

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Approved at the April 6, 2015 Meeting

Monday, March 2, 2015, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Charles Redmon and Lestra Litchfield, *Members*; Sue-Ellen Myers and Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: Margaret McMahan, *Alternate*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:08pm. She gave an overview of the meeting, procedures, and reviewed the agenda. Ms. Goodwin designated alternates to vote, Ms. Sue-Ellen Myers was designated for 16 Centre Street and 381 Harvard Street. Ms. Monika Pauli was designated for 379 Harvard Street and 17 Ware Street.

MC-4659: 16 Centre Street, by David Brackman & Debra Segal. Remove chimney, alter rear bay and window alterations.

Ms. Samantha Paull, staff to the Commission, gave a brief overview of the property and summarized the request on the application.

Mr. David Brackman, an owner, said he had been working with an architect, Mr. David Mullen, on a major interior renovation of the kitchen, along with the second and third floor bathrooms. Mr. Brackman noted that during that process the removal of the chimney was discussed as a way to add more floor area in the bathrooms and kitchen. He continued that the chimney had not been used for years as the oil heat was replaced with a direct vent. Mr. Brackman said the only item that was utilizing the chimney was a water heater, which was to be replaced as part of this renovation. He also noted that the application included the addition of two windows on the rear elevation, the alteration of a mulled window pair in the kitchen to a single window, and the enclosure of an open space between a rear rectangular bay and the exterior wall of the kitchen. Mr. Brackman added that the proposed window would match an existing window dimension on the structure in the dining room opposite of the proposed windows.

A neighborhood resident, who did not sign in, asked if she could see the plans. After reviewing the plans, she asked if a deck was being added. The owner replied that the deck reflected in the plans was existing and they were not proposing to construct a new deck.

Ms. Marilee Meyer, an abutter, stated she lamented the loss of the chimney but supported the proposal.

Mr. Mullen responded that as the chimney was not ornate, they were seeking approval to demolish it as it was common and did not speak to the character. Ms. Lestra Litchfield, Commissioner, rebutted that

while it was not ornate the chimney itself still spoke to the historical uses and function of the structure. Ms. Meyer added that the massing will lose its balance without the chimney.

Ms. Goodwin said the spindly chimney did not have a lot of character on its own. Ms. Monika Pauli, Commissioner, asked if it was in bad shape. Mr. Brackman replied that it did not appear to be in bad shape, but that it wasn't in great shape either. He continued that it would need repairs if they were proposing to keep it. Ms. Litchfield asked if the removal made a significant difference on the interior plan. Ms. Debra Segal, an owner, replied that the removal of the chimney would also allow a bathroom to be added that her aging parents could access as all bathrooms were currently located upstairs.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commissioner, said that the house was one of his favorites in Mid Cambridge. He asked that they talk to their builder about preserving or replicating the chimney above the roofline as it does speak to the overall character of the house. He continued that the house was delicate and refined, and as it was well preserved, maintaining the character was important. Mr. Mullen added that the owners were proposing to restore the hand rails that were on the stairs which had been removed and placed in the basement in years past.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the proposal as submitted with the request that the applicant look into preserving the chimney above the roofline. Mr. Tony, Hsiao, Commissioner, seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Ms. Sue Ellen Myers, alternate, voting.

MC-4660: 379 Harvard Street, by Ware Hall Trust. Window replacement. &
MC-4661: 381 Harvard Street, by Ware Hall Trust. Window replacement.

Ms. Goodwin requested that the applications for 379 and 381 be introduced and discussed together.

Ms. Paull introduced the applications. Mr. David M. Fenchel, the architect, elaborated on the proposal, stating that after doing research, the window product proposed was a product that could be sized to maximize the existing openings with a similar profile. He continued that it was a high quality product that was welded, which meant that it was not prone to the warping that older vinyl products were. He stated that it was not prone to discoloration as it was virgin vinyl instead of recycled. Mr. Fenchel said he did contact restoration specialists and felt that most of the windows were probably repairable but would be twice the cost. Mr. Fenchel noted that he believed the windows were replaced in the 1960s or 1970s. Ms. Goodwin asked staff if the windows had been replaced. Ms. Paull responded that after permit research, there was no reference to a window replacement and that the window had sash cords in place.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the windows were still functional. Mr. Fenchel replied they were still loose enough to operate but there was a substantial air loss. Ms. Litchfield asked him to look at new storms. Mr. Fenchel replied that the windows needed to be repaired, reglazed, most likely have lead paint, and all the mechanical components needed to be replaced.

