

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, November 1, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*, Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sara Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/MCnov2021>.

Due to statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response to COVID-19, this meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was **880 6715 5136**.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions and explained the meeting procedures and called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Case MC-6112: 12 Fayette Street, by 12 Fayette Street Ventures LLC. Consider revised design of single detached unit in rear of property.

Ms. Crosbie explained the applicant is seeking to amend the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness with a revised design of the proposed new detached unit in the rear.

Ms. Alison Hammer, the architect, described the revisions including the removal of the third floor, and changing a balcony into a Juliet balcony. The building footprint did not change. The maximum elevation is 28 feet, the windows have been reconfigured, and the trellis has been removed.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked if the floor-to-floor height has changed. Ms. Hammer replied yes, they are still working on it, they are staggered sections and are working with a large mechanical area.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the square footage has changed. Ms. Hammer said yes. Mr. Hsiao asked about the proposed brick façade. Ms. Hammer answered that it would just be on the façade facing the street inspired by brick townhouses, the rest is fiber cement.

Commissioner Charles Redmon asked if the windows on the brick portion are subdivided. Ms. Hammer replied yes, they're trying to create a different look here but are still looking at it. Windows are real or applied mullions, still doing early design studies. Mr. Redmon asked about the other windows. Ms. Hammer explained they are looking at tilt turn windows from abroad with double functionality, high performance. Mr. Hsiao asked for more clarification about these windows. Ms. Hammer described them.

Ms. Litchfield asked about the tilt turn functionality and there wouldn't be screens. Ms. Hammer confirmed they are tilt in and turn in.

Commissioner Monika Pauli asked about the roof. Ms. Hammer said there is no roof access, no roof deck, just a standard flat roof with slight pitch.

No Public Questions

Public Comments

Mr. Hugh Russell of Corliss Place stated that he supports the compromise design and was convinced by his neighbors that two stories is the right solution. Mr. Redmon asked Mr. Russell about neighborhood opinion on the brick cladding. Mr. Russell responded that that portion doesn't face any of the neighbors so there was no discussion.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon stated that the design is laudable, it's an interesting arrangement of the floors with a taller master bedroom space and had no opinion on the brick cladding.

Ms. Litchfield commented regarding the brick, she prefers one material and would like to use color on the Hardieplank and finds the lack of cornerboards awkward. She considers the 6/6 windows with pasted on mullions as post-modern, and there's no functionality, but would like to hear from other Commissioners.

Mr. Redmon concurred with Ms. Litchfield regarding the brick cladding and recommended that all the windows be the same. Commissioner Margaret McMahon agreed with both Commissioners about the brick, that it is not desirable. Mr. Hsiao agreed that the brick is unnecessary.

Ms. Pauli agreed with the Commission and thinks the details could be richer in windows and detailing. Ms. Litchfield agreed.

Mr. Redmon commented that the front elevation looks mean and severe, the entrance on the front façade should turn and have a more generous landing, and the overhang should extend further. Ms. Hammer responded that there are zoning implications that impact the orientation of the stairs and landing (regarding distances between buildings) and is happy to consult with staff on the overhang when the design is refined. Ms. Hammer also stated that the drawings don't capture the detailing or materiality that will go into the design, and in addition there is a substantial landscape design. She understands the drawings look flat right now.

Mr. Hsiao agrees with the modern approach and recommended looking at the cornice that can be worked out. He noted that reducing to two floors makes the detailing even more key and is glad to see the design more responsive to the neighborhood concerns.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal but to remove the proposed brick cladding. Ms. Litchfield added to consult with staff regarding window details. Mr. Hsiao reiterated that the windows will not have grid patterns and that the applicant consult with staff on color. CHC planner. Ms. Burks mentioned the need to include statements of fact. Mr. Hsiao stated that the design is appropriate in its massing and scale and does not detract from the existing house. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Case MC-6303: 74 Ellery Street, by James Flynn and Zoe Cullen. Alter fenestration and roof deck.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, noting this is a non binding review.

Architect Derek Bloom presented the proposal noting the renovation of the interior and reconfiguration of the kitchen that is informing some of the window alterations and explained the alteration of the roof deck on the side.

