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Historic Districts Commission Minutes 05/27/2004

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: S. Makowka, A. Alberg, M. Potter, L.Kuhn, M. Penzenik, M. Logan and J. Worden.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: B. Cohen, M. Hope-Berkowitz and Y. Logan

GUESTS PRESENT: S. Stafford, R. Elwell, L. Ivers, D. Garrity, N. & T. Ferranti, M Crewe, J. & A. Sparks, C. & R. Dressler, H. Wrinkler, N. Kaba, D. Powell, E. Balazs, D. Malin, D. Buckley and R. Bechtel, J. Artley, R. Duffy, P. Noonan, J. Artley

1. Commissioner S. Makowka opened the meeting at 8:10 pm. Appointment of alternates was made as follows: S. Makowka and M. Potter to Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill and Pleasant Street

2. April 2004 minutes tabled until June 24, 2004 meeting.

3. Communications

- a. Executive Secretary – An ad went out to the Advocate for a new Executive Secretary and for a Broadway/Central Street Commissioner. Carol Greeley will be the new AHDC Executive Secretary. Commissioner S. Makowka and Mrs. Slebodnick will be working with the new Executive Secretary during the transition.
- b. 20 Jason Street – Commissioner J. Worden had approached the owners regarding a large hole on one side of the driveway and a large post on the other side. He encouraged the owners to submit and application for a certificate for the work that is being done on their property that is in the Jason/Gray Historic District. Mrs. Slebodnick will be sending an application as well as the AHDC Design Guidelines to the owners.
- c. 187 Lowell Street – Mr. Scarano who is Mr. Mackey's lawyer sent a letter to Mr. Maher indicating an interest in pursuing a possible non-litigated outcome by coming before the Commission for an informal hearing. No formal request has been submitted. Interested parties should be notified even for an informal hearing.
- d. The Commissions still have openings for the Central, Broadway, and Mt Gilboa/Crescent Hill districts. One possible commissioner apologized for the delay in submitting his resume due to some personal reasons. Everyone was asked to seek interested parties.
- e. 159 Pleasant Street – The property has been divided into two lots. The latest word is that the barn was sold to a party planning to use the barn as a garage to store his antique cars and that the barn will remain as is. There has been no official communication to this effect.
- f. New Homeowners – Executive Secretary to follow up with Commissioner Y. Logan about an updated list.
- g. 184 Pleasant Street – Commissioner S. Makowka received a call regarding alteration to a garage that does not seem visible to the public view. A Certificate of Non-Applicability might be issued pending review when an application is received.
- h. Bob Botterio communicated that the Historical Commission needs to meet at least once a year in conjunction with the Arlington Historic District Commissions. Commissioner S. Makowka proposes to have the Historical Commission meet with the AHDC during one of the AHDC scheduled monthly meeting due to time limitations.
- i. Russell Street – Commissioner S. Makowka had received inquiries from a new owner on Russell Street regarding replacement of windows.
- j. Pleasant Street Sign – Commissioner J. Worden noted that he had been informed that the Pleasant Street Historic District sign was sitting in the Town Yard.

(8:20 pm - Commissioner M. Penzenik arrives)

- k. Arlington Town Website – The Historical Commission has a link to the Arlington Town Website. The AHDC should pursue this venue. Commissioner M. Logan will follow-up on this.
- l. Preservation Fund – nothing new.

4. Review of Projects:

- a. 40 Russell Street (Allen) 12/2000 and 4/2000, extended to 10/03 – Makowka – Commissioner S. Makowka reported that parts of the fences were in different styles and were partially painted.
- b. 149 Pleasant Street (Alberto/Arlington Home Rehab, 04-2P) – Y Logan – completed.

5. New Business:**8:30 pm – Continuation of Formal Hearing re: Lot 47 Pleasant Street
(Adjacent to 251 Pleasant Street)**

This is an application for construction of a single family dwelling on the site known as Lot 47 Pleasant Street (located adjacent to 251 Pleasant Street). Commissioner S. Makowka started the hearing by reading a letter from abutters (Ferranti, 243 Pleasant Street) who were present at the May 2004 hearing. They would prefer that no house be built on the property.

