

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

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

Members present: Nancy Goodwin, Tony Hsiao, Carole Perrault, members; Siobhan McMahon, 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 3099: 14 Clinton St., by Susan Butler (continued). To renew temporary one-year binding certificate for installation of wind turbine.

Mr. Trudeau explained that the Commission had allowed a temporary Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the installation of the wind turbine for one year to allow the applicant an opportunity to gather data on its electricity production. The Commission granted an additional 3-month extension in September 2008 to allow more time for data-gathering. At the January 5, 2009 meeting, the Commission had allowed a final 3-month extension to allow the applicant more time to gather data, and had determined that it would be preferable to have the turbine come down if no data were available. The License Commission had informed Historical Commission staff that a noise reading on the turbine revealed a violation of the City's noise ordinance.

Ms. Goodwin reminded that the Commission's jurisdiction in the case only concerned the visual impacts of the turbine.

Ms. Butler said she was willing to work with the License Commission on the noise violation but was not sure how to proceed with the Historical Commission's review.

Mr. Trudeau asked Ms. Butler if she had data on the production of the turbine. Ms. Butler said she had rough data but not very much.

Ms. Goodwin said the Commission had no jurisdiction over the noise issue. Ms. Butler said she was aware of this. She was contemplating different options concerning the violation.

Ms. Perrault if the installation of additional turbines was still an option. Ms. Butler said she owned three turbines, but was not intending on installing the other two.

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

Ms. Myers asked for the daytime decibels of the turbine. Ms. Goodwin said questions about noise should not be the Commission's concern.

Ms. Perrault asked if there were different models of turbines available. Ms. Butler said she was always investigating new products. Ms. Goodwin reminded that the installation of a different turbine would need to come back before the Commission.

Mr. Hsiao acknowledged that at the previous meeting the Commission had extended the temporary Certificate to allow more time for the applicant to gather data. Given the Commission's primary concern with the aesthetic qualities of the installation, he MOVED to approve a permanent Certificate of Appropriateness for the turbine in its current location. Ms. Perrault SECONDED the motion.

Mr. Trudeau reminded that the Commission had requested hard data before approving a permanent Certificate. Mr. Hsiao said although he had appreciated the Commission's concern regarding the energy production of the turbine, he felt it was beyond the Commission's ability to determine whether the turbine was producing sufficient energy to justify its installation. He said he was in favor of the exploration of sustainable energy practices, and the Commission could expect to see similar proposals in the future.

Ms. McMahon noted that a neighbor had mentioned that the turbine had different aesthetic qualities when the blades were rotating. Mr. Hsiao said the Commission had reviewed moving parts of mechanical equipment in the past.

Ms. Perrault asked what would happen with the noise ordinance violation. Ms. Butler said she was not sure. She did not want to annoy the neighbors, but the turbine needed to be turned on in order to function properly.

Ms. Goodwin asked for a vote on the motion. The motion PASSED 4-0.

MC 3414: 116-118 Amory St., by Cacciola Development, LLC. To rebuild and relocate porches; create new entrance door and window openings; replace windows and doors; remove exterior cladding and install new trim and fiber cement siding; install new roof shingles.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the two 1860s buildings. He described the site layout, noting that #118 was set back from the road and had suffered minor fire damage from a neighboring fire last spring. He said the current condition of the buildings was poor due to deferred maintenance. Both were clad in asbestos shingles and had vinyl replacement windows. He noted that the exterior stair configuration of both buildings was an original detail.

Richard Brimley, the architect, and Eddie Cacciola of Cacciola Development were on hand for the discussion. Mr. Brimley explained the proposals. He said the first consideration for #116 was to reorient the side stair to the front of the house, but this plan was reconsidered after consulting with Historical Commission staff. He said several windows would be relocated, and the aluminum cladding over the trim would be removed. He said they would assess the condition of trim details once the cladding was removed, and either replace or restore the trim. He noted the addition of a new canopy over the front door.

Mr. Brimley continued with a description of the proposal for #118. He said the stairway would be rebuilt but would remain within the existing footprint. The windows would remain in their existing location, but some would be filled in. Like #116, the repair or replacement of trim would be assessed once the aluminum cladding was removed. He said both house needed to asphalt roof shingles, and the removal of the side stairs on #116 would allow better parking. The site would be re-landscaped.