Commission Questions

Ms. Pauli asked if the trellis is to remain. Mr. Bloom answered that it was not part of the scope of work. Ms. Pauli asked if the chimney is to remain. Mr. Bloom answered yes.

Public Questions

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street noted the bay window and wanted to confirm that the pilaster is to be eliminated along with the cornice, it's the little details that make the difference in framing the window. Ms. Meyer asked about the mullions on the proposed large window. Mr. Bloom answered that it is metal not a traditional wood window.

No Public Comment

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield commented that it's a great project and very thoughtful in placement, details, and keeping the chimney. She asked if the windows will be SDL (simulated divided lites) and Mr. Bloom replied yes. Ms. Litchfield also commented that it's great that the house is being turned back into a single-family home.

Mr. Redmon agreed with Ms. Litchfield.

Ms. Pauli also agreed and asked about the color. The color is staying the same. Ms. Pauli noted that a house on Harvard Street has metal windows painted black. Mr. Bloom said they are considering white given the color palette of the house. Mr. Redmon asked about the storm windows. Mr. Bloom said the new windows won't need storm windows. The owner James Flynn asked the Commission's opinion on storm windows. Mr. Redmon suggested that there be consistency. Mr. Bloom suggested maybe by floor. Ms. Litchfield said she had no issue. Mr. Hsiao recommended consistency once they start replacing windows at least for the windows that face the public way.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Case MC-6305: 42 Dana Street, by Stephan Dubouloz. Replace wood siding and trim with synthetic materials, replace windows, install window well.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, noting this is a non binding review.

Mr. Steve Hiserodt, the architect for the owner, presented slides of the proposal for window replacements keeping the openings on the front, constructing a window well in front along with a French door. Mr. Hiserodt also presented alterations to the left and right facades. They are

proposing to replace all the windows with Marvin Ultimate SDL with traditional profile. The trim has deteriorated and will be replaced with pvc. They are also proposing to replace the wood shingle siding with cement fiber clapboard siding.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked about the porch columns and trim. Mr. Hiserodt answered they would like to keep the columns, but they don't yet know exactly what condition they're in until they start work.

Ms. Crosbie asked why they were removing the wood shingles and replacing with fiber cement. Mr. Hiserodt replied preference is part of it and that a lot of the wood is very soft, and they would have to replace a lot of the shingles.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the clapboards will be mitered. Mr. Hiserodt said yes, they were looking at that, but it's not finalized.

Mr. Redmon asked about the transition between the first and second floors and how will they deal with that. Mr. Hiserodt said there is a sloped top piece that can be used, but it is problematic.

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked about comparing back and front, the 2/1 windows in back is what you are changing to? Mr. Hiserodt replied yes. If the 2/1 windows go on the front, where there is a lot going on, is that compatible? Mr. Hiserodt answered that they will look at that, they will do more studies. Ms. Meyer asked about SDL windows. Mr. Hiserodt described them. Ms. Litchfield further clarified the muntin profiles available with SDL windows.

No Public Comments

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao stated that the siding issue was more substantive than the window issue. He suggested shingle on the upper floors and clapboard on the first level to deal with the area between the two floors that kicks out. There are examples of this in the neighborhood. Making it all clapboard is more awkward and difficult which is why wood shingle works here. This could be a more elegant way to resolve this.

Ms. Litchfield agreed, stating that her house is an example of shingles on the upper floors and clapboard first level. Mr. Hiserodt replied they did talk about that option. Ms. Litchfield also stated that fiber cement is not appropriate for this house and there aren't any in the immediate vicinity. She noted fiber cement on historic buildings just doesn't look right, you can tell the difference. They are not as maintenance free as you might think. She asked if they had thought about natural materials. Mr. Hiserodt replied they considered a lot of possibilities but can rethink this. Regarding windows, Ms. Litchfield noted her house has 2/1 and 1/1 on the first floor. She stated that the most appropriate option is to re-shingle the entire house and if not, then re-shingle the upper floors and use clapboard on the first floor and reiterated that fiber cement is not appropriate.

Ms. Pauli agreed with Ms. Litchfield and that the 2/1 windows need to be studied, it could get too busy.

Mr. Hsiao commented that the tendency of fiber cement is to look too perfect, unlike the natural product which has more character. The fiber cement shingles are even worse. Mr. Hsiao also thinks the windows could be simpler, maybe save some money on the windows and use it on the siding.

