

Historic District Commission Meeting
February 21, 2013

Present: Gretchen Schuler (presiding), Margery Baston, Chris Hagger, George Ives, Desmond McAuley, Kathie Steinberg.

Others: Dick & Sandy Hoyt, Heather Ryan, Susan Keyes, Lea Anderson, Enrique De Los Reyes, Tom Lizzewski, Diana Warren, Alice Boelter, Woody Baston, Molly Upton, Keith Sims, Marney Ives, Barbara Hayes Buell, Paul Langer, Sue Bryant-Still, Robert Mainer, Ann Gordon, Ross & Lynn Trimby, Lynne Spencer, Patrick Guthrie, Sue Wagner.

Public Comment for items not on the agenda – There was none.

The minutes for January 17, 2013 were accepted. (4-0-0)

Survey forms have been completed (with help of Jo Goeselt).

7:45 pm Public Hearing – First Parish Church – 225 Boston Post Road – One and on-half story connector addition between 1814-15 meeting house/church and 1983-84 parish house. Plans can be reviewed at the Selectmen’s office.

Gretchen introduced the members of the HDC and explained why George Ives and Chris Hagger do not have a conflict of interest with regards to this hearing. (George is a member of the First Parish Church, but is not on its Building Committee or Board; Chris Hagger lives next door to the First Parish, but members who live in the HD regularly take part in hearings, unless a proposed project is believed to have a financial impact on the commission member’s property.)

Gretchen read aloud from Mass. Law 40C:7. Factors to be considered by (HDC) commission: *“In the case of new construction or additions to existing buildings or structures the commission shall consider the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure both in relation to the land area upon which the building or structure is situated and to buildings and structures in the vicinity...”*

Lynne Spencer (preservation partner of Menders, Torrey & Spencer architectural consultants for the First Parish) gave a brief history of the Meeting House, drawn by Asher Benjamin and built in 1814. The building was altered in the 1850s to elevate the Meeting House to the upper level with a vestry underneath. In 1983-84 a Parish House was built. In 1991 the addition at the rear of Meeting House included an elevator – making the Meeting House accessible to everyone. The Parish House serves as Sunday School and a pre-school during the week. There is a need to make the facility accessible to young children and their parents as well. In previous informal meetings with the HDC there was stress on the view of the carriage sheds – and the HDC urged a solution with a view.

Gretchen explained that the HD ends just in front of the Parish House – which means that the HDC technically does not have jurisdictional review of the last 8 feet of the building; however, Spencer had urged the HDC at previous meetings to consider the whole design. Patrick Guthrie (who works with Lynne Spencer at Menders, Torrey & Spencer) explained that the size of the proposed link between the Meeting House and the Parish House is driven by the program needs for active space with movement through it. He said, “You should be able to see through two layers of glass and see the lighted carriage sheds”. Triple height windows are now proposed on west side; on east side double hung windows with a solid panel transom. The stair tower was the other concern in previous meetings expressed by the HDC, with its skewed angle and band of windows across the top. This clerestory raised the ridge line, and there were exterior windows that were evocative of the rising staircase. The most recently proposed windows have the nice, long slender look that can be seen in the Meeting House. Windows have been grouped to give the look of a tall space which allows you to look in and through the proposed addition. Patrick referred to the last sheet in the hand-out which showed views of the proposed addition from various angles. He said there has been an endeavor to keep the roof ridge lines (and the venting chimney) from overwhelming anything else.

Patrick Guthrie, of Torrey, Menders & Spencer, project architect, went on to explain that the roofing will be a standing seam metal roof, dull gray in color, similar to the lead coated copper on the addition and the parish house. The clapboard spacing changes gradually from the Meeting House (narrow) to the proposed addition to the Parish House (with its wide spacing). The windows on both sides of the “link” will be Marvin windows with wood exteriors. The proposed trim package needs to be simpler and less flat; and there will be simple ogee molding at the eaves. The stair tower will have a fascia board.

Gretchen invited HDC members to comment on the most recent plans proposed by Lynne Spencer and Patrick Guthrie.

