



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
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## 04/28/2011 AHDC Minutes

April 28, 2011  
 Whittemore Robbins House

### FINAL MINUTES

Commissioners Present: D. Baldwin, B. Cohen (Arrived 8:35pm), D. Levy S. Makowka, J. Nyberg, M. Penzenik, T. Smurzynski, J. Worden

Commissioners

Not Present: M. Logan

Guests: J. Black, E. Davidson, M. Wilke, S. Mathea, N. Tolman, R. Botterio, D. Nowell, K. Kokubo, B. Kokubo, J. Zolner

1. AHDC Meeting Opens 8:00pm
2. Appointment of alternate Commissioners: Mt Gilboa, Russell, Pleasant, Avon Place
3. Approval of minutes from February 24, 2011 and March 24, 2011 meeting. D. Baldwin moved approval of February 24, 2011 minutes having T. Smurzynski acting as pro tempore clerk, March 24 changes approved moved by D. Baldwin. Both approved unanimously.
4. Communications
  - a. S. Makowka has had many calls asking about CONAs. Mostly windows are the big questions.
6. Other Business (taken out of order)
  - b. New Commissioners – Jodi Black (in attendance), has expressed interest in joining HDC. She described that she grew up in Midwest, worked in Chicago, including for various non-profits in preservation. She currently works for Historic New England (SPNEA) in the property care division and is interested in working in town. Jade Cummings a resident of Central Street also expressed interest in joining and has submitted a resume for the Commission's consideration. S Makowka indicated an expression of interest from a resident of Jason/Gray and that he will follow up again.
  - c. Wall at 204 Pleasant Street – S. Makowka asked if this was in original plan and M. Penzenik was asked to check up on it as monitor.
7. Old Business (taken out of order)
  - a. Preservation Loan Program Update – J. Worden gave update that they have received an application, not in a District, that wants to remove tin and replace with original shingles. Also have a few pending applications not finalized yet.
  - b. Outreach to Neighborhoods & Realtors – No Update
5. New Business
 

8:20pm

  - a. Continuation of Formal Hearing - 188-190 Westminster Avenue (Kokubo) re: addition of windows and rear elevations. The Commission's feedback at the prior hearing was that a more traditional design would be more appropriate. The applicant reviewed a new set of proposed changes: Basically, they have a couple of variations

based on the prior feedback. The original application had windows on back and side elevation, but Commission's feeling was that that was a more modern interpretation. The Commission wanted to see a lot more wood and trim which would evoke perhaps a sleeping or closed-in porch which would be more traditional in style. The new proposal is to eliminate window on the side façade entirely. In addition, they are proposing to have the rear elevation follow a line down from the 2nd floor (thus eliminating "garrison" overhang on the rear). The new proposal's only changes for the side elevation is to bring rear trim board straight down instead of indent and to remove side window. The new idea is to do most of addition of windows on the rear elevation. The applicant mentioned that there is a steep grade and only fairly secondary road views on rear elevation. New options for the rear are lettered A,B and C and all have same treatment of windows. The applicant described that they are using some of the lines of the existing windows whether it's aligning the top casing or trying to match with existing double hungs. They have also also used the new sills to line up with existing features, thus bringing continuity. Options A and C are a variation with different looks for the grills on top of the transoms. Option B shows existing windows as they are if they are to leave existing bathroom glazing. M. Penzenik said option C is successful and likes that transom windows relate strongly and is harmonious. J. Nyberg thought it looks great. S. Makowka asked for window specifications. The applicant stated that their preferences would be Marvin integrity window which is fiberglass clad. The Commission noted that this is not consistent with the window guidelines and would need to be changed. Windows would have to be all wood window. S. Makowka indicated that the guidelines also called for muntins that would match the existing windows. M. Penzenik moved approval of Option C for the rear elevation; on the side elevation applicant has option to removal of existing 2nd floor window; and the removal of the rear garrison overhang. Final window replacements to be approved by monitor prior to installation. Seconded by D. Baldwin. Approved unanimously. M. Penzenik appointed monitor.

b. Formal Hearing – 187 Lowell Street (JK Construction) re: extension of 2 COAs previously issued. Commission has received letter from applicant's attorney confirming that there have been no changes to the plans as previously approved – they are only requesting approval of exactly the same plans as originally approved. J. Nyberg has recused himself from this discussion and from this vote. Application is by current owner. M. Penzenik moved approval of the extension of the 2 COAs for period of 1 year as requested by applicant. Seconded by D. Levy. Approved by M. Penzenik, S. Makowka, T. Smurznski, D. Levy, D. Baldwin; with J. Worden abstaining.

c. Formal Hearing – 7 Avon Place re: replace siding, add dormer, rear deck. E. Davidson, owner, gave history of home. Longtime employee lived in house at nominal amount of rent. House in poor condition. He stated that the Commission had previously approved repair/replacement of wood sash windows, the siding has a lot of wood rot. He is requesting shingles on front and clapboard on other three elevations of house. B. Cohen suggested clapboard for the entire house. Applicant also described that he wants to change front entry way and add a little bit of detail. He also stated that the rear deck has no public visibility. The applicant further stated that the house is very small, the bedrooms especially. He wants to put a dormer on the rear without having to take off the whole 3rd floor. He described that it was very tight in the attic and his proposal tries to increase the height a little bit.

