

Royalston Historic District Commission

Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 21th, 2013

Public hearing

At 7:35 PM Peter opened the public hearing on the application 2013-01-01 by John Knight to erect a 20'x40' open side pavilion in the South East Corner of Bullock Park.

John presented his application. He explained that the project was suggested to him by Kathy Morris, the librarian, when he was looking for a suitable Eagle Scout project.

George Northrop asked how it was possible to for the HDC to approve the construction of such a structure without having the permission from the owner. John's answer that this was only first step, the HDC only determines if the project is appropriate, it does not issue a building permit. In due time the board of selectmen and other town boards will be consulted.

Keith Newton explained that the land still belonged to the Bullock family but the Town had permission to use it as long as it maintained the park (the agreement dates from the 1940's).

Gary Winitzer worried about the appropriateness of the structure. The answer was that the pavilion was very simple and without walls, a kind of structure that could have been built during any period, and that it was located in a wooded area at the very edge of the District.

Phil Leger stated that he was supporting the project. It would lead to better utilization of the park and would not hurt the historic look of the Town center.

Celt worried about the maintenance aspect. If the Town agrees to the project it should also commit to maintain it. Otherwise the structure could quickly become dilapidated.

Keith Newton also spoke in support of the project but asked that it be moved out toward the SE, completely outside the baseball field. John agreed to such a move.

Pierre made a motion to close the public hearing, Celt seconded. Peter closed the public hearing and opened the regular meeting.

Regular meeting

Attendees: Peter Kraniak (Chair), Andy West, Bob Casinghino, Celt Grant, Pierre Humblet (Secretary), Clarence Rabideau. All were active voters.

Old applications

The commission considered the application 2013-01-01 by John Knight to erect a 20'x40' open side pavilion in the South East Corner of Bullock Park, as just discussed at the public hearing.

In light of that hearing, the general feeling was that the project would be a plus for the community and would have no significant effect, positive or negative, on the Historic District. Celt felt that the project would provide a useful public facility and that it was a commendable, but that any approval should be contingent on the resolution of the ownership and of the long term maintenance responsibility. Other members expressed similar feelings.

Bob motioned to issue a certificate of appropriateness subject to the conditions expressed by Celt.

Pierre seconded. All voted in favor.

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New applications

Keith Newton applied for a certificate of non-applicability to restore the siding under the Town Hall cupola at 13 on the Common, which has severely degraded over time. He submitted detailed work specifications as part of the application. The work would restore the original look, using original materials and color. The commission thanked Keith for taking good care of the Town Hall and expressed its strong support for this project (which must still get funding). Pierre made a motion to issue a certificate on non-applicability. Clarence seconded. All voted in favor. Certificate 2013-02-01.

Keith Newton applied for a certificate of non-applicability to reroof the “old fire station #1”, north of the Church at 15 on the Common, and to repair its siding and possibly its front door. He submitted detailed work specifications as part of the application. All the work would restore the original look, using original materials, shapes, and colors. The commission again expressed its strong support for this project (which must still get funding). Bob made a motion to issue a certificate on non-applicability. Andy seconded. All voted in favor. Certificate 2013-02-02.

Minutes:

The members read the minutes of the January 17 meeting. Celt made a motion to approve the minutes as read. Clarence seconded. All voted in favor.

Other commission matters:

Discussion with select board member Chris Long. Chris intends to seek a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council to do a capital needs assessment of Town Hall that would produce a 20-year repair and replacement plan, and which would also study front access options. She wanted to get the HDC feelings about the idea of creating a front walkway, as considered recently in the context of making the Town Hall accessible to disabled people, possibly connecting it to the ramp serving the kitchen side door.

Peter had brought a 19th century photograph of the Town Hall. It was clear that the design of the front entrance has not changed since that time. However when the U shape driveway was created the ground was dug out to create a flat area for the West end of the driveway. This has led to the noticeable slope between the bottom of the front steps and the driveway.

Making such a long term study is commendable and the commission looks forward to considering its recommendations. The HDC reminded Chris that previous public discussions have concluded that a front walkway would be very long and would start far from the parking area, which is not friendly to people with walking difficulties. It would not be safe during slippery weather conditions and some voices have already called to require a long continuous handrail. The HDC advice was not to seek to make the front an official handicapped entrance, as this could entail burdensome obligations such as the creation of parking spaces in non-appropriate locations.

Historic District boundary signs: The commission has received contradictory e-mails: from Selectboard member Linda Alger stating that the funds appropriated at the regular 1999 Town Meeting are available; from the Town Accountant stating that the funds are not on the books and that we need a Special Town Meeting to rectify the situation. Andy reported that Selectman Jack Morse has studied the issue and suspects the funds were not carried forward from 2000 to 2001. This could be due to an administrative error, which may have a purely administrative remedy. We decided not to take any action for now.

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Common restoration: Clarence reported that the Common Restoration commission starts to focus on specific projects, in particular the restoration of the monument.

Meeting adjourned

Celt made a motion to close the meeting. Bob seconded. It was unanimously approved. Peter closed the meeting at 9:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P.A. Humblet".

Pierre A. Humblet,
Secretary