Ms. McMahon concurred on the siding.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to reject the application as submitted and recommended using natural materials for the siding and to consult with staff on final choice. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed, 5-0.

Case MC-6274 CONTINUED: 123 Hancock Street, by Sam Wolff. Reposition existing building on site, remove rear addition and extend existing dormer. Construct 2 new attached dwelling units.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, explaining that the applicant was asked to return with more information regarding the design process, to consider reducing the scale of the new construction and offer a design option that does not move the existing house.

Mr. Sam Wolff, the owner, explained that the existing house has great presence, and he intends to keep the existing house as the focal point and not affect the view as you come up the street. He also explained that it is a nonconforming structure and separating the structures would need zoning relief. He also believes that the new construction should not be three stories because it would overwhelm the existing historic house. He is also proposing to lift the existing house to raise the height of the basement and gain more height. He noted that the interior space is very challenging with low ceiling heights, water issues in the basement, and the house is on the lot line. If the house is lifted to create the new basement then he can pivot it on the corner to allow two-story construction further back on the site, and ask for relief for the rear setback. He also stated that the proposed mansard style of the new construction fits with the neighborhood and that he heard from neighbors that they do not want to see a contemporary building. He went on to say that based on the last meeting, he reduced the footprint and increased open space, changed the façade on park side and the other side to break up the façade, and provided a landscape plan.

Ms. Heather Souza, the architect, presented the revisions:

- Scheme 1A keeps the existing house in the same location with three-story structures, three units in total, removal of later addition to existing house.
- Scheme A2 has the house in original location with more open space between structures.
- A massing study looked at a 3-story structure versus 2-story new structure, and they prefer the 2-story structure which provides more visibility of existing house.
- Footprint size – pulled back rear façade to meet open space requirement and respond to comments from Commission regarding park side façade.
- Landscape plan includes lawn, stone patio, 8 to 10-foot arborvitaes in rear, more along park edge. Some trees remain, some will be removed. Three angled parking spaces. Dogwoods to be planted in front.
- Elevations, added two bays on park facing façade. Same bay configuration on the other building.

- Massing study in sketchup showed proposed new building massing and views. Mr. Wolff explained they are trying to defer to the existing building and showed the difference in massing between 2 and 3-story new construction.

Mr. Hsiao asked to see that two site plans side by side. Mr. Hsiao noted that the building parallel to the park appears to be the same size footprint as the 3-story option, trying to understand the analysis of the schemes. Ms. Souza replied they are similar but slightly smaller.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked to show the park elevation from last month. Ms. Souza showed last month's proposal and the current one. Ms. Litchfield asked about the addition of a second bay and elongation and its impact on being able to pull back the footprint. Ms. Souza said they pulled the building in 4 feet, but no change in the front facing the park.

Mr. Hsiao noted when you looked at the other scheme with two 3-story buildings, they don't look like the footprint size changed, so why is it necessary to go to three stories? Do you have area takeoffs? Mr. Wolff said they felt like they were blocking the existing building and the 3-story piece was looming over the site and some of the neighbors.

Ms. Crosbie asked if there are other designs aside from mansard that they can show. Mr. Wolff replied that they focused on the mansard style because they felt it was the best solution.

Public Questions

Ms. Casey Weinz of Hancock Place asked if it was possible to dig out the basement instead of raising the house. Mr. Wolff replied it would be very difficult and its proximity to the property line is a problem. Ms. Weinz asked about the two proposed dogwoods replacing the existing pines noting that one of them might be a Native American trail tree, and this should be considered and the tree retained.

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street supported Ms. Weinz' suggestion. Regarding the building facing the park, the current double bay tower versus the original single bay tower, why is it now double bays? Mr. Wolff replied that the Commission thought the façade was unrelenting so they added more bays in response.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer commented that coming up Hancock Street she understands the issue of the façade facing the park, the double bay towers look modern and hotel-like, not compatible with the surrounding scale, the first design was quieter and still worked to break up the façade. She noted you have to look at everything around this proposed building. Right now, it emphasizes the height, please reconsider this very prominent façade.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon commented that the site is very crowded and wondered why aren't there options to lessen it. Ms. Litchfield stated that the Commission asked for previous designs that show how they got to this point and nothing was presented. She also explained that she thought the elevation facing the park was unrelenting, but the revised design doesn't work. She stated that she is not sure why there have to be three units on this site. Mr. Wolff answered that the

existing building has very inefficient space, the second floor is very low. They need successful space in the back to make up for the existing structure in the front. Having just one unit in the rear is too much. Two units meet the zoning and allows them to build something that they think works. There is no breathing room especially on the lot line that is now a problem with the carriage house being so close. He also noted there are drainage problems that they want to resolve and they're just trying to do something that works.

