

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Monday, August 4, 2014, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Charles Redmon, *Member*; Monika Pauli, Sue-
Ellen Myers, Margaret McMahon, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, *Member*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. She gave a brief overview of the procedures and process for the meeting. She reviewed the agenda.

MC-4537: 84 Antrim St, by John Walsh. Solar panels

Ms. Goodwin asked Ms. Samantha Paull, staff, to introduce the item. Ms. Paull gave a brief overview of the architectural characteristics of the structure, a previous application before the Commission in March regarding the replacement of the original slate roof with asphalt shingles, and the scope of the proposed project.

Mr. Alec Meyers, a representative from Solar City, introduced himself and confirmed the scope of the work on the application. He stated that the proposal included adding 20 photovoltaic panels to the southernmost facing roof in a symmetrical array. He noted that it was not easily seen from the street as it would employ a sleek mount and lie parallel with the roof deck, no more than six (6) inches above the roof deck.

Mr. Charles Redmon, commissioner, asked if the panels could be moved around on the roof or if the proposal outlined their exact location. Mr. Meyers stated that the proposal was designed in a fashion to allow for the best energy efficiency and company standards required a minimum of a one (1) foot setback from the ridge and eave of the roof.

Ms. Goodwin stated that it was hard to tell from the documents provided what impact it could have on the neighboring properties. Mr. Meyers referenced the aerial photograph superimposed with the panel design, shown in a red color, page PV-8 in the applicant's materials. Ms. Goodwin read a letter written by the neighbors, Wayne Barron and Megan Brook of 103 Inman Street, which supported the installation and use of solar panels in the district but wanted to prevent potential glare after the installation from impacting their home and homes of neighbors.

Ms. Margaret McMahon, commissioner, asked if the red area on the plan was the proposed panel area, noting that it covers the entire roof plane. Mr. Meyers confirmed that yes, as proposed, it covered the majority of the roof plane.

Ms. Monika Pauli, commissioner, asked if the packet information incorporated the actual product information in the schematic rendering. Mr. Meyers confirmed that it did. Ms. Pauli responded that the

panels did not seem high. Mr. Meyers reiterated the low profile nature of the proposed panels, measuring six (6) inches or less from the top of the panel down to the deck of the roof.

Ms. Goodwin asked what was between the roof and the panels. Mr. Redmon added that the panels themselves are two (2) inches but you have approximately six (6) inches for the entire panel system. Mr. Meyers added that many other systems include rails, the proposed systems from his company do not.

Ms. Pauli asked how the panels will handle the snow. Mr. Meyers responded that due to the dark color of the panels, the snow typically melts during the day and added that rain helps to keep them clean as well. Ms. Pauli asked how the panels would be maintained. Mr. Meyers stated the maintenance is done by the company and to what extent is spelled out in the contract.

Ms. Goodwin asked for questions from the public. Mr. John Walsh, an owner, asked if the proposed panels had a glare. Mr. Meyers responded that there are panel options that reduce glare, but the panel proposed does not include any film or finish to reduce the glare. Ms. Pauli asked if the reduced glare panels were more expensive. Mr. Meyers replied yes and noted that the panels with a low glare finish had a higher kW rating. Ms. Goodwin asked if the panels had a better payback if they were more powerful. Mr. Meyers noted not necessarily, the panels as part of the overall proposed system are chosen for optimum efficiency for the specific site.

Mr. Walsh asked if older panels had less glare. Mr. Meyers noted that Mother Nature kept the panels pretty clean. Mr. Walsh asked if, over time, the panels would dull and weather in the sun. Ms. Goodwin said that while paint weathers and fades in the sun, glass doesn't unless it becomes pitted. Mr. Meyers added that pollen and dirt tend to build up over time and may reduce glare. Ms. Goodwin said that the glare might not be a long term issue throughout the day. Mr. Meyers added, because the sun moves during the day, glare is limited to a small window of time. Mr. Walsh asked if the finish was like a laptop computer screen. Mr. Meyers responded no, the frame is black and the glass has a slight navy hue to it.

Ms. Pauli asked if the panels had a metallic finish. Mr. Meyers responded no, you see the conductor lines but the finish is not metallic.

Mr. Walsh asked if 344 Broadway had solar panels. Ms. Paull responded yes, but they are behind a parapet roof. Mr. Walsh stated he wondered if neighbors had problems with glare.

Mr. Redmon said that during eight (8) months of the year, reflection goes up, mainly occurring at 4pm in the winter, at a very low angle. Mr. Meyers noted that there was a problem with glare at an airport in Western Massachusetts and they dealt with it.

Mr. Redmon noted that this property does not have many higher neighbors and if you moved it up on the roof, away from the eave and farther back toward the house that could help. Mr. Walsh asked if they should be setback behind the shutters on the right elevation. Mr. Redmon clarified that there was about one (1) foot of space that you could move them back, which would help with visibility as well.

Mr. Meyers responded that he would make sure he brought all the comments back to the office as well as the concern of an impact on an abutter. Ms. Goodwin added that setting the panels farther away from the bottom edge of the roof would also help with diverting the rain and melting snow into the gutters. Mr. Meyers noted that the plan, as proposed, was aimed to be the most efficient as designed by

the company. He asked Mr. Redmon if centering the array on the roof would help. Mr. Redmon responded yes, and with feeding runoff into the gutter.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the application with the recommendation to center the panels on the roof. Ms. Pauli seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0 with Monika Pauli and Margaret McMahan voting.

Mr. Meyers asked if he needed to bring a plan back to the Commission for review. Mr. Redmon directed him to follow up with staff. Mr. Walsh asked if it would cause problems with distributing the weight on the rafters. Mr. Redmon responded no. Mr. Meyers stated he would follow up with Ms. Paull.

Minutes

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the July meeting minutes as submitted. Ms. McMahan seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0 with Ms. Pauli and Ms. McMahan voting.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:28pm. Ms. McMahan seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Paull
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public (who signed the Attendance list)

John Walsh	84 Antrim Street
Margaret Walsh	84 Antrim Street
Alec Meyers	24 St. Martin Drive, Building 2, Unit 11, Marlborough, Massachusetts
Kelly Strickland	24 St. Martin Drive, Building 2, Unit 11, Marlborough, Massachusetts

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.