Ms. Litchfield asked what the proposed muntin pattern was. Mr. Fenchel replied that the windows were currently a one over one pattern and the plan was to utilize a one over one replacement product. He noted that there were a couple of fixed units and two stained glass windows, as well as an odd ball window on the left elevation of 379 Harvard Street that faces the driveway.

Peter Kaufman, a tenant at 379 Harvard Street, Unit #3, stated that he was in support as the windows were a little bit drafty.

Ms. Myers asked if there was any site work that would require the site landscaping to be brought to code. Mr. Fenchel replied no, just the windows and interior work at this time.

Ms. Marilee Meyer, a resident, asked what the product options were for replacement. Mr. Fenchel replied that many were considered. Mr. Litchfield asked what else was looked at. Mr. Fenchel responded that they thought about vinyl, wood, clad, and even a full restoration but ultimately chose to propose vinyl.

Ms. Goodwin stated that the Commission always preferred the preservation of historic wood windows. Ms. Litchfield added that adding a high end storm window to the historic windows is a huge, huge difference. Mr. Fenchel said there was a functional advantage to not having storms. Ms. Litchfield rebutted that the Commission valued preservation and that high end storms were a huge plus to a property with historic windows.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to deny the application as proposed for MC-4660, 379 Harvard Street and recommended that they restore, refurbish or replace in kind. The motion was seconded by Mr. Redmon and approved 5-0 with Ms. Pauli voting.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to deny the application as proposed for MC-4661, 381 Harvard Street and recommend that the applicant restore, refurbish, or replace in kind. The motion was seconded by Mr. Redmon and approved 5-0 with Ms. Myers voting.

MC-4662: 17 Ware Street, by President & Fellows of Harvard College and Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Addition, alterations & rear deck.

Ms. Paull gave a brief overview of the subject property's history, including reference to the previous alterations that possibly impacted the character, including the removal of the historic front porch. She summarized the applicant's request for the construction of a new rear addition and rear deck.

Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. introduced himself as the future owner of the subject property, noting the Harvard currently owned the property and had granted him the ability to act on their behalf as he was negotiating a purchase of the structure. Professor Gates mentioned that the structure was originally renovated over 10 years ago, at which time he came before the MCNDC to seek approval of his renovation plans. The property was then renovated for him to live there alone. He noted that as his personal and familial situation had have changed, and as such there is a pressing need to expand and include additional bedrooms and include a study and library for his substantial collection. Professor Gates stated that while there are many lovely homes in Cambridge, his history with this specific home is important to him and he passionately sought to remain at 17 Ware Street.

Ms. Maryann Thompson, architect, introduced the proposed addition. She directed the Commission to the plans that reflected a three story addition, which included a kitchen expansion and family room on the first floor with additional bedrooms on the second and third floors. She noted that the proposed addition did not extend beyond the existing rear line of the structure. Ms. Thompson noted that the

addition would keep the structure under the FAR limits and below the maximum height restrictions for the property.

Ms. Pauli asked if the existing historic chimneys would be removed. Ms. Thompson replied that the plans included removal but the chimneys could be kept if the Commission would prefer. Professor Gates asked about the significance of chimneys. Mr. Goodwin replied that the chimneys are original and contribute to the character of the structure. Ms. Litchfield added that the chimneys reflected the history of the structure and its use. Ms. Thompson added that the chimney on the right side serviced a boiler and the left was for multiple fireplaces.

Mr. Hsiao noted that, as proposed, the plans reflected a substantial transformation. He asked how they addressed the needs of the resident. Professor Gates responded that the addition allowed for a two story library, which had always been a dream of his, as well as giving room for his expanding family while providing space for visiting relatives and grandchildren.

Ms. Thompson noted that she aimed to maintain the historic New England character in the front of the home and progress into the modern addition elements of the structure. She believed that transition was synonymous with New England character, traditional but progressive. She also pulled inspiration from the historic greenhouses and conservatories found in England where the closed, historic structure was prominent in the front and the openness was reflected on the rear elevation. Ms. Goodwin appreciated her inspiration but noted that the historic structure is lost with the gable on the right elevation proposed to be incorporated with the new addition. She felt preservation of the gable would help to maintain the historic structure's prominence, as it was maintained on the left elevation with the addition being set back behind the bay. Ms. Thompson replied that the addition could be moved in on the right elevation to maintain the gable.