Desmond expressed his appreciation of their response to HDC concerns. He felt the hierarchy is better; and the stair tower doesn’t shout out. He liked the clapboard articulation. He thought the glazing on the front of the addition was respectful of the old but obviously new. There is a nice reciprocity of ridge lines of the Meeting House to the stair tower in the newer building. The trim work looks good. The gesture of acknowledging the windows of the Meeting House but articulating in a different way – works well. Desmond did have a question about the trim around the windows. He also asked if there would be shades of white or off-white. (Patrick responded that they are proposing a white on white-ish palette.)

Margery also expressed appreciation of the changes from last month’s proposal to the current proposal. It now includes larger, multi-paned windows on both the east and west side of the proposed addition. These windows appear to give a nod to the beautiful windows in the First Parish. The stair tower has been somewhat reduced, is less prominent and its proportions have been improved.

Gretchen commented next and she agreed with previous comments made – and she had

some questions. Is there such a window that is 3-sash that would give you the light you have with the 4-sash? This would not be a copy of original windows, but it would be interesting to try... (Patrick responded that he attempted numerous drawings of the 3-sash, but it did not work in the proposed addition.) Gretchen's other question had to do with the fenestration on the west side of the stair tower which is not shown in plan but was acknowledged in the prospective of the west side when south bound on Cochituate Road. .

George expressed his appreciation of the job done. He felt there was a synergy of goals resulting in a wonderful project.

Kathie – agreed with what other HDC members had been said so far.

Chris Hagger wanted to focus on the views from Route 20. He commented that the railing on the addition is not like the railing on the front of the First Parish. (Patrick Guthrie responded that the railing for ramp will have posts with metal tubing; and it will be malleable metal. The railing on the front of the First Parish was added on significantly after the church was built. It would not be good to copy because it does not work well as an accessible handrail. The proposed handrail would be in a dark brown color. The color for the handicap railing (along the ramp) could possibly be the same color.

Patrick Guthrie spoke next about the lighting plan for the proposed addition. In creating the “link” we have chance to illuminate the path. Most of illumination along the east side of the link is going to be in the soffits as recessed light shining downward. It will reflect on the wall giving some additional light. There will be one light fixture on the east wall of the stair tower and one on the north wall of the parish house (adjacent to the stair tower) for the continued path/ramp. The point was made by someone that just path lighting might be adequate. (Patrick responded by saying that on the lighting drawings each grid is 5 feet – which shows what light is being cast down to the ground; with all exterior lighting the beam direction is down. He pointed out that there will be two exterior lights on the building. There will be a rank of small simple lights along the carriage sheds – and this is where accessible parking will be located. Gretchen asked, “What would the lights look like on carriage sheds?” (Patrick folded a piece of paper to show the size of the housing for the lighting – about 4 by 8 inches.) Desmond asked about placing the lighting down low – but this would require additional lighting fixtures. Desmond mentioned that lights could even be in the bottom of the handrail – but that would be significantly more expensive. Gretchen made the point that the fixtures being proposed are not going to have a large spread of light; and this is a good thing because the HDC was trying to avoid light-spill.

Desmond commented on the west façade of the carriage sheds – where the light fixtures are hidden so that you don't see the bulb -- just light on the building. (Patrick responded that the carriage sheds are so simple that the lighting should be simple. This building has never been illuminated before.) Desmond asked if there was a light fixture that could clip onto the building as opposed to making a 4 inch hole (for each of the 5 lighting fixtures being proposed on the sheds.)

Kathie asked about the interior light in the stair tower. (Patrick responded that a chandelier with lower wattage bulbs will give a nice glow and people will be visible moving around inside.) Gretchen mentioned exit lights—which can be surprisingly bright.

The following people in the audience raised questions or made comments:

Robert Mainer asked about the lighting for walkways on posts. (He had concerns about vandalism if that type were used).