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

Ms. Perrault asked if the chimneys were visible from the street. Mr. Trudeau said they were. Mr. Brimley said the chimneys were inoperable and would need to come down.

Ms. Perrault asked for more details on the site plan. Mr. Brimley said the existing side stairs on #116 projected 3' out into the driveway. A new stair would be erected on the rear ell, allowing for 3 tandem parking spaces and better landscaping. Mr. Cacciola said he had considered brick pavers for the driveway. Ms. Goodwin asked if there would be plantings. Mr. Cacciola said there was not much room on the site for plantings. Ms. Perrault said a site plan would be helpful for the Commission to make better recommendations.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there was a basement unit for #116. Mr. Brimley said it had been abandoned.

Ms. Myers asked for paving materials between the two buildings towards the rear. Mr. Cacciola said he was considering brick pavers with a small landscaped area.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there was any thought to restoring the front triple window to its original configuration. Mr. Brimley said this was not considered. Mr. Cacciola said based on interior demolition there was no evidence of the original window configuration.

Ms. Perrault asked if the dimensions of the cornerboards were known. Mr. Brimley guessed they would be about 8", but would try to verify once the asbestos shingles came off.

Ms. Pauli asked for details on the new siding. Mr. Brimley said the new siding would be 6" HardiPlank siding with a smooth finish.

Mr. Hsiao asked for details on window trim. Mr. Brimley said the goal was to repair the existing trim or replace with a synthetic trim. Ms. Perrault asked when the investigation would take place. Mr. Cacciola said the asbestos would be removed by the end of April.

Ms. Myers asked if the siding would continue down to the foundation if the side stair was removed on #116. Mr. Cacciola said it would.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the watertable would carry around the house. Mr. Brimley said it would be a continuous watertable.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were questions or comments from the public.

Greg Hyde, 117 Amory St., asked if the parking would be in tandem. Mr. Brimley said that was correct. Mr. Hyde said the windows on the front façade of his house were probably the same as #116 if the applicants were looking for evidence of an original configuration. He said his windows were double-hung. He asked if the applicants would need a second means of egress for the second floor if there were two units. Mr. Brimley said a second means of egress was not required if the windows were in compliance with the zoning code. Mr. Hyde said he had understood the rule differently from his experience. He said he was happy the buildings were being restored. He asked if the chain link fence would remain. Mr. Brimley said it would be replaced by a wrought iron fence. Mr. Hyde asked for details on the new doors. Mr. Brimley said they would be 6 panel doors.

Ms. Pauli asked if the Commission would see the trim details once the asbestos shingles were removed. Ms. Goodwin said the review of these details could be delegated to the Architects Committee. Mr. Hsiao agreed, and said the Commission should see more details on site. He said he appreciated the restoration of the two buildings.

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, on the condition that the Architects Committee review and approve additional site plan and trim details following the removal of the asbestos siding. Ms. Myers SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

MC 3415: 21 Irving St., by Francis J. Sennott on behalf of Julie Stone Peters. To add second-floor bay window; install new handrail on front steps; alter, relocate and add windows; construct decks.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, a 2 ½ story Italianate house with decorative brackets and window hoods. He said the enclosures on and above the front porch were added circa 1900. Otherwise, the house had remained relatively unchanged.

Michael McCloskey, the architect, and Ms. Peters were present for the discussion. Mr. McCloskey reviewed the proposed changes on each elevation. He said a second-floor bay window would be added to the bay window on the front façade. Vinyl windows would be replaced with wood windows. New window hoods would be installed on the north façade. Two new windows and French doors would be added to the south façade as part of the conversion of the house from a three-family to a single-family. A second-floor porch and low deck would be constructed on the rear ell. The chimneys would be removed because they were inoperable. All venting would be on the rear façade and not visible from the street. The site would have new landscaping, with parking reduced to a space for one car. The driveway would likely have brick pavers.

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

Ms. Myers asked for information on the skylights. Mr. McCloskey said they would be installed toward the rear of the house and would not be highly visible. He said there was an existing skylight on the north side of the roof.

Ms. Perrault asked for an explanation of the clerestory windows on the south stair tower. Mr. McCloskey said the interior stair would not carry to the second floor as part of the renovations, so there was an opportunity to allow more natural light.

