

Arlington Historic District Commissions

January 24, 2019
Whittemore Robbins House

Final and Approved Minutes

**Commissioners
Present:**

**N. Aikenhead, M. Audin, D. Baldwin, M. Bush, B. Cohen,
S. Makowka, C. Tee, J. Worden**

**Commissioners
Not Present:**

C. Barry, C. Hamilton, S. Lipp

Guests:

**K. Lubar, C. Harrington, J. Leone, T. Smurzynski,
D. Caradimitropoulo, D. Tee, G. Wolf, A. Gamble, J. Sweder,
D. Green, G. Axelrod, T. Taketomo, H. Colquhoun,
R. Smurzynski, S. Shaloo**

1. **AHDC Meeting Opens** **8:00pm**
2. **Election of 2019 Officers** – D. Baldwin moved approval to keep current slate of officers, B. Cohen seconded. Unanimous approval.
3. **Appointment of alternate Commissioners** – Jason/Gray – M. Bush, B. Cohen; S. Makowka for 0 Ravine Street for at-large Commissioner N. Aikenhead (absent for initial hearing).
4. **Approval of draft minutes from November 15, 2018** – D. Baldwin, seconded by M. Audin with unanimous approval. **December 20, 2018.** B. Cohen moved approval, seconded by M. Audin, unanimous approval with J. Worden’s changes for December.
5. **Communications**
 - a. See Email List Submitted by Executive Secretary
 - b. Historical and Cultural Resource Committee sent communication to S. Makowka and coming up with plan to identify neighborhoods that might be appropriate for Historic Districts.
 - c. J. Worden had communication from a neighbor on Maple Street concerned that tenants are not respecting a building and broke a window
6. **Other Business**
 - a. Central Street and Avon Place Historic District vacant commissioner seat
 - b. Discussion on Guidelines – S. Makowka has incorporated our changes into a PDF and changed to a Word Doc. and asked for someone to compare various versions and proofread. B. Cohen volunteered and will proofread for S. Makowka.

- c. Report from Streetscape sub-committee – D. Baldwin reported they met with director of DPW and we need to explain why we should treat Districts different from any other part of town. They have agreed to use street signs suggested by M. Audin going forward. Brief discussion about who has authority to sign off on policy changes.

7. New Business

8:20pm

- a. **Formal Hearing re: 17 Jason St (Hattem) for addition and exterior renovations.** J. Worden said he looked at project with applicant and liked prior completed work and new proposed work. P. Hattem said proposal is to expand kitchen into back yard. Also looking for approval of extension to the previously approved but not yet built deck. Last page has easiest view – A-5 review. Shows the way the L on the left side comes out and how decks integrate with back yard. Back corner of house is least original part of the house. The house is most visible from the Whole Foods parking lot and Bartlett Ave. and Jason Court.

S. Makowka asked about the roofline and how the addition is engaging with the house because it is a very irregular shape. To his eye it looks really stuck onto the back. A1 shows how it is quite engaged at the ground level. B. Cohen said the engagement of the existing 2nd floor gambrel with the new roof will be a construction nightmare. The Applicant said this shape has same slope as dormers but he can show gambrel option. M. Audin said visually if you're adding a new ridge it has to have a relationship with the existing house – maybe ridge of addition and edge of house have to align. B. Cohen said addition and ridge of addition is sticking out past house. Historically people wouldn't have done that with this house. If ridge of addition engage edge of rake it's a more logical way to connect things but will move addition in toward house which may be a problem with windows. S. Makowka suggested the possibility of using a flat roof for the rear addition to minimize impact on existing gambrel roof fabric. M. Audin not in total agreement that a flat roof would be best. B. Cohen said it reads like a separate building almost right now. M. Bush said he might almost push it out further because you sometimes see 2 buildings essentially separate with a little chunk connecting them somehow. See a lot of this in Maine. He'd push addition 15 feet but it would get too much into the back yard. The connector has to have some rational relationship to both pieces. Overall esthetic if 2 buildings with connector as opposed to integrated home. Typical of a Maine farmhouse but this building is a different style so some dissension amongst Commissioners. Applicant said their interior goals may be affected negatively. S. Makowka summarized that they need more thought on what the options are and what makes sense. M. Bush said the 1 story 'chunk' feels grafted on and has some inconsistent window heights. The applicant indicated tis would be the kiln room. The Commissioners indicated that the window headers should align around new addition -- the current drawings show different and not aligned for kiln room. Meeting continued to 2/28/19 meeting.

