

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

June 6, 2011 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2nd Floor

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Charles Redmon, *Member*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Commission Members Absent: Lestra Litchfield, Carole Perrault, *Members*; Siobhan McMahon, *Alternate*

Staff: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3881: 48 Fayette St, 2nd Fl., by Leena and Michael Contarino. Install vinyl windows.

Staff presented images of the property, which is an 1892 Queen Anne two-family residence, designed by architect George Fogerty. Fogerty also designed the neighboring triple-decker at 52 Fayette. Minor alterations were made to the property in 1903 and 1907 (piazza added), and the house has retained much of its historic integrity over the years. The property has wood, double-hung windows – many with a 2-over-1 glazing pattern – as well as several ornamental stained glass windows. The current proposal is to remove the original wood windows on just the second floor of the house and replace them with 1-over-1 vinyl windows. The exterior window trim will remain intact and no stained glass windows are proposed to be removed. The Sheffield line of windows by Alside only offers grille-between-glass window muntins. Exterior colors are limited to white, beige, or brown.

The owners were out of the country, and did not appear at the public hearing. Their contractor, John Carroll of U.S. Home Improvement in Peabody was at the hearing as the owners' representative.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were storm windows currently installed at the property, to which the contractor responded that they did have storm windows. She also asked what the reason was for replacing the hardwood windows, which remain in both the first and second floor units. The contractor said the owners felt they were drafty, did not operate to their liking, and that the storm windows dated back to the 1960s.

Ms. Myers asked if the first floor owners planned to replace their windows soon, but the contractor was not sure.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Ms. Goodwin stated that the Mid Cambridge Commission highly prefers that owners repair historic hardwood windows and noted that, with properly fitted storm windows, they can yield the same energy savings as contemporary insulated windows. She also mentioned that, if original muntin patterns are to be replicated with anything other than true divided lights, the preference is for simulated exterior divided lights with interior spacer bars rather than grille-between-glass or snap-in grilles.

Staff stated that, due to the owners' inability to appear before the Commission, it was a lost opportunity to educate the historic homeowners about feasible window restoration methods versus the inferior quality and performance of vinyl replacement windows, which typically fail within 15 years. As a result of this project, the century-old hardwood windows will be lost and the property will look like a patchwork from the exterior, since these make no attempt at matching the first floor fenestration.

Mr. Redmon moved to reject the application for vinyl replacement windows. Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

(one additional Commissioner joined the meeting)

MC-3882: 76 Inman Street, by 73109 LLC. Rebuild and enclose existing rear porches.

Staff showed images of the property, which is one half of a double house located mid-block. A private way (King Place) terminates directly behind the lot, making the rear of the property visible from Amory Street. The building is a 1-1/2 story Mansard. The half at #74 has been altered and no longer retains much of the original ornament. The property under current consideration (#76) does retain much of its original detail, including the roof brackets, window trim, projecting bay windows and ornamental columns and trim on both the front and rear porches. The current proposal would remove the ornamental columns on the rear porch as part of the plan to enclose the northeast corner of the house.

As part of the project, the owner has agreed to repaint the exterior of both this side of the building and #74 Inman to help unify the exterior with a single paint color.

Ms. Goodwin asked if Mr. Ferrante had plans to rebuild the neighbor's front porch in the future, but that is not currently part of the plan.

The Commission asked if a setback variance was needed to complete the project, and Mr. Ferrante said none was required. It was noted that the rendering showed the wall of the enclosed porch continuing in line with the existing outer wall of the house. Mr. Ferrante said that was an error on the rendering, and that the exterior wall of the enclosed porch would be set back, leaving a 6-12" return between the original wall of the house and the new wall.

Ms. Myers asked what would happen to the bulkhead as part of the porch project. The owner said they were going to build the rear entrance over the existing bulkhead.

The enclosure of the existing porch would accommodate a larger kitchen. There would not be appliances or cabinets up against the exterior wall that is proposed to be a series of windows. The proposed windows are Marvin Integrity, which are fiberglass-clad wood windows. The owner plans to use grilles in these windows, but they will not have metal spacer bars between the glazing units. He felt that, since this is at the rear of the property, false muntins would not be as noticeable.

The proposed railing on the deck above the enclosed porch would be Azek wood composite. Ms. Pauli asked if the dormers were proposed to be changed as part of the project, since the rendering appears to be different than the existing conditions. The owner said that was simply a deficiency in the rendering, and that the dormers were not being altered. The siding on the new addition will be cedar clapboards.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Ms. Myers said that she appreciated the modest scale of the proposed addition. Mr. Redmon said, since the owner's residence is next door, that he was sure the owner designed something he'd be pleased to look at all the time.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3884: 22 Fayette St., by Anne-Marie and John Howe. Decrease size and replace windows, 3rd floor.

The property is one of three adjacent triple-deckers all constructed in 1910 by the builder Thomas O'Connell. The proposal is to replace two 3rd-floor windows towards the rear of the north elevation with shorter windows, in order to accommodate kitchen counters on the wall's interior. The windows, although located towards the back of the building, are publicly visible from Fayette Street.

The Commissioners asked if the new windows would be installed so that the sills lined up with the other shorter windows closer to the front of the building. The owner said he was not sure if they would. This was the recommendation of the Commission, as it would also maintain an unbroken horizontal line in the clapboard patches underneath the new windows. Ms. Pauli also suggested moving the existing wood sills up to the new height, so they would match the existing sills in material and thickness.

Comments were accepted from the public. The neighbor across the street at 23 Fayette Street spoke in favor of the proposal.

Mr. Redmon moved to approve the application with the following condition:

- Match up the sill heights of the 2 new replacement windows with the shorter windows immediately forward of these openings on the same elevation.

Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3883: 1663 Cambridge St., by James Hamm. Decrease size and replace window, 1st floor.

An application was submitted to alter the front window under the entrance porch, raising the sill height in order to accommodate new kitchen counters on the interior half of the wall. This triple-decker is one of three adjacent matching buildings, all designed by architect George Fogerty and constructed in 1898.

The existing window next to the front door is a standard height double-hung window, as are the windows in the other 2 Fogerty-designed buildings. The proposed replacement window would be a vinyl double-hung window with a sill height that is 16" above the existing window sill.

The owner was out of the country, so was not in attendance at the hearing. There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Hsiao and Mr. Redmon suggested maintaining the existing proportions of the front window, since this would be the only building of the grouping with a smaller window in this location.

Ms. Pauli moved to approve the application with the following conditions:

- Retain the exterior trim and original sill of the existing window in place, to indicate the historic window size
- The gap between the original sill and the raised sill can be filled in with either clapboards painted to match the house exterior, or a wood panel
- An alternate approach would be to keep the existing window size and create a recessed pocket or window well on the interior so that the counter steps back from the face of the glass in that area.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Minutes

Ms. Myers moved to approve the minutes of the May meeting. Ms. Pauli seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance Sheet 6/6/11

Sara Mae Berman

23 Fayette Street, Cambridge, MA 02139