M. Penzenik said she thinks the chimney height might be a problem with the building department if the peak of the roof is raised. The applicant described the proposed new pediment and pilasters on front entry and that he was looking to add master bedroom on 3rd floor by putting a shed dormer off back. B. Cohen pointed out that if this was anything but a 1950s Garrison Colonial she'd have a problem with the proposed changes to the roof. M. Penzenik asked about floor heights in the attic; the applicant said it was 6'10" to bottom of ridge. Members of the Commission indicated that it would be preferable to have the whole roof line continue all the way across rather than jogging at the two side eaves. The Commission discussed the side elevation changes if the proposed peak was extended to the two sides of the house including moving of the existing window toward the rear so that it will be centered under new peak and change in the originally proposed half height window in the rear (eliminate or make full height). J. Nyberg suggested that they extend the front staircase to access from either side (rather than just one side) or instead come straight out. D. Levy and J. Nyberg felt the monitor could approve the final window/chimney design after the new drawings are finalized.

D. Levy moved acceptance of proposed plan with several modifications, one of which being extension of proposed rear dormer all the way to ends of existing house, moving of top window on one sides to be centered on new ridge and potential change of window on rear, in addition cladding or shingle consistent, all the way around, B. Cohen seconded for discussion purposes, S. Makowka suggested some changes and D Levy proposed amending his motion to include providing applicant the option to do "Nantucket" staircase (subject to monitor approval of final design), clarifying that window casings and trim will be identical to existing conditions, and that the final plans for the rear dormer design to be approved by monitor prior to installation. Amendment seconded by B. Cohen. Amendment approved unanimously. Original motion, as amended, approved 6-0-1 with J. Worden abstaining. Monitor appointed: B. Cohen.

d. Formal Hearing – 218 Pleasant Street re: install vinyl siding. S. Makowka said vinyl siding in an Historic District is not consistent with our guidelines. Since he's been on Commission, there has never has any vinyl siding approved in a District. The applicant stated that the home is not a highly visible home on the street, the side on the home that is visible from the street doesn't have any real detail, and the look of home would be to replicate that view but that it would be done in vinyl. B. Cohen clarified that the pond is a public way and the house is highly visible from that public way and also the home is visible walking along sidewalk on Pleasant Street. N. Tolman (present with applicant) is the

salesman. The applicant described a lot of rot along back side of house where a flat roof was repaired several times such that the living room ceiling was non-existent due to severe water penetration. The applicant stated that she doesn't want to change look on outside but wants to fix problem with the house including rot on other sides of the home. The Commission suggested that there were alternatives to fix rot with appropriate materials. The applicant stated that she wanted to replace wood that is rotted and add vinyl siding to protect it in the future. She also stated that she didn't know she was buying in a Historic District and that everything was neglected by previous owner. The Commissioners suggested that there are probably multiple issues are going on in the house with water infiltration and rot and that the applicant would be well served to discuss options with a general contractor as opposed to a siding specialist. D. Levy indicated that he feels terrible about the family's situation, but that it would be inappropriate for this board to approve anything with vinyl. Applicant agreed to continue hearing until next meeting and to explore other options including asking for a CONA to repair and replace with like wood materials and design.

e. Formal Hearing – 20 Prescott Street re: removing garage, add porch and rear addition. J. Nyberg is recusing himself from participating in this hearing. R. Botterio (architect) presented proposal with Atty. D. Nowell on behalf of the petitioner, H. Boudreau. R. Botterio stated that the house is presently for sale and that J. Carney wants to buy house to develop it into two condominiums. He continued: it is presently a 2 family house and the proposed addition will double the size of each of the units. He understands that the Commission has asked for suggestions that they might want to put together a model but they felt that time is of essence so they tried to draw the proposal instead. R. Botterio described that the addition will be hardly visible from Prescott Street, and it will be mostly on left side where you can't see it. He acknowledged that you do see the proposed addition from other vantage points, particularly from Russell Terrace. He noted that the houses on either side are considered Queen Anne in style.

