

WEST TISBURY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Date of Meeting: January 22, 2024
Meeting at 5:30 PM

Attending: Sean Conley, Nancy Dole, Charlie Kernick, Carol Sarason, Anne Fisher

Absent: Mark Mazer, Josh Gothard

Also attending: Cynthia Mitchell, Skip Manter, Jen Rand

We met to discuss needed revisions to the HDC published design guidelines. Should we revise them to provide owners with firm guidelines for acceptable solar panels, 400 amp service panels, HVAC units and ducts? We are getting an increasing number of applications for these items. If we can define exactly what is acceptable, and if we see the application meets those definitions exactly, we might want to add the above items to the list of changes that do not require a public hearing, only a certificate of non-applicability. No decision was made at this time.

Research is needed. We will start by looking at how other HDs handle these matters.

We also reviewed past demolition requests, specifically because the Town is asking the HDC for permission to demolish large portions of the existing cemetery fence, and we will be holding a hearing on that application soon. The Select Board, at a hearing held September 25, 2023, originally asked for permission to replace the existing wood painted fence with an unpainted vinyl fence, using the existing granite posts. At that hearing, The HDC, while denying the application for a PVC fence, did approve a simple wood fence, unpainted. The Select Board, acting as cemetery commissioners, would prefer to remove most of the existing fence and the Board has applied to the HDC for permission to do so. A hearing will be held on the application to remove the fence at a future date. In preparation, HDC members decided to review past demolition requests we have received over the years.

We had a recent example where an owner wanted to demolish a fence that was badly in need of repair. We met to discuss, the owner decided not to apply, and the fence has been repaired.

We had an owner who applied to remove wooden gutters and replace them with aluminum. The application was denied.

Much less recently, we had an owner with whom the HDC met who was interested in demolishing an historic home in the district, which was badly in need of major repair, and replacing it with a simple cape. It was a difficult decision for all involved. After discussion with the HDC the owner decided not to apply. The home was subsequently sold and completely restored by the new owners.

Recently, on September 25th, 2023 we did approve demolition of an existing barn. We had approved a complete renovation of this barn on 5/22/23 with detailed plans, but the owner was informed by engineer that it was not feasible to leave the barn, which is used as a guest house, as a pole barn with corner posts driven into the ground and no

foundation. The owner was given permission to tear down the existing barn and replace it with the same plan the HDC approved on 5/22/23. There was discussion by neighboring owners in the district about allowing a historic structure to be demolished, but ultimately, the HDC felt that because the new barn would be the same in appearance as the existing barn, it was appropriate.

Requests for demolition in the district, formal or informal, have been few and far between, and generally are not approved, unless a hardship is granted. A hardship can only be granted if the circumstances would not apply to other owners in the district.

A joint meeting with the Select Board is planned for February 26th.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Dole, Secretary
Approved on 4-15-24