C. Solander indicated he thought the guardrail may need to incorporate pickets in order to be code-compliant. If the building inspector indicates this is a requirement, then the application would need to be updated and Mr. Ripman would need to return to present the amended application to the HDC.

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TOWN CLERK
BELMONT, MA**

DATE: May 10, 2023

TIME: 2:03 PM

- C. Solander moved to approve the application for the facade project (23-03) as submitted. This passed unanimously. However, he noted that if the building inspector requires pickets, then Mr. Ripley would need to come back to the Committee.

Case 23-04

- Application for landscape restoration project represented as deferred maintenance and to meet code. Project scope to include replace in kind and paint-to-match various existing rotted landscape timber retaining walls with 6x8 railroad ties to match existing or 6x8 pressure treated landscape timbers. Regrade and step existing high wall to meet code. Photos were attached.
 - There are a number of retaining walls around the house, most of which are low (2 ft.) but there is one high (6 ft) retaining wall.
 - Options considered were:
 - Eliminating the terraced landscape by taking out the landscaping timbers and instead grading/seeding the land.
 - Putting a railing around the areas with the higher drop-off to prevent issues with the drop-off.
 - C. Moyles prefers the original approach of replacing the landscaping timbers. She feels it is safer, integrates more plantings, and would bring the scale down to meet the code.
 - C. Solander pointed out that railroad ties may be hard to obtain but would last longer and would fit in better and be less obtrusive-looking. Pressure treated landscaping lumber may be difficult to stain. If the railroad ties are available, Mr. Ripman would prefer to use those.
 - C. Moyles was most concerned about how the landscaping timbers would be viewed from the public way and suggested exploring the staining of the pressure treated lumber. She asked whether the contractor had any experience with staining pressure treated lumber for this type of application.
 - Mr. Ripman indicated he was happy to discuss the options with the contractor.
 - C. Solander indicated that the general concept for 23-04 is ok but some details to be reviewed at the next meeting.
- Case 23-04 will be continued at the next HDC meeting.

Cases 23-03 and 23-04

- Neighbors were contacted and did not have issues with either proposal.
- C. Solander made a site visit and C. Moyles drove by from the public way.
- Mr. Ripman indicated he could defer the landscaping project to the fall but would like to move ahead with work on the structure.

b. Case 23-05: 75 Oakley Road – Benton Library Roof Work

Application to repair the failed stone chimney at the Benton Library as well as spot repair the asphalt roof with the same roof materials and spot repair the interior wooden underlayment.

- Lisa Harrington (Building Conservation Associates) provided an update on the project. The project was put out to bid several weeks ago. Only 2 bids were received and neither bid was acceptable. The dollar amount of one bid was acceptable but the contractor was not acceptable; the dollar amount of the other bid was too high. Therefore, the bidding process is being restarted.
- S. Ahlblad questioned why the chimney should be rebuilt; he had been told that the chimney was no longer used or needed. D. Blazon stated that the chimney is required for the gas- fired

furnace. M. Chesson asked if the furnace could be vented a different way. D. Blazon stated that it could not. L. Harrington added that the library is eligible to be listed on the historic register and there was no reason for the structure to be built differently than the original building.

- J. Feinleib urged the Commission to approve the chimney repair, stating that the building would not be the same without the chimney.
- C. Solander asked about masonry cleaning. Per L. Harrington, this would only apply to sections that were repointed.
- L. Harrington stated that mockups would be available on site. She will let S. Ahlbad (Commission liaison) know when they can be viewed. Alternatively, Commission members can review her site reports.
- C. Solander moved to approve the application as proposed subject to the Historic District Commission approving the mockups. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Case 23-06 455 Concord Avenue – Town Hall Roof Work

- Application is to repair sections of the Town Hall slate roof, as designated by TGAS. Investigation of the underlayment and sheathing is needed as well as repair of a copper corner cap and replacement of damaged/missing slates.
- Roof leakage was noticed by the Town of Belmont Facilities Department.
- The Facilities Department is moving ahead with the low bidder.
- Salvage slate will need to be used because new slate is not a match. To that end, a Vermont Company has been contacted for the salvage slate.
- C. Solander stated that someone from the HDC should be on site to review the color match of the slates used to repair the roof.
- C. Solander made a Motion to approve the application subject to a HDC member reviewing the slate color matches. The Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Draft 3/14/23 Meeting Minutes

- A redlined copy of the Minutes was distributed. G. Distler will clean up the formatting after the minutes are approved.
- C Solander had several edits on page 2 beginning with the 4th bullet.
 - The buildings are all Town-owned buildings.
 - Under Work Plan iv.a., it was only Gabriel who “reported on the large Belmont-Watertown Methodist church”.
 - C. Moyer made a Motion to approve the Minutes as amended and C. Solander seconded the Motion. The Motion was approved.

