

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Monday, May 5, 2009, 6:00 P.M., 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2nd Floor

Members present: Nancy Goodwin, Tony Hsiao, Lestra Litchfield, Chuck Redmon, members; Monika Pauli, Sue Myers, alternates.

Staff present: Paul Trudeau

Members of the
Public present: See attached list

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. She introduced the Commission and outlined the meeting procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC 3433: 10 Trowbridge St., by Wallace W. Sherwood. To install fire escape.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, noting that the fire escape would be installed on the rear of the building and only visible from Ellery St. and slightly from Mass Ave. He said that the applicant contacted him and said he would not be able to make it to the meeting.

Ms. Goodwin recommended a continuation, based on the lack of opportunity for the Commission to discuss the proposal with the applicant and determine if the fire escape could be reduced at all. She asked if there were any questions or comments from the public. There being no questions, she asked if there was a motion to continue.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to continue case MC-3433 to the next public hearing of the Mid Cambridge NCD Commission. Ms. Litchfield SECONDED the motion. Ms. Goodwin recommended that staff request an interior floor plan of the building for the next meeting.

The motion PASSED 5-0.

MC 3434: 132 Antrim St., #2, by Jacques Govignon. To construct dormer and roof deck; alter windows.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, an 1874 Queen Anne double-house, and explained that the majority of the proposed work was at the rear of the building and only visible from Inman St.

Mr. Govignon and his architect, Hans Fulcher, described the proposal. Mr. Govignon said a roof deck and dormer would be installed on the rear flat roof, which would allow access to air conditioning condenser unit. The deck railing would screen the condenser unit.

A few windows on the rear façade would be enlarged and better aligned with adjacent windows.

Ms. Goodwin asked for questions of fact from the Commission.

Mr. Hsiao asked for details on the proposed exterior spiral staircase. Mr. Trudeau said the spiral staircase had been signed off by staff a few months earlier because it was not visible from a public way.

Mr. Hsiao asked why the dormer needed to be so large. Mr. Fulcher said it would only be 4' wide. Ms. Litchfield asked for clarification of the living space on the third floor. Mr. Govignon explained the interior plan. Mr. Hsiao asked if the dormer could have a lower slope. Mr. Fulcher said it would be possible to alter the roof slope. Mr. Govignon noted that their neighbors in unit #1 were considering a similar roof deck plan, which would tie in well with the current proposal. He said the neighbors supported the proposal.

Ms. Myers asked if the roof deck would be functional. Mr. Govignon said it we used for sitting as well as an access to the condenser unit for maintenance.

Ms. Goodwin asked for comments or questions from the public.

Marilee Myer, 10 Dana St., agreed the size of the dormer was too large.

Mr. Govignon said that he had letters of support from four neighbors, which he submitted for the file.

Ms. Goodwin asked for comments from the Commission.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as proposed, with the recommendation that the dormer could be scaled back to match the roof line of the edge of the gable roof. Mr. Hsiao SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

MC 3435: 1643 Cambridge St., by Cambridge House Trust, Linda Sophia Pinti, Trustee. To rebuild and enlarge balconies.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, a four story apartment building constructed in 1969. He described the views of the front and rear of the building as seen from the street and the existing conditions of the balconies.

Ms. Pinti said the wood was rotting on the existing 11" false balconies. She said a major goal of the proposal was to make the balconies functional. The proposal was to have the balconies extended out 30", which would allow for 24-26" of useable space. She said the proposal would maintain the architectural integrity of the building. The new balconies would be of wood construction and the railings would be higher to meet code. She said the final

decision to do the work would be based on cost, and the condominium trust was still receiving bids on the proposal.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the current doors to the balconies were sliding doors. Ms. Pinti said they were. Ms. Goodwin noted that the rooms facing the existing balconies acted like balconies as well. Ms. Pinti said this was somewhat true when the sliding doors were open.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the balconies were cantilevered. Herb Eisenberg, the architect, said the balconies were supported by beams in the wood fins. He said the balconies were currently unsafe.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the wood fins would be extended. Mr. Eisenberg said they would be, but not as far as the balconies.

Ms. Perrault asked if the proposal was a non-binding review. Mr. Trudeau said it was.

Mr. Trudeau asked if zoning relief would be required for the proposal. Ms. Pinti said Inspectional Services was still trying to determine whether the proposal was considered “significant” or not.

Ms. Goodwin asked for questions and comments from the public.

George Goverman, 1643 Cambridge Street, asked that if the condominium trust did not approve the proposal, would the balconies on the rear façade that were previously repaired remain as they were. Ms. Pinti said they would, and explained to the Commission that one “drop” of balconies on the rear façade were previously repaired and required higher handrails.

Ms. Goodwin read a letter from John Oxman, 1643 Cambridge Street, which noted that there were two proposals presented to the individual unit owners by the Trustees: the one before the Commission and another to rebuild the existing balconies “as is.” He questioned whether the new balconies would require higher handrails. The letter also noted that the unit owners were presented with the option to replace the sliding windows. Ms. Pinti said the Trustees had a recent meeting with the unit owners and Mr. Oxman was provided a copy of the project booklet. She said the proposal to enlarge the balconies had been discussed for a long time. Mr. Eisenberg said if the balconies were rebuilt, the handrails would need to be higher to meet code.

Mr. Hsiao said the change to the façade would be substantial because of the combined enlargement of the balconies and fins. He said it was not clear from the drawings where the balconies would meet with the fins.

Ms. Perrault said the flatness of the façade would be obliterated, which would alter the building's character.

Ms. Litchfield said the extension of the fins was problematic. Ms. Pauli agreed, noting that the fins would be too prominent under the current plan.

Mr. Redmon said he felt the proposal would improve the overall look of the building.

Ms. Goodwin asked for clarification that the fins would need to extend beyond the balconies. Ms. Pinti said they would, but only about 6".

Mr. Hsiao said he would prefer to see balconies contained by the framing, perhaps flush with the fins. He said he was troubled by the lack of detail in the drawings. He said he was not opposed to an extension of the fins, but was not sure how far would be inappropriate.

Ms. Perrault said the proposal would make the building too modern and it would lose its character. She said she understood the desire for usable space on the balconies.

Mr. Hsiao said if the rendering of the proposed work was more accurate, there would be a clearer picture of the final product. Mr. Redmon said it seemed that the consensus was to recommend that the balconies be set back from the fins.

Mr. Eisenberg commented that the original design may have included larger balconies but was changed because of financial reasons. Ms. Pinti said she still felt the change would improve the building.

Robert Skendarian, 1653 Cambridge St., asked if the front and back balconies would be changed. Ms. Pinti said they would. Mr. Skendarian said he supported the proposal but had some concerns with privacy issues.

Ms. Goodwin asked for a motion.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, with the recommendation to not more than double the projection of the existing fins and to keep the balconies set back at least 1" behind the fin projections. Mr. Hsiao SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 4-1 (Ms. Perrault opposed).

Minutes: 1/5/09

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to approve the minutes for the 4/6/09 meeting as submitted. Ms. Myers SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

There being no further business, Mr. Hsiao MOVED to adjourn. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 7:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Trudeau
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public that signed the 5/4/09 attendance sheet:

Jacques Govignon	132 Antrim St., #2
Hans Fulcher	
Marilee Myer	10 Dana St.
Linda Pinti	1643 Cambridge St.
George Goverman	1643 Cambridge St.
Herb Eisenberg	123 N. Washington St., Boston
Robert Skendarian	1653 Cambridge St.