

## **Harvard Historical Commission - Meeting Minutes**

### **October 24, 2011, 7:45am**

Members Present: Roseanne Saalfeld, Jonathan Feist, Ken Swanton, Rhonda Sprague, Pam Marston, John Martin, Doug Coots, Chris Cutler.

Guests present: Janet Beaty, George Watkins, Andy Warner, and Mary Arata (Harvard Hillside Newspaper).

Members absent: Jarod Wollaston

The meeting started with a brief informal round table discussion regarding solar photovoltaic collectors on buildings in Harvard's two Historic Districts. Some of the various inconclusive comments made:

**Jonathan** - these are space age objects on handmade buildings and are therefore inappropriate. Given that about only five percent of the buildings in Harvard reside in the two Historic Districts, it is acceptable that in those districts there may be greater restrictions on the placement of PV arrays. It is important to preserve the look and feel of the historic districts and these arrays undermine that.

**Doug** - Would we be more comfortable allowing PV arrays on a historically significant mid-20th century modern house, even if the PV technology was not "original" to that period? Might we try to identify buildings of higher historic importance and exert more control over those, and allow collectors on secondary buildings or less significant primary buildings?

**John** - We shouldn't be alarmist and assume that if some buildings in a District have PV arrays, all of them will. Solar orientation will determine whether buildings can support collectors. As long as the overall fabric is maintained, we should be able to approve some of the applications and be satisfied we have done what we are obliged to do as a Commission.

**Doug** - This new technology should not be approached any differently than an addition to a roof, like a dormer. We can deliberate on it solely on it's contribution to the District, whether it hurts or improves it, or is neutral. We are not obliged to consider it as anything other than a visual addition.

**John** - Along the lines of understanding the basic ideas of Historic Districts, it will help us to better understand which buildings in each district are categorized as "Contributing" vs. "Noncontributing".

The Special Meeting then turned to its primary purpose, to review two projects which had been previously determined as insubstantial:

**Watkins Application for 96 Shaker Road.** reread from the Oct. 5th meeting - *“A nine panel ( approx. 30” x 60” each) roof top array on an outbuilding behind the main house approximately 460’ from the public way. Moreover, the site line is up a hill which further reduces the array’s visibility from the road. Motion to find the application Insubstantial, reasons - array not on an historic structure, a great distance from roadway and a relatively small array - motion seconded and approved unanimously.”*

Motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, seconded and voted unanimously approved.

**Warner Application for 99 South Shaker Road.** Reread from Oct 5th meeting - *“This is a land based PV Solar Array, measuring approx. 11’ H x 13’ x 15’, and located approx. 690’ ( line of sight) from the public way. Motion to find the application Insubstantial, reasons - array not on an historic structure, a great distance from roadway and a relatively small array - motion seconded and approved, one nay vote.”*

Motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, seconded and voted unanimously approved.

The last Application required a Public Hearing. Motion to open the Public Hearing, seconded and approved unanimously:

**Beaty Application for 5 Oak Hill Road.** Reread from Oct 5th meeting - *“A 22 panel PV Array on a dormer roof on the barn next to the house. Motion to find the application Substantial, seconded and approved.”*

A photoshopped image had been created to portray the array as seen from the most prominent viewpoint within the neighborhood, from the West standing on the Little Common at the edge of Fairbank Street.

Comments by the Commissioners were as follows:

Chris - Until he saw this particular point of view he had thought it an acceptable application, but not anymore. It is more visible and more objectionable than he had imagined.

Jonathan - It is still a space age thing on a handmade house - inappropriate.

Roseanne - Wouldn’t have an array on her house but thought it acceptable in this case.

Doug - Given that the array is on the secondary building, not the house, it is OK.

John - Asphalt shingles introduced in the 1940's were initially not liked, but have now become acceptable. This sort of array will also become acceptable.

Pam - The principal view is from a distance and has small impact.

Ken - There will be other Applications for PV arrays which will be more significant - this is not egregious enough to resist.

John asked that we receive information about the electric connections from the collectors to the roof as a condition to a motion to grant. A motion was made to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness (with the above condition), seconded and approved with two nay votes, Jon and Chris.

Additional discussion regarding two upcoming CPC sponsorship requests, one from Pat Jennings and the Congo Church for Column Repairs to the main building. We agreed to sponsor. The second from the Cemetery Commission looking for sponsorship for tree removal at the Shaker Burial Ground. Doug suggested that the Conservation Commission may be a more appropriate sponsor. Discussion on this item shall be continued until the next meeting, on November 8.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Doug Coots