4. New Business:

- Welcome Matt Schonewald to the Historic District Commission
 - The HDC welcomed Matt Schonewald as a new HDC member. Matt has resided in the Pleasant Street Historic District at 548 Pleasant Street since 2014. The house was built in 1896, and his family is only the 3rd owner of the house.
- Pleasant Street Historic District Walking Tour and Pleasant Street Historic District Signs with Viktoria Haase
 - A flier about the Pleasant Street Historic District Walking Tour was distributed with the Meeting materials. The Walking Tour will be led by Victoria Haase and will take place on

Saturday, April 29, 2-4 pm. Participants should meet on Pleasant Street near Stella. HDC members are encouraged to participate.

- The Belmont Historical Society is paying the cost of the Historic District signs. The first of the new signs has been in place for approximately the last 9 months and is located by the Stephen Frost house. A second sign has been commissioned. M. Chesson questioned exactly where the sign will be located and who will install the sign. He believes that the DPW should do the installation. G. Distler will contact the DPW. Viktoria Haase has been in touch with the sign carver. It is uncertain when the sign will be finished.
- S. Ahlblad suggested that someone should take the initiative to apply for listing on the National Historic Register as a way to prevent demolition of historic structures. He estimated there are about 6 buildings that would qualify. C. Solander didn't feel that listing would provide any protection above what is already available through the demo delay. L. Harrington might have a 'how to' document on this topic. A few years ago L. Harrington worked on getting properties on the list.
- G. Distler suggested that we all should give some thought to other things that could be done to delay tear downs.
- C. Solander mentioned that other towns have a neighborhood conservation district apart from a historic district. Lexington has one for modern houses. This might be helpful in delaying/preventing tear-downs.

5. Continued Discussion

- Membership

C. Moyles mentioned that two additional alternates are needed, and that it would be to fill these slots. Need 2 more alternates.

C. Moyles also mentioned that if your term expires in 2023 and you want to be reappointed you need to apply by the end of June. Please let G. Distler know either way what your intentions are. He can send a link to apply.

• McLean Barn

C. Solander indicated that an RFQ for a facilitator is expected to be released within the next 2 months.

- HDC Webpage Update

S. Ahlblad stated that the website pages have been sorted alphabetically due to the computer programs default settings. A way to correct the page sequence will be proposed to the website programmers.

The McLean barn needs to be included on the website.

The website is going to need to be updated periodically.

• Town-owned historic Assets Building Inventory (CPC Projects)

J. Appel gave an update on the progress of the RFP. Gathering comments went more slowly than anticipated and there is some confusion about whether an RFP or an RFQ should be prepared. G. Distler will try to get some more guidance on this question.

J. Appel is still targeting to have the next draft available by the end of April provided the RFP/RFQ question can be resolved quickly.

- Work Plan Review

C. Moyles stated that a working group consisting of C. Solander, M. Ryan, and C. Moyles has been formed to establish what to update on the design guidelines.

The landmark designation will be added to the Work Plan.

The Work Plan doesn't need to be sent out every month if there are no significant changes.

- **MBTA Community Zoning Update**

A meeting took place on March 13 and an updated plan is being drafted for intended approval in May.

- **Housing Production Plan Advisory**

C. Solander indicated that last month's meeting was canceled.

G. Distler indicated that there was a public meeting in March. There probably will be another subcommittee meeting in the next several weeks to complete the Plan, with a goal to approve the Plan in May.

- **General Housekeeping**

G. Distler indicated that M. Haskell will attend the next meeting regarding funding related to the Land Management Committee of Lone Tree Hill and the McLean barn facilitator.

C. Solander is the interface for the HDC.

- The next HDC meeting is May 9. S. Ahlblad will take the minutes.

The HDC meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Appel