In response to Commission questions, R. Botterio clarified that there are corner boards on the proposed structure; also the window placements would be completely changed with bottom windows being 6" longer than the top windows. He noted knowledge of the Commission guidelines that replacement windows must be completely wood (i.e., non-clad).

He also described a new water table, stuccoing of the existing foundation stucco; and a lowering of the clapboards on the sides so it becomes part of the foundation. S. Makowka asked to talk about the plans to pave over the back yard for a parking lot. Response: the plan for driveway hasn't been figured out yet. M. Penzenik said she's worried that there is going to be a lot of detail lost and the house will look like recently constructed generic infills; she noted that her preference was to not have corner boards and that shingles siding was traditionally done with shingles all the way around. She noted that even though this is a modest house it still has features that are better – R. Botterio said window detail can be duplicated – don't need to be flat, as well as the mouldings on the rakes. He also stated that wooden gutters are proposed with rounded galvanized downspouts.

Members of the Commission stated that they were not persuaded by the proposed "farmer's porch" and think that it is way too large. This looks like a 1950s infill house has been turned into 19th century farmhouse and seems phony in the neighborhood. J. Worden said plan says 1/8th to a foot but that does not appear to be the scale used in the presented drawings. R. Botterio stated that the plans had been reduced in size and were not to scale. J. Worden commented that the proposed rear addition appears to be doubling the size of the structure (scales to 48 feet); the windows are too big; but that his main problem is that this house as it sits is a 1950s infill housing, pretty unattractive, but looking at other houses on Prescott Street, there's a very strong vocabulary of towers, gables, real porches, etc. and what you're wanting to do is to double the size of your house to have 2 modern units. He suggested that an appropriate trade-off should be if you're changing, try to help the street instead of making it a 2000 era infill. He would very strongly suggest that you go back and look at options – especially for the front façade – without trying to create Queen Anne try to borrow some of vertical vocabulary that relates it to rest of street instead of another "somewhat improved" infill. R. Botterio understands, but doesn't imagine how he can do what John's asking. M. Penzenik asked about Italianate Revival so you bump out the front in the middle and bring the roof up. Kind of like other houses in the district. S. Makowka commented that the back of the house is very visible from Russell Terrace and that this massive addition is not your typical back of the house – it is front and center. The Commission raised the question about the whether the scale is too big. R Botterio stated that the existing structure square footage is approximately 36 x 24 x 2, or over 1700 sf.

M. Wilke, lives next door to property and his main concern is that it is an infill structure and doubling its size and paving the rear yard affects the entire neighborhood integrity adversely. This house is just the first of two properties that will be before the board – the current owner trying for years to get vehicles to the rear of the properties and has cut down trees and ruined property. S. Mathea (22 Russell Street) indicated concern about the size of the addition and about paving over the area with the associated loss of greenspace. Part of the concern of the neighbors is the long-term owner and new potential owner worries them also. R. Botterio responded that, speaking as a neighbor, no matter what people may think about Russell Place development he likes it and thinks that development does fit in to the neighborhood. One needs to look at what is currently there and what might be more pleasing and that the warehouse which was there before Russell Place was not as pleasing as what is there currently. J. Zolner (16 Russell St.) said he appreciates comments and think that a good effort has been put forward and certainly some changes could be made to make something that is of future consideration. However, he stated that for anyone that views the existing property, it is an embarrassment to Town of Arlington. The absentee owner who lives in NH and the proposed developer have a

blatant disregard of the neighborhood. Gentleman who owns property doesn't care about anything and the proposed owner has a lack of respect for the neighbors.

R. Botterio said he is hearing that some people feel massing is too great, but some feel not too great. S. Makowka indicated that this is a relatively modest infill house and now the proposal is to make it approximately 3500 sf which is a significant change. B. Cohen said Commission is not against renovating this house, but disturbed by much larger footprint being proposed. Style can be argued, but size cannot be ignored. S. Makowka summarized that he is hearing that the applicant needs to look at some design alternatives that enhance character of neighborhood and some design alternatives not so massive in terms of scale in back. Maybe becomes a big single family house and not two big condos. Representative for the applicant agreed to continue hearing.

B. Cohen moved adjournment. Seconded. Unanimous vote in favor.

Adjourned 10:38pm.

Carol Greeley  
Executive Secretary  
cc: HDC Commissioners  
Arlington Historical Commission, JoAnn Robinson-Chair  
Building Inspector, Mr. Michael Byrne  
Building Dept., Richard Vallarelli  
Planning Dept. and Redevelopment Board, Ms. Carol Kowalski  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Town Clerk  
Robbins Library  
MIS Department