

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., May 10, 2010 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, Chair; William King, member; Grenelle Scott, alternate

Staff present: Susan Maycock, Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

Chair Van Sickle called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. The first order of business was to introduce the commission members present and authorize Grenelle Scott to vote.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-78: 148 Mt. Auburn Street, by Penny O'Brien. To replace existing Darwin's, Ltd. Sign with 2 wall signs and 2 projecting signs. Building dates to 1925.

Susan Maycock presented the new signage proposal to the commission. The tenant wishes to remove the existing internally lit plastic cabinet sign, which has been in place for many years, and install 4 new signs.

The contractor, Jason Parillo, confirmed that the existing sign was in place prior to Darwin's tenancy and seems inappropriate for the building. Current signage amounts to 27.7 sq. ft, whereas the new proposal would only require 17.5 sq. ft. to post four signs. The light rail for the proposed wall sign is less than 2' wide, houses LED lights, and can be directed towards the sign.

Bill King inquired about the number of lumens and the brightness of the proposed light strip. Mr. Parillo said the light level can be controlled and if deemed too bright after installation, could be reduced to better suit the neighborhood.

James Van Sickle asked if there would be any spill of light beyond the sign area. Mr. Parillo felt the directional ability of the light rail could limit extraneous illumination.

Mr. Van Sickle asked about the condition of the cast stone storefront, and whether adding new holes would cause irreparable damage. Mr. Parillo did not feel the storefront would be damaged and stated that the intention was to patch any residual holes left over from the old sign. It was also suggested that the new signs be repositioned, if possible, to utilize existing storefront penetrations and avoid creating additional holes.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for clarification that the two projecting signs would be 18" in height and non-illuminated. Mr. Parillo confirmed those conditions.

Public comment was received from Mr. Curt Pollari, 24 Ash Street, who said he thought the signage would be an improvement over the large projecting illuminated sign.

Mr. Richard Crowley, owner of adjacent properties, likes the idea of having signs at the separate entrances.

Mr. King asked if the sign for the laundromat would remain. Mr. Parillo said that it would.

Mr. Van Sickle asked whether, after the expansion of Darwin's from one storefront to two, the owners consider it as two separate operations. Mr. Parillo said they share staff and space on the interior, but they would like the two entrances clearly marked.

Mr. Crowley reiterated that he feels the project is a good thing for the neighborhood and feels the signs will be attractive. He would, however, like to see a limit on the hours of illumination.

Eiliesh Tuffy pointed out that municipal ordinance prevents commercial sign illumination after 11:00pm in residential areas.

Mr. Van Sickle read correspondence from Judith Dortz, speaking as a nearby neighbor, into the record. Ms. Dortz was pleased that improvements were being made to the property, but opposed an increase in the number of projecting signs as well as any illumination of the new signs.

Mr. King said he was delighted to hear that the lumens could be controlled and decreased if necessary, and agreed with the favorable comments of both Mr. Pollari and Mr. Crowley.

Mr. King motioned to grant a certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, with the condition that residual holes in the cast stone storefront be patched to the satisfaction of the CHC staff. Ms. Grenelle Scott seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

In closing, the Commissioners said they would be willing to hear what a possible alternative plan would be, understanding that the proposal as submitted required BZA approval. Mr. Parillo said that, if they were not granted all four signs, they would likely eliminate the projecting signs and only install the two illuminated wall signs.

A second motion was proposed stating that, while finding the initial proposal appropriate, the Commission nevertheless also approves an application that does not include the two projecting signs. Ms. Scott seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Property

HCM-79: 9 Sibley Court, by Adam Seitchik and Pamela Wickham. To install stovepipe for wood-burning stove.

Ms. Maycock presented the proposed plans for a stovepipe installation, which is the latest phase of an ongoing rehabilitation of the property.

The property owner, Mr. Adam Seitchik, said that at the time they drew up plans for the rehabilitation, they had not worked out the detail of the chimney installation, which is why it was being presented at this time. At first they had hoped to locate the chimney in the southeast corner of the house, closest to the street, but that would place the chimney within 10' of the neighboring property in violation of fire codes. The current proposal attempts to minimize the visibility of the chimney from Sparks St.

Mr. King asked if they had given much thought to a brick chimney. Mr. Seitchik said it was not practical for several reasons, including increased material costs and navigating around a bend in the pipe that is necessary to place the chimney within the roof dormer.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the metal chimney pipe would be painted. The owner said they were considering painting it black. Ms. King asked what color the roof would be. The owner said it would be grey shingles.

Mr. Van Sickle said he did not object to removing boiler-type chimneys and has no objections to this chimney. If denied, the Commission would be telling homeowners they could not have wood burning stoves.

Mr. Van Sickle read a statement from Ms. Judith Dortz into the record. Ms. Dortz was reluctant to see a metal chimney and inquired about the possibility of installing masonry instead.

Mr. King said that the record should reflect that there are other stovepipes in the neighborhood and on adjacent buildings. He thought it was not inappropriate to other changes the Commission has approved for this address.

Ms. Scott moved to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted, with the condition that the stovepipe be painted black. Mr. King seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Minutes

Mr. King offered the following corrections to the minutes of Jan. 11, 2010:

- Page 2, 2/3 down the page: replace “stipulate” with “specify”
- Page 3, 3rd para.: reverse order of “in” and “it”
- Page 3, 4th para.: along with Ms. Masterson’s name, add “and Ms. Scott” to the sentence stating they accepted the amendment

Mr. King moved to approve the minutes from January and April 2010 as corrected.
Ms. Scott seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Introduction of New Staff

Ms. Maycock introduced new staff member, Eiliesh Tuffy, to the members of the commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, May 10, 2010

Richard Crowley	152/154 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge
Curtiss Pollari [<i>illegible</i>]	24 Ash St., Cambridge
Jason Parillo	25 Temple St., Somerville, Mass.
Adam Seitchik	9 Sibley Court, Cambridge