- b. **Continuation of Formal Hearing re: 0 Ravine Street for new construction.** S. Makowka said last month some discussion got into massing and size but it is important that there are some places you just can't do anything and other times it may depend on what is proposed so we may need to expand our consideration to steps 1 and 2 jointly. Per guidelines he would entertain a motion to deny anything to be built on that site. B. Cohen agreed that it is hard to deny at step 1. S. Makowka reiterated for everyone's understanding that if we move to step 2, this is just an expansion to the scope to put context around arguments and position presented tonight but tat all

concerns remain on the table. M. Audin suggested that we consider massing and building site (1 and 2) as one unit. J. Leone said it seems inherently unfair that once you move along stages that you can deny the project on a prior stage that has already been moved past. M. Bush said that if indeed a barn was ever built on this lot then it is buildable. D. Baldwin said he disagrees. J. Leone said the Commission needs to massage the design to find a building that will pass muster. J. Leone said that he sees nothing, without reasonable doubt, to say there was ever a structure or the size of any such structure on the lot. J. Leone said he can't represent either way that there was or was not anything on that lot. Lots of speculation but it has only been seen on maps. Maps without scale, measurements, building records, no total proof.

J. Leone said 24 Irving Street will not be blocked from Ravine Street. M. Bush said his feeling is that the question of historical precedent is important because 1) if building ever on site it is buildable and 2) if small barn precedent against a 5000 sf house in his mind. M. Audin said based on the maps he was presented with it has been a moving target historically in that area. Question whether or not what might be proposed is reasonable and doesn't significantly impair character of neighborhood now and he would be judging whatever is proposed with what is there now. S. Makowka disagreed with that view. J. Leone said he was focused on the placement of the proposed house.

S. Makowka invited interested parties to comment. K. Lubar presented a package with maps showing various maps and info on the lot. Various plot plans show the barn that he presented. (0 Ravine Street – Historical Evidence for Barn Structure on Lot – December 28,2018) B. Cohen said it looks like the barn on the site was moved back and there have been some changes but the size has not changed. The Report of the Historic District Commission from 1998 was quoted about the barn. M. Bush said the question here is – as a finding of fact was there a building on this site or not. B. Cohen said Sanborn maps tended to be reliable because they were used for insurance. S. Makowka said a carriage house typically sits back behind main structure. Might be appropriate to do something here that fits with the historical context – that is a structure subservient to the main structures. Discussion about what the purview of the HDC is for determining what can or should be built on a vacant lot such as this lot. J. Worden said Sanborn maps typically show barns.

T. Taketomo said he assumes that when testimony is taken from the community the purpose is to present that info to the HDC and the criteria by which you make stage 1, 2, 3 etc.. He asked for clarification on how the HDC is making judgements. With respect to whether when the lots were made, was this lot thought to be buildable – what is the criteria based on neighboring properties that is the basis of the judgement. S. Shaloo said on 1881 plot plan there is 8 Ravine St with a much deeper lot. 1891 deed showing about 3000 sf depth. Land negotiation creates space that building was move to back then. B. Cohen said the Sanborn Maps were edited at times and they were hand drawing new houses as they were being built. They were in the moment, current views for infrastructure of the town.

S. Makowka said he believes we've discussed the barn enough. S. Makowka asked if there was any motion to deny the application based on discussion. D. Baldwin moved that in reading the document that established district they endorsed the study at Town Meeting by voting in favor and any building on this lot would be in conflict of the Jason/Gray district and therefore should be denied. J. Worden seconded for discussion. S. Makowka said in his mind there is additional context he would like to see – personally he would not deny at this point and wants to get additional context. J. Worden said discussion has been was there a barn here and should anything ever be

built here. He feels motion may be premature. He suggested tabling the motion. D. Baldwin withdrew his motion.

S. Makowka said reports need to focus on the intact streetscape and historical significance to Arlington. J. Leone said he feels house would be great, and that the Commission must consider the context of the entire District and this house will not be unduly close to other houses, and would be congruous with the district as a whole and vicinity can be Academy and Pleasant Street districts as well. He feels it would not upset the streetscape and would blend in nicely. B. Cohen said there is a lot of info provided about other parts of the district and disagrees with J. Leone's opinion that the entire District and other nearby areas should be considered equally relevant in our decision for this site. Personally she thinks Ravine Street has a very balanced, very open layout as it is now and that is consistent with context of Ravine Street. Leone said you can't pick and choose what you will use for comparison. S. Makowka's opinion is that the Commission needs to consider what is appropriate for the location.

