

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, October 2, 2023, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*; Charles Redmon, Katinka Hakuta, *Members*

Absent: Monika Pauli

Staff present: Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public: See attached list

This meeting was held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MCOct2023> with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was **844 4945 9399**.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions, explained the process for the hearing, and called the meeting to order at 6:05.

Case MC-6825: 5 Crawford St., #10, by William Blank. Replace windows.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, presented background information on the non-binding review and showed slides of the property.

Mr. William Blank, the applicant, explained that the windows are drafty and located on the corner of the building, and he would like to replace them with more energy efficient windows that will match the style and color of the existing windows and stated he didn't think you would be able to tell they are replacement. He also stated that he thinks he might be the first person to replace windows and suspects that other condo owners will follow.

Commission Questions

Commissioner Nan Laird asked if the building is apartments or condos. Mr. Blank replied that the building is condos, 12 units in each building, 4 per floor, as is the building across the street. Ms. Laird asked Mr. Blank if he knew of other replacement windows on the building. Mr. Blank said no, not to his knowledge.

Mr. Hsiao asked if all the windows are original and if the vertical dividers between the triple windows will be retained. Mr. Blank said he wasn't sure. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at the windows and pointed out the vertical elements that he was referring to. Mr. Blank said he imagined that those elements would remain. Mr. Hsiao then asked if the replacement windows will have simulated divided lights (SDL) and explained what those are to the applicant. Mr. Blank stated he did not know exactly what type of grid he would be using, just that there would be a grid.

Public Questions and Comments - none

Commission Comments

Commissioner Catherine Tice asked the applicant if he considered restoring the windows instead of replacing them. Mr. Blank responded that he had not considered restoration.

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked the applicant if he looked at other companies prior to choosing this one. Mr. Blank said he just looked online for some place nearby thinking this was a simple project. Ms. Litchfield then referred to Ms. Laird's comment about this being the first replacement and could therefore set a precedent for future replacements. She explained that the Commission prefers wood or vinyl-clad or other materials, and the division of the lights is the most important element, that trying to look like divided glass is key and she further explained SDL windows that look like real 6/1 windows. She emphasized that even though his unit is on the third floor the applicant is setting the precedent for all the other units.

Ms. Hakuta commented that there looks like a unique detail around the window. Mr. Hsiao said it might be a storm window, but it's hard to tell in the image.

Mr. Hsiao reiterated that this review is not binding and stated that he hopes Mr. Blank considers the Commission's recommendations. He also stressed that the muntin or grid profiles are important details, including the width and depth. And as the first owner to replace the windows, these replacements could set the standard for future replacements in the building.

Ms. Pauli noted that vinyl windows probably don't have the right color to match so it could look different. Mr. Blank responded that the windows are custom made and can be painted. Ms. Litchfield advised him to speak with his vendor about possible options.

Ms. Laird agreed with Ms. Litchfield and said it would be helpful if Mr. Blank could be informed of the right language to use when speaking with the window vendor. Ms. Litchfield concurred.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to reject the application as submitted with the recommendation to look at other alternatives and consult with CHC staff. Ms. Laird seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0.

Case MC-6832: 413 Broadway, by Sebastian Martinek. Alter fenestration.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property and the proposed window replacements and noted this is a non-binding review.

Mr. Bill Harper, the designer, explained this is part of a larger renovation. Mr. Harper went over the replacement of two basement windows and the addition of new windows on the alley side. He pointed out that the existing basement windows were in rough shape and proposed to install the same style SDL aluminum carbonate windows and hold the grade back from the windows. He also went over the elevation showing the new windows that will be detailed the same as the ones on the front, aligned with the infill window following the original logic of the building, and pointed out the proposed vents. Mr. Harper showed details of the proposed Marvin Ultimate windows and explained they will have spacers. He also showed a section of window wells to keep grade back from windows, a window specification, and a drawing of how the windows will look, and existing conditions.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked the applicant to confirm that only two windows are being replaced. Mr. Harper answered yes, he just numbered all the windows for the sake of discussion. Mr. Hsiao asked if the Marvin windows are double hung with SDL, aluminum clad. Mr. Harper answered yes, and the exterior will be black.

Ms. Hakuta asked if he's replacing the windows on the front to match. Mr. Harper replied that they are matching the existing windows with the 2/2 muntin pattern.

Ms. Pauli asked if the unit is on the property line. Mr. Harper answered yes they are, and has been speaking with Inspectional to see if a Variance is required.

Mr. Hsiao explained that installing windows can require zoning relief and understands they are doing their due diligence.

Ms. Laird asked if this is a single-family home and what the basement is used for. Mr. Sebastian Martinek, the owner, explained that currently the basement is unused but with their third child they need more room, and the new windows will bring in more light into the space. Ms. Laird asked what is the vent for. Mr. Harper said it has both air intake and outgoing exhaust air.

Public Questions and Comments

Ms. Crosbie read an email received from Geoffrey Peters of 411 Broadway in support of the project.

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao stated the proposal appears straightforward and thoughtful, the proposed windows appear to be consistent with the character of the building and the alignment is logical. He also commented that the Marvin windows are appropriate and advised the applicant to pay attention to the proportions which are important. Ms. Litchfield agreed with Mr. Hsiao. Mr. Redmon also concurred with Mr. Hsiao.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

The minutes for September 5, 2023 were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on October 2, 2023

Panelists:

William Blank, applicant

Sebastian Martinek, applicant

Bill Harper, architect

5 Crawford Street

413 Broadway

Newton, MA

Attendees:

None