Mr. Hsiao asked for the roofing material on the proposed second-floor bay window. Mr. McCloskey said this was not yet determined. Mr. Hsiao recommended copper, and to have match it the two-story bay window on the south façade. Mr. McCloskey said slate was another option.

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

Martha Osler, 4 Irving Terrace, asked for more information on the rear venting. Mr. McCloskey explained the venting plan.

Ms. Osler commented that the front façade already had three boxy elements; adding a fourth by constructing a second-floor bay window would be excessive. She asked if there was a precedent for this kind of alteration. She said the original details of the house would be compromised. Ms. Stone showed photographs of other buildings in the neighborhood with two-story bay windows. Ms. Perrault said she had seen this example in her neighborhood. Ms. Osler said she felt an additional bay window was excessive for the front façade.

Ms. Osler asked if the chain link fence at the rear of the property would come down. Ms. Stone said that if the fence was on her property, it would come down.

Ms. Goodwin closed the public comment period. She thanked the architect for the thorough presentation. She said the existing composition on the front façade had a lot of character. She expressed concern about the removal of the chimneys.

Ms. Perrault agreed that the chimneys were a character-defining feature of the building and should not come down.

Ms. Pauli said that the addition of the second-floor bay would compete with the existing bays on the façade. Ms. Stone asked if would be more appropriate to have the second-floor bay set back slightly, as seen on the south façade. Ms. Goodwin said the porch enclosures on the front façade were already a very strong element.

Mr. Hsiao said he appreciated the thought that went into the proposal. He said the existing balance of the bay windows enhanced the asymmetrical details of the house. An additional bay on the front façade would give the impression of a townhouse. He said the rear porch details were also highly elaborate. He agreed that the chimneys should remain.

Ms. Perrault said the broad blank spaces on the house were a strong detail. The window plan seemed to disturb this.

Ms. McMahon said she was not bothered by the removal of the chimneys, especially as viewed from the street.

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, with strong recommendation that the addition of the second-floor bay on the front façade and removal of chimneys be reconsidered. Ms. Perrault SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC 3420: 3 Greenough Ave., by Stephen Friedberg. To construct new entrance vestibule.

Mr. Trudeau explained that he received Mr. Friedberg's application late, but had included it on the agenda under the 10-day notice procedure because it was not a substantial alteration to the house. He showed slides of the house and indicated the area for the new vestibule.

Scott Simpson, the architect, explained the proposal. He said the current entrance used to have a sliding door to the porch landing, but a new door was installed. He said the vestibule would tie into the bay window. The owner was elderly and wanted an enclosed space as he entered the house.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the roof of the vestibule would be raised to match the adjacent windows. Mr. Simpson said the windows would be reduced.

Ms. Myers asked if there would be space on the deck after the vestibule was constructed. Mr. Simpson said there would be.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the vestibule would be clad with clapboards. Ms. Simpson said it would.

Ms. McMahon asked if the applicant had communicated his plans with the other unit owners in the building. Mr. Simpson said he believed he had.

Mr. Hsiao suggested that the vestibule be set back more than shown in the plan, in order to better express the corner and to keep it subsidiary.

Ms. Pauli said the house had a vertical feeling and the proposed vestibule seemed short and squat. Mr. Simpson said he could investigate a more elevated design. Ms. Pauli suggested including more edging detail to match the house.

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to approve the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness under the 10-day notice procedure, with the recommendation for a taller, set back design for the vestibule to complement the scale of the house, and to include edge detailing that complemented the existing detailing on the house. Ms. Perrault SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

Minutes: 1/5/09

Ms. McMahon MOVED to approve the minutes for the 1/5/09 meeting as submitted. Mr. Pauli SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

Other Business

Mr. Trudeau showed recent slides of the 29 Irving St. and 19-21 Roberts Road projects.

There being no further business, Mr. Hsiao MOVED to adjourn. Ms. Perrault SECONDED the motion, and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 7:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Trudeau
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public That Signed Attendance Sheet on 4/6/09

Sue Butler	14 Clinton St.
Michael Keohane	60 Catherine St., Roslindale
Martha Osler	4 Irving Terrace
Greg Hyde	117 Amory St.
Michael McCloskey	86 Pleasant St., Marblehead
Julie Peters	468 Riverside Dr., New York City
Scott Simpson	117 Judy Farm Rd., Carlisle