

Minutes
WHDC Meeting
January 21, 2016

Members present: Gretchen Schuler (presiding), Margery Baston, Alice Boelter, Marji Ford, Kate Finlayson, Sheryl Simon, Kathie Steinberg

Others: Woody Baston, Mike Lowery, Timothy Burke, Susan and Bill Wagner, Nadine and Dan Hill, Dana and Matt Cooper, Ted Price, Denise Passaretti, Peter Reynolds, Nik Andersson, Cindy Reardon,

Public Comment:

Mike Lowery suggested that the Library Town parcel be added to the Town Center Historic District.

25 Bow Road -- James Henry Small House - Informal discussion about potential addition of a conservatory. Dan and Nadine Hill and their architect presented plans for a mostly glass conservatory on the front of their house. It would measure about 7.5 feet by 14 feet, and would extend 3 feet closer to the road than the tower. It would be painted the trim color of the house. After some brief questioning, there was general approval of the concepts for the plans for this addition. An application will follow and will be heard at a posted hearing.

31 Cochituate Road - George Smith House - Complaints about displays in front of the building. Gretchen started this discussion by having the Commission review pertinent legislation (including references to Mass. General Law 40C). She explained that she had had discussions with the owner of 31 Cochituate Road, who in turn spoke with Matt Cooper who is currently renting the first floor of the building and placing displays on the front porch and lawn. Gretchen reported that she has also met with the building commissioner who feels that the displays would not fall under current town bylaws for a sign -- that there is currently no zoning violation.

Gretchen also reviewed the definition of "sign" under HD Bylaws: "Any symbol, design, or device used to identify or advertise any place of business product, activity or person."

Gretchen gave the example of a parking lot being considered a "structure" under HD bylaws, that is not generally considered a structure in zoning. The definition for "structure" under HD Bylaws is: "A combination of materials other than a building, including a sign, fence, wall, terrace, walk or driveway."

Gretchen asked the Commission the question: Is it a sign? Marji responded that it is staging intending to advertise the chiropractor's business; this is not constructive or consistent with the HD. It also doesn't enhance the architecture; it hides it. Marji also spoke of the precedent that could be set. Kathie felt that the mannequins or figures could not be considered a "structure" -- but that the wall-like backdrop for the current Star Wars display could be considered "structure." Kate felt that decorations or mannequins were not structures, but agreed with Kathie and others that the large back-drop could be a

“structure.” (It is about 10 feet long and 5 feet high, supported by two by four wood posts and metal sign posts).

For the public record Gretchen read aloud a letter to HDC and Board of Selectmen from Mike Lowery and Sue Wagner. She also read emails received from Mary and Brian Farley (30 Cochituate Road), Cathleen Reynolds, and Edmund Price.

Gretchen then opened up the discussion to all those in attendance. Mike Lowery spoke first and said he agreed that the HDC must decide if the displays in front of 31 Cochituate Road are under its jurisdiction. Mike also had given the HDC at the beginning of the meeting a large photo showing that the display covered the front steps and front entrance and most of the front corner yard. Bill Wagner reminded the HDC that their reason for being was to preserve the historical nature of the HD.

There were many comments made by those present in favor of the displays. Some mentioned the community spirit and humor it represented. Dana Cooper spoke of the recent contests involving elementary age children in town to determine the themes and to take part with the creativity. A number felt that such displays should be outside of the HDC jurisdiction. Matt Cooper reported that he had received over 20 letters/emails in support of the displays; and he turned these letters/emails over to the HDC at the end of the meeting.*

Members of the HDC were in agreement that the figures or mannequins did not fall under their purview -- but there was general agreement that the large (approx. 10 feet by 5 feet) backdrop for the Star Wars figures could be considered a “structure” and thus under the purview of the Commission. Alice Boelter asked if there was a record of what other HD Commissions have done in other communities under similar circumstances. Gretchen offered to try to track down such information. Gretchen also was willing to meet with Matt Cooper and Sherman Lin (owner of 31 Cochituate Road) prior to the next HD meeting tentatively scheduled for February 18.

Design Review Guidelines - Review of guidelines. There was a brief discussion of “shutters” on pages 13 and 14 of the Guidelines. The word “synthetic” in the final sentence was changed to “vinyl”. The most recent version of the Guidelines with edits from previous meetings and some rewriting to reflect the nature of the edits have been posted online.

Elections - annually in January - Chair, Vice-Chair, Clerk. Gretchen Schuler was elected unanimously to continue as chair. Alice Boelter was unanimously elected as vice-chair; and Margery Baston was unanimously elected to continue as clerk.

Demolition Delay Bylaw. There was discussion of the Demolition Delay Bylaw, Article W for Town Meeting, proposed by the Historical Commission. There was a motion that the HDC sponsor/support this Article. A unanimous, favorable vote followed this motion.
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The next HDC meeting is scheduled for February 18th, 2016.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Margery Baston

*Matt Cooper gave the HDC a collection of emails/letters in support of the displays in front of 31 Cochituate Road from the following people:
Benjamin Downs, Jean Prince, Pamela Kaufman, The Donovan Family, Thom and Michelle Davidson, Debi Morrell, Victoria Walton, Kate Anderson, Cathleen Reynolds, Tami Bloomstein, Amy Ferrer, Denise Passaretti, Kim Brown, Mark Reardon, Nancy Hopkins, Lynne McVie, Nina Corcoran, The Lloyd Family, Nikki Milott McCay, Jamie Larsen, Mary and Brian Farley