Mr. Hsiao asked to see scheme A1 noting that there is too much here. The trees near the street are significant. Pulling apart the houses from the existing house provides more breathing space. For three units, it might be possible to make the rear unit 3 stories creating a dynamic composition, and leaving the historic house alone in the same location, the adjacent unit should stay at 2 floors which is appropriate, and explore a three-story more vertical house in the rear with a reduced footprint, it backs up to a parking lot and there's a taller building beyond. The separation will allow more space and not crowd the historic house giving it a more special quality. When you attach the new construction to the house the design language will not work. You have a very different form, and it becomes more challenging to attach it to the existing Greek Revival structure. Mr. Hsiao also felt 3-d views are essential. The current design language you have is fighting the historic house.

Mr. Redmon concurred with Mr. Hsiao regarding the three-story house in the back and just move the building to the front.

Ms. Litchfield also agreed with Mr. Hsiao and commented that the trees in front are significant and add a lot of character.

Mr. Redmon looked at the diagram 1A and suggested clipping off the addition to the house and get more breathing room.

Mr. Hsiao reiterated that separating the units will work better and once you use a 3D model you will see how to make this work.

Ms. Litchfield still felt the site is too dense and there are plenty of houses being built as single homes behind existing houses.

Ms. McMahon also agreed that the site is too crowded with too much going on.

Ms. Litchfield is also concerned with the density even with Mr. Hsiao's suggestions.

Mr. Hsiao suggested the vertical house becomes a more diminutive tower house to reduce density on the site. He mentioned this is where a 3d model helps to develop this and see what works. This is a complicated parcel.

Mr. Redmon suggested rotating the rear house as well. Ms. Litchfield also suggested pulling the rear house further back. And pull back the front façade of the two-story house.

Mr. Redmon noted the new houses have generous floors.

Ms. Litchfield asked what is the square footage of the two units as designed right now. Mr. Hsiao saw the total is 3,861 sf.

Ms. Pauli agreed with what was being said and remarked that where she lives she can see the back of 19 Centre Street and the carriage house in the rear, these buildings are separate and work together really well. Mr. Hsiao noted that separating the houses does recall carriage houses, and when they're attached it looks like an extrusion. There's more license to design when they're separate. He also stated there needs to be further study, there is still discomfort with the current scheme, the previous schemes show some promise. Keeping the house where it is will help. Mr. Redmon agreed.

Mr. Wolff wanted to clarify that the tree on the right, the double trunk tree, was noted by the City arborist as dead or dying, it is bolted together as it is. Mr. Wolff said he is a tree lover but just wants to be clear about the condition of the tree.

Mr. Hsiao stated that the applicants should bring images of what they saw in the neighborhood that inspired their design approach, it would be very helpful.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to continue the meeting and that the applicant work out the design suggested by Mr. Hsiao with three separate buildings on the site and bring examples that influenced their decision making and explore how two buildings instead of three could be feasible and provide 3d views in the form of a model to walk through the site and enable elements to be moved. Mr. Hsiao recommended a physical model and if not, more developed 3d views at eye level that allow you to move around the site. He noted others have used photo montages with the design which is also useful in helping to understand the design approach. Ms. Litchfield asked to eliminate the two-story bays on the façade facing the park. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed, 5-0.

Mr. Wolff agreed to a continuance.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Minutes for the October meeting were approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on November 1, 2021

Panelists:

Alison Hammer, architect

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Sean Hope, applicant

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Scott Zink, applicant

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Andrew Collins, applicant

Derek Bloom, architect

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Attendees:

Marilee Meyer

10 Dana Street

Hugh Russell

Corliss Place

Casey Weinz

Hancock Place