Input from interested parties: R. Smurzynski read "community has recognized that its historic buildings and setting are worthy of protection" from the MA Historical Commission guidebook. Daniel Green, 40 Irving Street presented data on spacing in the District. Spacing on left and right – 48 feet on l and r side, 90% of houses have more than 22 feet. Driven by 56 and 54 Jason and 6 Jason and Jason Court. Exclude Jason Court and 56' avg., median 50 and bottom decile 36.5 feet. J. Sweeter, 24 Irving Street said he would be interested to hear from architect to see if this could satisfy most people. K. Lubar summarized his points for denying the application at Stage 1 of the AHDCs process and gave memo with 11 points. (0 Ravine Street, Phase 1 – January 2019).

J. Worden had a question about spacing between buildings – discussion about spacing on relevant streetscape. S. Makowka noted D. Baldwin's motion remains tabled with introduction to allow presentation on sizing and massing. He asked Applicant to present their information. G. Wolf said they are trying to find a house that is not incongruous to the setting and the District. Size, massing, scale, height and shape is key. Want to minimize presence both in width and height. Width much narrower than what would be allowed by zoning. In overall massing deferring to adjoining properties in height and form. 1 story extensions help relate and subordinate house to neighbors. Garage does not face the street but put it on the side to play it down. Without getting into details, materials, etc. the massing of the house is shown and it steps back in plan. 1st floor stepping back from main part of front block then to garage door and then to rear addition. Idea is they are deferential to buildings on each side and believe they have a building compatible with the district as a whole. In light of proximity – 22 off house on left and 35 to house on right (See A9). If sacrificing tree that would make about 29.5 feet to each house on right and left but at cost of beech tree. (See A9A) S. Makowka asked about impact of visibility on 24 Irving from Ravine St perspective. Answer: looking dead on when you're going past the driveway you'll see a substantial portion of the house. M. Audin asked if they have engaged an arborist to help the beech tree. He believes the tree is an integral part of the district streetscape. M. Bush asked if they have a full scale drawing of B1. Observation he makes is we can develop statistics of one kind or another but that house on that lot is an outlier – not consistent with either its immediate neighbors or the balance of the District. The applicant stated that what is visible subject to public view is not critical factor and that the way they break up the mass or step it down is more important. M. Bush said he disagrees.

Gail in 40 Irving Street asked about the turning radius. M. Audin asked if front side of

garage to far side of 40 Irving – is that 45 feet which is what you need for turning? S. Shaloo said she has a deed laying out Ravine Street in 1901 that says they should maintain spacing, won't intrude on enjoyment of other houses on block except that out buildings will be allowed between the houses. J. ne stated that deed restrictions expired after 20 years and old deed restrictions no longer legally of value to any of the houses still there. Pg. 6 (V6) has info on Jason/Irving/Academy and has SF of houses and lots. A10 shows additional info. T. Smurzynski said what we're talking about where Ravine is going from a Historic Street to a Historic Looking Street with the addition of this house. M. Audin said building in a historic zone – "do not design something that can be confused with historic elements – it needs to be complimentary to historic elements" is what Federal government guidelines mandate. D. Greene asked if there has been a title exam tracing what is covenant. R. Smurzynski said she keeps looking at Guidebook for Historic District Commissions in MA and feels if we allow this we don't follow General Law 40C to protect buildings and places significant.....to encourage new designs that are compatible with existing buildings in the district.

J. Worden said his issue looking at plans is spacing seems really tight and it's very wide and if anything can be built it would need to be a good deal narrower on the front elevation. M. Audin complimented designer efforts suggested that they find patterns and precedents in the neighborhood. For example, the existing houses address the street and use porches; here the front door is not facing street, thus this structure is not addressing the street. S. Makowka asked that the applicant provide statistics on properties in a more contiguous area such as Gray/this section of Irving between Academy and Jason/and Ravine houses.

8. OPEN FORUM

Ordinarily, any matter presented to the Commission under Open Forum will neither be acted upon nor a formal decision made, absent a previously noticed agenda item, but the Commission may make a decision if it deems it appropriate and necessary for the public good.

9. REVIEW OF PROJECTS

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION – To discuss ongoing litigation – NOT NEEDED

11. MEETING ADJOURNS – 11:07pm