The applicant stated that he would like to view this meeting as a new start to address the appropriateness of the guidelines. Mr. J. Artley, architect, made the presentation articulating the applicant's position that the proposed structure is appropriate for this historical context. Commissioner S. Makowka quoted Commission feedback from the draft May minutes about the issues raised related to the size, massing, and style of the proposed structure. Mr. Artley, the architect replied that: 1) the house would be tall, thin and with a narrow footprint that is only 23 feet wide closest to the street; 2) the setback of the house will be further than the others in the streetscape, 3) the house will be traditional in style 4) the first floor is raised so that there can be a front porch, 4) the house will have high ceilings so therefore the look will be tall and thin but still smaller than a two family and also complies with the setbacks for zoning. The architect continued his discourse by stating that there is a diversity of styles on Pleasant Street.

Commissioner L. Kuhn commented that the design submitted is the same design that was presented at last month's meeting. Mr. Noonan agreed that this was the case. Commissioner M. Penzenik asked what the average height is.

Commissioner L. Kuhn stated that Lot 47 Pleasant Street is a lot where nothing has ever been built on before and therefore must be treated with some sensitivity. Since there has never been anything built on it, what should be built should not overpower the lot. This lot cannot support a 3-story house. Commissioner L. Kuhn also noted that not one single architectural detail was changed from what was previously presented at last month's meeting. Commissioner S. Makowka interjected that the most important house that this affects is 251 Pleasant Street, the house next to it on the left. He appreciated that the footprint is small but the size and the massing is increased by the attempt to maximize the third floor living space. Also, the combination of the three houses is presented out of context, since the house to the right is set back a very considerable distance and is not nearly as visible from the street. Commissioner S. Makowka also commented that there is a considerable difference in the eave lines of the house at 251 Pleasant and the proposed structure next door. Commissioner M. Logan who was absent from last month's meeting asked if it was even discussed that a house should even be built on it. Commissioner M. Penzenik commented that this lot did not start out as a single lot but was indeed two lots and that the subdivision happened around the turn of the great Depression. Commissioner L. Kuhn asked if the applicant would consider building a house similar to 251 Pleasant Street. Mr. Noonan stated that he did not want to build a similar house to 251 Pleasant Street, which is his house. Commissioner M. Penzenik did not feel that the proposed design is harmonious to the neighboring houses.

Commissioner J. Worden asked about the analysis of style of other houses in the district on page 7 of the applicant's handout, cautioning the applicant that the styles reported on assessor's cards may not accurately reflect the historical style of a property. He also asked about the front elevation and the roofline. Commissioner S. Makowka proposed the possibility of addressing the massing issue by redesigning the third floor as storage rather than living space and lowering the roof line. Commissioner M. Penzenik stated that the top of the ridge is too high and that her position is that the house should be 1 ½ story. Commissioner M. Penzenik defined a 1-½ story house. The applicant asked if this was historically significant lot. Commissioner L. Kuhn answered that this is a historically significant lot by virtue of being in a historic district.

Commissioner L. Kuhn felt that the applicants should have met with the Commission at an interim stage of the project development to get feedback on the direction the applicant was going. The applicant interjected and felt that they followed the letter of the Commission's design guidelines. Commissioner S. Makowka clarified that the guidelines speak to both style in the district as well as the context of the specific proposal being presented. The guidelines provide direction, but issues of relative importance and context are still subject to interpretation by the Commission.

Donald Garrity, the applicant's lawyer, took the blame for the presentation, stating that he had encouraged the applicant to present as complete a design as possible. He asked what should be done to move the application forward. Various Commissioners responded that they would like to see more conceptual design alternatives that were more appropriate in scale and style. Mr. Noonan felt that they presented the additional information that was asked.

Commissioner S. Makowka would like for it to be noted in the records that the Commission appreciated the details presented. If there were more conceptual discussion earlier, some of the current misunderstandings might have been

avoided. Commissioner S. Makowka asked what changes can be presented? The applicant felt that the process is hard to pinpoint because of the differing opinions from 10 Commissioners and also stated that in the design process the architect had made the house narrower and pulled it down. Commissioner M Penzenik encouraged them to consider 251 Pleasant Street.