Mr. Hsiao asked how the new elements transitioned from the old. Ms. Thompson replied that the existing windows would be kept, most of which were replaced in the early 2000s when a sliding glass door was added. She noted that the new windows would be mahogany, that would weather to gray, on the exterior. Mr. Redmon asked if white trim was considered instead of mahogany. Ms. Thompson replied that when she was in school, she was taught that if you built something new, it should be able to be easily read as a new element. She continued that she felt she was achieving that through the proposed plan.

Ms. Litchfield said in many of the house projects you showed us as examples of your work, the front house still maintained its quality and the additions appeared to be secondary in nature. She asked if Ms. Thompson considered staying below the main roof peak to keep the addition more in scale with the front of the building. Ms. Thompson replied that she could maintain the gable if the Commission wanted the gable maintained. Ms. Goodwin replied that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation emphasized maintaining the original structure as much as possible, including its roof forms, while differentiating the addition from the historic structure. Ms. Thompson said she was happy to go back to the drawing board with the comments to address the Commission's concerns with the third floor portion of the addition. She said she would like to work on the drawings and come back in April. Ms. Goodwin suggested an Architect's Committee as an option, allowing time for Ms. Thompson to incorporate the Commission's concerns and then reconvening on site or in the Historical Commission's office.

Ms. Marilee Meyer, an abutter, asked what the square footage of the addition was. Ms. Katie Chu, an architect with Maryann Thompson Architects, replied that it was approximately 1,060 square feet. Ms. Meyer asked if it was being added to the existing ell. Ms. Thompson replied yes.

Mr. Jeff Knight, a resident of 19 Ware Street, voiced his concern with the addition blocking the light in the back yard, as many of the apartment building's residents use the back yard, and its potentially massive feeling. Ms. Thompson responded that the addition would not exceed the existing rear line of the subject property's footprint. Mr. Knight reiterated his concern that the three story addition would feel substantial and have a substantial impact on the property where he resided. Mr. Redmon suggested adding the neighboring structures' exterior walls to the model. Ms. Thompson added that she would complete a shadow study as well.

Ms. Meyer voiced her concern with the addition of a modern square to the rear of the structure where the historic streetscape would be negatively impacted. She felt that the 19th century building was bookended by the brick apartment buildings and was concerned the architectural language of the neighborhood would be broken. She hoped to see the addition reflect as secondary to better blend the balance of new and old.

Mr. Redmon suggested Ms. Thompson complete various views of the proposed addition with photoshopped renderings in context as there was a visual disconnect between the model, the plans, and the physical structure.

Ms. Litchfield noted that she hoped the addition would be minimally visible from the front elevation and the gable would be maintained. She continued that the Commission had approved a number of modern additions in the past and supported them when the addition read as secondary to the original structure.

Mr. Hsiao said he felt Ms. Thompson was a talented architect and felt there was a need to demonstrate the bigger, holistic picture with sketch up views, shadow studies, elevational studies that included the streetscape and impact to the surrounding open area.

Mr. Knight reiterated his concern that a shadow study would not deal with the impact of a three story addition and the loss of the backyard, community-like park space.

Ms. Thompson asked who to follow up with. Ms. Paull stated she would be happy to arrange the Architect Committee meeting and would follow up during the week to schedule.

Professor Gates asked if it he could make presentations to his neighbors before the April meeting. Ms. Goodwin replied that meeting with neighbors was always encouraged.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to continue the application until the April meeting with the stipulation that an Architect's Committee meeting be held prior to the April meeting to adjust the plans.

Minutes

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the January 5, 2015 minutes as submitted. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission Meeting held on March 2, 2015
Minutes approved at the April 6, 2015 Meeting

Mr. Redmon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha M. Paull
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

David Brackman	Owner	16 Centre Street
Debra Segal	Owner	16 Centre Street
David Mullen	Architect for 16 Centre St	39 Bow Street, Lexington, MA
Erika Johnson	Harvard University, 17 Ware St	1350 Mass Ave, HPPM, Room 573
Marilee Meyer	Abutter	10 Dana Street
David M. Fenchel	Architect for 379 & 381 Harvard	88 Broad Street, Boston, MA
Peter Kaufman	Tenant	379 Harvard Street, #3
Jeff Knight	Tenant	19 Ware Street, #5
Maryann Thompson	Architect for 17 Ware St	741 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown
Katie Chu	Architect for 17 Ware St	741 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown
Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.	Tenant & prospective owner	17 Ware Street

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