

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., February 11, 2013 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Commission Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, William King *members*; Michael Robertson, *alternate*

Commission Members absent: Robert Banker, *member*; Deborah Masterson, Charles Smith, *alternates*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

Chair Van Sickle called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. Van Sickle introduced the Commissioners and staff present.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-181: 151 Mt. Auburn St., by Tom Jevon & Louise Richardson. Exterior alterations. Repair entry porch, remove chimney, replace doors, and install exterior mechanicals.

This house was constructed in 1853 by local carpenter Andrew S. Waitt, who later went on to become the Superintendent of Buildings at Harvard from 1859—1872. Eighteen buildings in Cambridge are attributed to Waitt including seven in the immediate area of the Mt. Auburn Street and Ash Street intersection. This property is one of four prominent corner lots at that intersection, each of which is dominated by a significant example of 19th century residential architecture.

The proposal calls for the following exterior alterations:

- Removal of the east chimney
- Addition of 1 new skylight (not publicly visible)
- Removal of gable end exterior ridge vents
- Repair and reconstruction of historic trim details on the front entrance porch
- Replace existing doors and transoms on the side elevations
- Addition of a gas fireplace vent on the side wall facing the driveway
- Addition of 2 air conditioning compressors on the Ash Street elevation
- Extension of existing driveway

The architect, Peter Wright, attended the hearing on behalf of the owners who were out of the country.

The Commission asked why the driveway was being extended. Mr. Wright stated the owners would like to get a 3rd car in the driveway, since the rear ell of the building is a separate rental dwelling unit. The 8' extension of the existing driveway should allow for more parking.

Mr. Wright mentioned that the existing skirt under the stairs is metal, similar to the material used for radiator covers. He proposed replacing that with more traditional wood skirting.

When asked about the projection of the gas fireplace vent, Mr. Wright said it had a projection of 8-9" off the exterior façade. Mr. King pointed out that the exemption for exterior vents applies to those that are flush with the exterior siding.

Regarding the exterior mechanicals, Mr. Wright said the units should adhere to the 74 maximum decibel limit set in the noise ordinance. Mr. King strongly suggested Mr. Wright run the proposed condition by the License Commission for compliance. To help alleviate the noise of the units, the compressors could be recessed somewhat into a pit below grade or surrounded by fencing and/or acoustical panels. Ms. Dortz said that she walks by the Ash Street façade often and that the existing hedges do shield the proposed location of the compressors.

Mr. King inquired about the lattice privacy screen proposed for the rear elevation near the east edge of the house. Mr. Wright said that was to help provide some screening because the tenant's unit has very large windows looking out onto the owners' rear deck. There was some question as to whether that screen would be publicly visible from Mt. Auburn Street.

The new doors are proposed to be paneled wood doors as are the proposed replacement transoms. Both the doors and transoms would have simulated divided lights with spacer bars. One alteration that was approved by the Commission was to install a replacement door on the driveway elevation that has full glazing rather than the existing $\frac{3}{4}$ glazing.

The chimney removal was not felt to adversely impact the overall integrity of the building.

Questions and comments were accepted from the public.

The direct abutters at 147 Mt. Auburn Street said they had no opposition to the proposal and felt it was sensitively done. They hoped the Commission would allow the Ash Street placement of the mechanicals given the dense foliage on that side of the property.

Paulette Crowley, who owns the property at 152 Mt. Auburn Street, agreed the loss of the chimney seemed inconsequential.

Mr. King made a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project with the following comments:

- With respect to the proposed exterior vent for the new gas fireplace, the Commission feels that the overall projection of the vent is acceptable in this particular case and because it will not be located on either of the most publicly visible façades of the building.
- The applicant must ensure that the exterior mechanicals as proposed meet the city requirements as set forth in the noise ordinance and, if in compliance, be installed within a recessed pit to aid in their concealment.
- A mock up of any proposed new fencing be reviewed by staff to determine whether further Commission review is needed

Mr. Robertson seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

