

Royalston Historic District Commission

Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: April 19, 2012

Attendees: Peter Kraniak (Chair), Celt Grant (Vice-Chair), Bob Casinghino, Clarence Rabideau, Ken Lively, Pierre Humblet (Secretary), Rick Carrier. All were active voters.

Public Hearing

At 7:35 Peter opened the public hearing on Application 2012-03-04 from Ken and Andrea Lively to install 36 photovoltaic panels on the roofs of their house and barn at 5 on the Common.

Using a digital projector, Ken Lively showed pictures of the site and presented the application, going over the motivation, the constraints and the details. He mentioned that a ground array had been considered but would require clearing 2 acres of land. He stressed that the proposal was following numerous local and national guidelines for panels in Historic Districts, in particular those of Salem, MA. Specifically the panels would

- be installed on an auxiliary building
- be mounted parallel to and close to (6" above) a roof that is not facing the front of the property
- only be visible from short road segments, both from the East and from the South.

Ken also said that the payback period would be about two years and that he had signed a contract for a photovoltaic installation before filing the application in March, in order to benefit from better financial conditions.

Members of the public who spoke included at least Jim McPhee, Paul Tortorella, George Krasowski, Andrea Lively, Lorraine Casinghino, Steven Chase, Chris Dawson, Gene Cauthen and Kristin West. Pros and cons statements were made, ranging from "the application should be accepted as is" to "having PV panels visible from public ways would be a serious blow to the historic nature of the town". Many supported the development of solar energy sources even in Historic Districts while others expressed concern. Most acknowledged that Ken had carefully studied the panel placement but had reservations of some nature, such as the blue-ish panel color, the views from the road or the dangerous precedent for the Historic District. The need for guidelines was mentioned several times and it was pointed out that Royalston with its barns and open spaces is quite different from Salem where secondary buildings have limited visibility.

All the property owners in the District had been personally notified of the hearing by US mail and seven letters and e-mails had been received (from Henri Cole, Bonni Widdoes, Paul Tortorella, Barbara Stowell, Theresa Quinn, Elizabeth Farnsworth & Aaron Ellison, Mark & Susan Smith) and were distributed to the commission members in advance. 4 were mostly pro and 3 against (some making lengthier arguments). Ken also hand carried a last minute e-mail from Andy West, which was mostly in favor.

Peter closed the public hearing at 8:50 PM and opened the regular meeting at 8:53 PM

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New applications

Steven Chase presented five applications for Certificate of Appropriateness

13 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Steven Chase): Reroofing the house with greenish asphalt shingles matching those on the workshop across the road.

Pierre made a motion to accept this routine application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Bob seconded. All voted in favor. Application 2012-04-01.

6 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Boyd Estus): Reroof the house and two porches with architectural shingles matching the existing color. The application was amended to note that the color was black.

Bob made a motion to accept the amended application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Clarence seconded. All voted in favor. Application 2012-04-02.

22 on the Common. (Jeanne Stanton): Reroof the house with shingles matching the current color and style and add a ridge vent (the style of vent covered with shingles).

Bob motioned to accept the amended application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Clarence seconded. All voted in favor. Application 2012-04-03.

6 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Boyd Estus): Install a stainless chimney cap. The application was amended to specify that the cap will be painted black.

Bob made a motion to accept the amended application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Clarence seconded. All voted in favor. Application 2012-04-04.

7 old Winchendon Rd. (Pat Jackson): Install a stainless chimney cap. The application was amended to specify that the cap will be painted black.

Bob made a motion to accept the amended application for consideration without requiring a public hearing. Rick seconded. All voted in favor. Application 2012-04-05.

Minutes:

The members read the long minutes from the March meeting. Several corrections were made.

Celt motioned to accept the minutes as amended. Bob seconded. All voted in favor.

Old Applications

2012-03-01: Application by Chris Dawson to install a free-standing chicken coop at 2 on the Common.

The members commented that this was a temporary structure that would enhance the rural aspect while not hurting the historic character of the District.

Ken made a motion to issue the requested Certificate. Bob seconded. All voted in favor except Pierre recused himself as an abutter.

2012-03-03: After the fact application by Dan Schodek to install a flue cap at 1 Frye Hill Rd. As requested by the Commission in March, Dan had provided a picture and had verified with Orange Oil that the cap could not be installed as the one of Paul Tortorella at 14 on the Common.

Bob commented that the cap was a requirement of the heating system and was not obtrusive. He made a motion to issue the Certificate. Pierre seconded. All voted in favor.

2012-03-04: Application by Ken and Andrea Lively to install 36 photovoltaic panels on the roofs of their house and barn at 5 on the Common.

This application had been discussed at length during the public hearing earlier in the evening. The members agreed that this would be a precedent setting application and that it was too early to make a decision. On the issue of the contract that has been signed by Ken before any Certificate had been granted, Pierre pointed out that self-created hardships are usually not recognized as legitimate hardship ground. More issues remained to be thought about researched, in particular the exact look of the proposed panels.

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Celt made a motion to request Ken to a) provide us with the addresses of sites where we could see the proposed panels and also alternate black panels and b) to study the possibility of moving all panels to the barn roof. Furthermore the commission would reconvene in a special meeting at 7:30 PM on May 3rd to take further action. Bob seconded. All voted in favor except Ken and Pierre who recused themselves (as applicant and abutter respectively).

Internal HDC matters

- Celt presented the draft of a letter to the SelectBoard about certain flaws in Town notification processes exposed by the Warwick Rd communication tower project. Clarence volunteered to format the letter. Peter will sign it.
- Peter announced that the Athol Daily News had an article on the installation of an elevator in the Royalston Town Hall. All agreed the HDC should be consulted on this if exterior work was involved. A request was made to mention this project in the letter that Celt is preparing. Celt accepted the suggestion.

District Boundary signs

Rick has brought an actual sign. The members rejoiced and saw the end of a 10 years long saga. They liked the size and the look of the sign but suggested 3 changes:

- The Town Seal is fuzzy on the edges, we need a better picture.
- All the letters should have the same size
- "Est. 1980" should be added in smaller font at the bottom.

Meeting adjourned

Pierre made a motion to close the meeting. Rick seconded. It was unanimously approved. Peter closed the meeting at 10:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Pierre A. Humblet,
Secretary

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Meeting Agenda
May 17, 2012 at 7:30 PM
Royalston Town Hall

Old Applications, all by Steven Chase:

1. 13 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Steven Chase): Reroof the house with greenish asphalt shingles matching those on the workshop across the road.
2. 6 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Boyd Estus): Reroof the house and two porches with architectural shingles matching the existing color.
3. 22 on the Common. (Jeanne Stanton): Reroof the house with shingles matching the current color and style and add a ridge vent (the style covered with shingles).
4. 6 N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd. (Boyd Estus): Install a stainless chimney cap.
5. 7 old Winchendon Rd. (Pat Jackson): Install a stainless chimney cap

New Applications:

As they may be filed at the meeting

Internal HDC matters:

Correspondence

Financial items

Other internal matters

Other commission matters:

Letter to Select Board

Historic District boundary signs

Plantings near the fire station

Any other business that may come before the commission