The Commission invited comments from the public. Mr. Ferrantes (243 Pleasant Street) was concern about the access to his property for maintenance. Commissioner S. Makowka stated that this was outside the AHDC jurisdiction. Ms. Crewe (253 Pleasant Street) encouraged the Commission to work with the Noonans. The land is valuable and someone someday will build a house there.

In response to questions about what can be built, the Commission reminded the applicant that it cannot design the house for them as this is not the role of the AHDC and it is not appropriate. The Commission has made several suggestions and noted its concerns, but in the end can only react to the proposal before it. Discussion followed concerning continuing the hearing at the June meeting. Commissioner Makowka informed that the decision to continue the hearing versus taking a vote on the proposal as it stands was up to the applicant. The applicant decided against requesting a vote at this time. The lawyer would like a point person or subcommittee designated to work with the applicant to modify the proposal acknowledging that this person or subcommittee cannot approve or design anything for them nor guarantee that house can even be built on the lot. This hearing will be continued on June 24, 2004 at 8:30pm. The commission promised to take this request under advisement.

9:45 pm – Formal Hearing: 22 Montague Street

This is an application to install a decorative safety fence around the front and back yards. The applicants seek to delineate a bare, corner lot while providing security for the young children in residence. The fence proposed would be consistent with other fences in the surrounding neighborhood and similar in style to fences around the time the house was constructed. The applicant proposed to duplicate 16 Montague's picket fence with flat rails, 3 feet tall.

The Commission asked how close would the fence be from the corner. The applicant stated that there would be a 4-½ feet of public easement. Their preference would be to have unpainted fences. Commissioner L. Kuhn asked what the life expectancy of the fences would be. The applicant said that, according to the contractor, if the fences were left untreated, they have a life expectancy of 25 years. The fences would have 2 ¾ in spacing in the rails – the "good neighbor" fence with square posts and caps similar to the next-door neighbor – square pyramid. Commissioner A. Alberg moved that the Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill Historic District Commission having fully reviewed the application before it, find that the project under consideration if constructed according to the drawings submitted herewith will be in harmony and not incongruous with the historic and architectural values of the District and that a certificate of appropriateness be granted to the applicant as shown in the supporting materials submitted with the application (as modified), installation of decorative 3 foot tall safety fence enclosing the front and back yard. Modifications include: 1) the fence must have 2 ¾ on-center baluster spacing and square posts with pyramid caps (similar to those on the neighbors fence); and 2) the Commission urges the homeowner to stain the fence, but leaves the option to stain or not to stain to the applicant. Commissioner M. Potter seconded. All voted in favor. Commissioner M. Potter is appointed monitor.

10:00 pm – Formal Hearing: 82 Westminster Avenue

The applicant would like to remove the side door at 82 Westminster Avenue in order to put in a lavatory. She proposes filling the door and removing the associated small side porch. Additional plans were submitted showing the location of the proposed changes related to the side door. The applicant also proposed adding doors and a porch on the rear of the house which is visible at a considerable distance. Commissioner S. Makowka felt that due to the lack of any plans or specifications for the changes on the rear (new doors and deck) the AHDC does not have enough information available to it to approve these elements. Commissioner S. Makowka felt that a plot plan and a sketch of the deck are needed as well as drawings, materials, elevation and spacing of the rails for the deck. Commissioner M. Potter moved that the Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill Historic District Commission having fully reviewed the application before it, find that the project under consideration if constructed according to the drawings submitted herewith will be in harmony and not incongruous with the historic and architectural values of the District and that a certificate of appropriateness be granted to the applicant as shown in the supporting materials submitted with the application (as modified), removal of side door and stoop as documented in plans submitted with application Motion was seconded.

Commissioner S. Makowka made a motion to include language cautioning the applicant that the removal of the side door is at the applicant's discretion and approval of the door removal does not guarantee approval of the rear doors or deck. The amendment was seconded and approved by all. All voted in favor of the motion, as amended.

Commissioner Potter is appointed Monitor.

