

Royalston Historic District Commission

Royalston, Massachusetts, 01368

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 20, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, this meeting was held both in-person and remotely, using a Zoom session hosted by Jon Hardie on behalf of SelectBoard member Deb D'Amico. The call-in information was indicated in all meeting notices. The written material had been distributed by e-mail. All votes were taken by roll call.

Attendees: Peter Kraniak (chair), Andy West, Bob Casinghino, Christine Statuto, Matt Valliere (remote), Pierre Humblet (secretary, remote), All were active voters. Members of the public Ben Schodek.

Public Hearing

Peter opened the Public Hearing on application 2021-04-1 at 7:32.

No one from the public was in attendance. Ben Schodek went over his application for a solarium in the back of the house at 1 Frye Hill Rd. The members asked a few questions about the details of the project. Andy moved to close the public hearing. Peter seconded. All voted in favor. Peter closed the public hearing at 7:44 and opened the regular meeting.

Regular meeting

Old applications

Considering the discussion during the public hearing it was clear that the project in application 2021-04-01 was not problematic for the Historic District. Andy moved to approve the application for a certificate of appropriateness. Matt seconded. Approval was unanimous.

Peter then asked Andy what had happened with the chimney on the garage at 10 S. Royalston Rd., next to his house. Andy answered that it was in bad shape and had been taken down. Matt remarked that we do not really care about that chimney, but that proper procedures had to be followed. Andy said he would talk to his neighbors about filing an after the fact application.

Approval of the minutes

The members read the minutes of the April meeting. Andy moved to approve them as read. Christine seconded. All voted in favor.

Internal commission matters

Raymond School

People remarked that the handicap ramp as well as one of the entrance column had been removed. All agreed that this was done without obtaining a certificate. Someone opined that the ramp was not up to code. Pierre said he would contact the Building Committee of the Town (Tom Musco and Jim Barclay) to understand what was going on.

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Posting of public hearings

The Athol Daily News has raised to price of a legal ad from \$40-50 to \$90-100. This is to be compared to the HDC budget of \$300-400. So, either we need for a budget increase, or we must find another way to give notice. It was decided to study if there are requirements on how to give notice of public hearings.

Construction at 5 on the Common

The Building Inspector has issued a building permit for a deck on the north side of the building, even though it is in public view and no certificate had been issued. The question is how to react. Pierre suggested making certificate of non-applicability mandatory for new constructions. Andy thought we should just send a letter to the inspector. Matt thought the blame should be shared, as he had told inspector that the construction would not be visible from public ways. Bob remarked that it was visible from the Common, a public park. Pierre asked if the deck has been built according to the permit. Matt answered that it was built higher than planned, and that stairs had been added, which were visible from public ways. Andy thought that an after the fact application should be submitted. Bob added that it needed to show what was actually built. Andy then read a section of MGL defining public ways from a vehicular point of view. Pierre read from MGL 40C and the Historic Bylaw stating that public views include views from public streets, public ways public parks and public bodies of water. He added that the HDC Rules and Procedures have narrowed those definitions. In the end it was decided that Peter would send a letter of protest to the building inspector.

Antennas for data access

The current Rules and Regulations include guidelines for antennas. They were meant for the wireless system that was under study in 2016. That project has been abandoned. While they are waiting for cable, some residents have installed antennas for the Startlink low altitude satellite system. These are white and must be oriented toward to sky, which is likely to make them quite visible if positioned on houses. A discussion was started about developing guidelines for their use. It will be pursued at future meetings.

Meeting adjourned

Matt motioned to close the meeting. Andy seconded. Approval was unanimous. Peter closed the meeting at 8:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted



Pierre A. Humblet
RHDC Secretary