

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., Sept. 14, 2009 at 6:00P.M., Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, Chair; Bill King, Judith Dortz, members
Deborah Masterson and Grenelle Scott, alternate members

Staff present: Sarah Burks, Arthur Goldberg

Members of the Public: See attached list

The Chair, James Van Sickle, called the meeting to order at 6:01PM. He made introductions and reviewed the hearing procedures. He designated alternates Masterson and Scott to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-54: 7 Willard St., by Jerrold M. & Louise B. Grochow. To alter fencing.

Ms. Burks showed slides, described the house, and summarized the application. She described the limited visibility of the rear fencing from the public ways. Only one of the side fences was visible from Willard Street.

The proposed replacement fencing for the sides was similar to the existing at 5 Willard Street, with a 2' balustrade at the top. The rear fence was proposed to remain a solid board fence with no open topper.

Ms. Dortz asked about the proposed material for the fence.

Jerrold Grochow, an owner, answered that they would be cedar. The back fences would not be painted but would age naturally. Only the front portion visible from Willard Street would be painted to match the adjacent fencing.

Mr. Van Sickle asked about the gate design.

Mr. Grochow answered that it would be solid, without a topper.

Ms. Burks said the proposed fence design was not incongruous with the district. The open topper would be more transparent and was not taller than the existing fence.

Betty Vorenberg, of 9 Willard Street, said the fence, on her side of the property, would be taller and more solid than the existing. Her husband has asked years ago that the top be kept very open.

Mr. King noted that at one time, years ago, there was a movement to consider fences over 6' high as spite fences.

David Barrett, of 112 Brattle Street, asked if the pergola was part of the application.

Mr. Grochow said the pergola had been constructed as part of an extensive landscaping improvement project begun during the summer. The pergola had not yet been painted, but would be painted the same dark color as the house trim. It was 4' square in plan and 6' high. Climbing plants would be trained to grow on the pergola. A screen for the pre-existing air conditioner would be installed, as well as the already constructed enclosure for the area where the trash cans were stored, which would be painted. The trash enclosure was not visible from the street.

Ms. Burks said the application could be amended to include the additional structures. The low screening around the A/C condenser could get a Certificate of Nonapplicability if lower than 4'.

Ms. Vorenberg said the trash enclosure was a big improvement. She was the only one affected by that. Before the Grochows moved in, there was a huge fence at the front of the property.

Mr. King suggested a 10-day notice. Not many workers cottages would have originally had pergolas, but in terms of the neighborhood today, the pergola was not incongruous.

Ms. Vorenberg noted that she had a large pergola in the back yard.

Mr. Barrett said paint would help make the pergola fit in and be less obvious.

Ms. Masterson suggested that a hearing be scheduled for the pergola next month.

Mr. Van Sickle closed the public comment period. He said the commission should consider character, through views, materials, and the like, but to keep in mind that the NCD review was not meant to resist all changes for modern living.

Mr. King agreed that the chair's views were consistent with the objectives and principles of the district.

Ms. Burks read from the list of objectives and principles and stated that the pergola was not inconsistent with many of them.

Ms. Dortz moved to approve the changes to the fencing, as proposed. Ms. Masterson seconded the motion, adding that it was an improvement and appeared to be acceptable to the neighbors.

Messrs. Van Sickle and King suggested amending the motion to also include approval of the trash can screening, which would be minimally visible, and the screening of the A/C condensers.

Ms. Dortz so amended her motion, and Ms. Masterson seconded. The motion passed 5-0 with all voting.

Mr. King noted that although painting the pergola would be at the owner's own risk, since it was not yet approved, it might help make the pergola recede into the landscape and be more palatable to the neighbors.

Mr. Grochow agreed to amend his application to include the pergola, which would be scheduled for a hearing at the Commission's October meeting.

Minutes:

Mr. Van Sickle pointed out a typo on page six, where "was" should be struck.

Mr. King asked for an update on his request that the staff outline a procedure for review and approval of demolition and construction details.

Ms. Burks replied that it was the general procedure of the staff to check building permit submittals for consistency with the often schematic designs submitted to the Commission. The staff looks at the permit application and if it varies significantly from what was approved by the Commission, can require the applicant to amend the permit set or to return to the Commission. However, in cases where a specific scope of work or construction details are required for approval by the Commission, she suggested that such expectations be framed as part of a motion for approval so that the staff would look for conformance to those specific requirements. Not all projects resulted in further refinement of drawings and details prior to submittal for building permit review.

Mr. King moved to approve the minutes, as corrected. Ms. Dortz seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. King moved to go into Executive Session for the purpose of reviewing pending litigation.

Ms. Masterson, an abutter to an abutter in the 45 Foster Street case, indicated that she had a vested interest in the matter and suggested maybe she should not be present. She opted to recuse herself and leave the meeting. She left the room.

Ms. Dortz seconded the motion to enter Executive Session, which passed 4-0.

After a motion was made, seconded and passed to close the Executive Session, the meeting resumed in regular session.

Mr. King moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Scott seconded, and the motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:03 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public who signed in on 9/14/09

Jerrold Grochow	7 Willard St
David Barrett	112 Brattle St
Betty Vorenberg	9 Willard St