Consideration of the changes to the rear were continued until the June 24, 2004 hearing, at the applicant's request, in order to allow the applicant to provide needed documentation.

10:15 pm – Formal Hearing: 159 Pleasant Street

The applicant and corresponding materials were not present at the hearing. Commissioner S. Makowka received a call stating the applicant was not moving forward with this project. Absent formal withdrawal of the application which was scheduled for hearing, the Commission decided deny the application on procedural grounds in order to formally close the record. Commissioner J. Worden moved that the application be denied because it was not accompanied by the proper documentation. Commissioner A. Alberg seconded. All voted in favor.

10:20 pm – Formal Hearing: 75 Westminster Avenue

Application for demolition of existing front porch, addition of front and side wrap around open porch, addition of family room on west side and extension of kitchen at the back of the 1900 Amelia Elder House. The applicant proposes a wrap around front porch and an addition to the left for a family room. A dormer will be added on the driveway side of the attic. There will be a 7 ft addition to the back. All roofing will be asphalt except for the proposed copper roof on family room addition. The balusters will be 3 ½ in on center. The windows and the French doors will be the same, wood with divided lights.

Commissioner M. Penzenik felt that the handrails need to be more substantial than those shown in the plans. Commissioner M. Potter felt that the handrail could be handled by the monitor. More double hung windows will be added also. Commissioner A. Alberg moved to accept the proposal as submitted with the monitor working with the applicants with regard to the handrails and windows. Discussion continued: Commissioner M. Penzenik has a problem with combination asphalt and copper roof design due the changing materials on a single continuous roof surface (porch and family room). Commissioner L. Kuhn stated that a standing seam product would not be appropriate in this situation. The preference is for all asphalt or all copper as long as no standing seam is used. After discussion of foundation exposure, a stone face on the poured concrete foundation was suggested. Commissioner L. Kuhn moved that the Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill Historic District Commission having fully reviewed the application before it, find that the project under consideration if constructed according to the drawings submitted herewith will be in harmony and not incongruous with the historic and architectural values of the District and that a certificate of appropriateness be granted to the applicant as shown in the supporting materials submitted with the application (as modified), demolition of existing enclosed front porch to be replaced by an open front/side wrap around porch. Also the construction of a one-story addition on the west side as well as the extension of the rear two story gable by approximately 7 feet. The approval is contingent on certain modifications including: 1) the final railing material and size/design of new windows must be approved by the monitor prior to installation; 2) the roof of porch and west-side addition must be made of continuous materials to be chosen by the owner provided that no standing seam metal shall be used, and 3) any exposed foundation on the new construction shall be covered by stone to match original foundation. Commissioner A. Alberg seconded. All voted in favor. Commissioner L. Kuhn is monitor.

6. Other Business:

- a. Website — see communications.
- b. Members needed for Central Street and Broadway – an announcement was sent to the Advocate.
- c. Missing Signs – Call to Public Works not returned.
- d. Academy Street Extension – no report
- e. FY 2004 - Needs to be in communication with Controller re: fund roll-over.
- f. Lot 47 Pleasant Street – The Commission discussed the possibility of establishing a subcommittee(s) to meet with applicants outside of Commission meetings to review detailed plans. Although the Commission is available to answer questions on process and scope outside of hearings, Commissioners expressed concern that discussion of detailed design plans by a subset of Commissioners outside of a hearing before the full Commission might be misconstrued by the applicant as an endorsement by the full Commission. A motion was made to establish a subcommittee. Commissioner S. Makowka voted in favor, all other opposed. Motion was denied 5-2. Commissioner S. Makowka appointed Commissioner M. Logan to contact applicant's lawyer regarding his request.

Commissioner L. Kuhn moved to adjourn at 11:25 pm. Commissioner A. Alberg seconded. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by,

Anne-Mer Slebodnick
Executive Secretary

cc: HDC Commissioners
Arlington Historical Commission, Mr. Robert Botterio
Building Inspector, Mr. Michael Byrne
Planning Department and Redevelopment Board, Mr. Kevin O'Brien
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Town Clerk
Robbins Library