

Royalston Historic District Commission
Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: November 17, 2011

Attendees: Peter (chair), Celt, Ken, Pierre (secretary), Rick (late). All were active voters.

Peter called the meeting to order at 7:44 PM.

Minutes

The members read the minutes of the October meeting and noticed a typo. Celt motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Ken seconded. All voted in favor.

Old business

John Mc Clure was present. He stated that the front windows at 8 NE Fitzwilliams Rd had been replaced about a month ago and that he was surprised to receive a certified letter so late. The commission thanked John for getting the job done and closing this chapter, regretted the miscommunication and pointed out that a certified letter had been sent because no answer to the regular letter sent in July had ever been received. John stated that he did not recall receiving it.

New application

Mark Smith filed two after the fact applications for 7 South Royalston Road and stated that the work was done without permission in order to satisfy FHA requirements and obtain a mortgage.

The first application is about adding a railing on the back porch. In answer to a question he stated that it was visible from the road, but only barely so. He also answered a few other questions about the construction of the railing.

Pierre stated that he thought that the application was complete and that the work would have little impact on the character of the Town. He motioned to accept the application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Ken seconded. All voted in favor. The application was assigned number 2011-11-01.

Mark then presented a second application for the twisted iron rail that was installed next to the front steps. In answer to a question he stated that he had chosen this style because it was readily available and its cost was reasonable. Peter pointed out the strange height at which the fence is attached to the house. Pierre said that he thought the style was unusual in Royalston. Peter suggested a white fence. Finally Ken motioned to accept the application for consideration, requiring a public hearing. Pierre seconded. All voted in favor. The application was assigned number 2011-11-02.

Before Mark left, the commission asked him what his plans were for the new concrete foundation that stands at the spot of the demolished shed on the West side of the house. Mark answered that he was unable to pursue the work for the moment.

Pierre also asked him if he had received a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace the front windows with vinyl. Mark stated that he had, about ten years ago, and that he had obtained permission for the back, side and front windows at once. Pierre reported that he had been unable to find such a certificate and asked Mark to look for a copy in order to complete the commission records. In return Pierre will also provide Mark with the available documents.

Internal matters (Rick arrived at this point)

Pierre outlined to the commission a procedure used by the Salem HDC, whose guidelines we have traditionally followed. In summary, the Salem HDC clerk can file at the Registry of Deeds a "Clerk

Certificate” stating either that work is outstanding (but is done with permission) or that work was done without permission and must be corrected. A third kind of certificate is filed when the work is completed.

Filing those certificates is very simple. It does not require changes to the HDC bylaw but only to our internal procedures, to define precisely how and when these certificates are filed and to insure consistent treatment. For example Salem always notifies the owner well in advance of its intention to file.

These certificates are not something like a lien and do not relieve the commission from having to go to court to enforce a decision. Their main purpose is only to inform potential buyers that work is outstanding and have them assume the responsibility of the seller. In addition it is thought that the second kind of certificate would discourage mortgage issuers and thus put pressure on the owner to complete the work.

As an example, Pierre pointed out the sad situation of the foundation at 7 South Royalston Rd. It would probably have been avoided if we had notified the owner that we would file the first kind of certificate if the reconstruction were not completed within a few weeks after the demolition. It is likely that the demolition would not have started before precise plans had been made and financing obtained for the reconstruction. This would have been better both for the owner and for the District. Having such a procedure in place would thus avoid such instances in the future. The second kind of certificate could put pressure on owners who do not respect the bylaw. In the past the commission has been reluctant to pursue some matters due to the difficulty of going to Superior court and it becomes practically impossible to do so after a property has sold. Owners elsewhere have performed unauthorized work just before selling.

A short discussion ensued. The matter was tabled and will be taken again at future meetings.

Rick reported that he had failed to convince the maker of the Historic District signs to proceed but would try again. The matter of the financing is not resolved and Pierre will contact Andy again.

Celt mentioned a desire of the CDC to replant trees and beautify (add light posts, fix roads) the Common for the 250 th anniversary of the Town. He asked if the commission wanted to be involved. It was pointed out that the HDC would have to approve the changes and that a commission member that was part of such a group could be seen to have a conflict. However some members expressed interest.

Ken reported that Chris Dawson has installed a dish antenna on the East corner of the North roof at 2 on the Common. The spot is not conspicuous and is hidden by trees in season.

Meeting adjourned

Celt motioned to close the meeting and was seconded. Peter adjourned the meeting at 9 PM

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "P.A. Humblet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Pierre A. Humblet,
Secretary