Mollie Upton said her primary view of the carriage sheds is from route 27, north bound. She pointed out that most people view the carriage sheds from their cars. This led her to ask, “What is height of the windows from the ground on the west side?” (Patrick responded that the level of the grade varies and he gave some estimates. He pointed out there is a level landing just outside the double doors. He also stated that the carriage sheds are low, but a motorist on route 27 would be looking up and through the windows and doors to see the sheds.)

Alice Boelter stated that she would like to see a simple glass connection between the First Parish and the Parish House. (Patrick Guthrie responded that there is 150 square feet of glass in the proposed addition. This is a lot of glass given the building materials and the building codes. He couldn’t see how more glass in the proposed construction would be possible. He pointed out that the glass will be an efficient thermal pane.)

Desmond made the point that the level of transparency of the glass can make a big difference. He also pointed out that the addition was not designed to be all glass. He also thought that a motorist on Route 27 would get only a glimpse of the carriage sheds.

Gretchen raised questions about the color of the roof – and she pointed out that the color should be approved by the HDC. There was also a question about the “contrasting whites” which also need further review. Desmond asked if the roof would have a baked on factory finish. (Patrick responded in the affirmative.)

Chris Hagger said he would like to see more details on the railing.

Desmond commented that what the HDC was considering was the first level of the design; another level would be required that gave more detail (on color, roofing, handrails etc.)

Gretchen: I think the design is well done and meets many of our concerns. Gretchen felt the architects approach to lighting was good.

Kathie asked what had been there before the existence of the Parish House. Gretchen briefly stated that a house had been on that parcel. She noted that long ago there was another string of carriage sheds behind the church, but they were demolished years

before.

Desmond said he was pleased with the massing and wants to see more detail. Lighting could be done either way. In conclusion, this is an improvement to design of last month.

Enrique De Los Reyes, a member of First Parish, made the point the lighting is a safety issue for church members.

Chris Hagger asked about the timing of the lights. (Patrick said they would be placed on an astronomical/ digital timer.)

Susan Keyes, member of the First Parish, said that most meetings at the church are over at 10 pm. (Timers could go off at such time.) She referred to the idea of an all glass addition; and this was considered by the Building Committee. However, the cost differential was very substantial and it would have been prohibitive. She expressed her regret over losing the view of the carriage sheds.

Susan Geiger, representing the Wayland Creative Pre-School, spoke in favor of the connector/addition. From an accessibility perspective – the Parish House is not handicap accessible because the building has been grandfathered. When there is a need (for instance, a child with a broken leg) we have to carry the child up and down the stairs. The current lack of accessibility can make it difficult for children or for a parent with mobility issues.

Bill Wagner pointed out that the most prominent feature of the proposed addition is the roof. He asked if something couldn't be done that was more antique (perhaps like a metal roof). Gretchen commented that the HDC doesn't believe that new buildings should be designed to look old or to replicate old buildings.

Paul Langer expressed his concern over the condition of the carriage sheds. He pointed out that they are in bad shape and unless something is done to repair them they will not be around for long.

Susan Keyes, a First Parish member, stated that it is the church's intent to apply for CPC funds for the carriage shed roofs (for next year's town meeting). Gretchen pointed out that the Mass Historical Commission may also have funding for such a project.

George Ives made the motion that the HDC accept the plans elevations and massing that were presented tonight, with the proviso of a later review of the details of the building including materials, roofing, paint colors, railing, lighting, trim work. Margery seconded this motion and the result was a favorable, unanimous vote. (6-0-0)

Alice Boelter suggested that window glazing also be included in the list of future items to be considered by the HDC.

The hearing was closed. This motion was made by George and seconded by Desmond.

This received a favorable, unanimous vote. (6-0-0)

The next meeting/hearing on the addition to the First Parish, will be held on Tuesday, March 19.

Old business – update on intersection construction. Town planner, Sarki, informed Gretchen that the intersection is currently working without taking land from Law Office Green. The HDC was surprised and pleased with this news.

Kathie asked about the problem with light-spillage at 10 Old Sudbury Road from the back of the Stop & Shop. Sarki will push for greenery that could mitigate this.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Margery Baston