

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

August 1, 2011 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2nd Floor

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Carole Perrault, Charles Redmon, *Member*; Sue-Ellen Myers, *Alternate*

Commission Members Absent: Siobhan McMahon, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

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-3920: 17 Leonard Ave., by Ann Murphy. Replace windows.

Staff presented images of the property, which is an 1893 Queen Anne residence constructed by builder John McIsaac. McIsaac built many of the houses on Leonard Avenue around the same timeframe. The proposal is to replace the existing windows, which are a mix of 2-over-1 wood windows and later replacement windows with exterior storms in favor of new fiberglass-clad 1-over-1 wood window units.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the exterior storms were going to be removed, to which the owner said they would not be necessary because the new windows are fitted with insulated glass. Mr. Redmon asked if there would be any changes to the doors and the owner said they would remain unchanged.

Questions were received from the public.

Margaret McMahon of 14 Highland Ave. asked if the windows in the round corner tower no longer had their curved glass and if the wood windows were deemed by the owner as inefficient. Staff noted that it was evident that there are still curved glass windows on the 1st floor, but the 2nd floor curved glass had been replaced with flat glass units. The owner said she did not wish to install all wood windows in favor of lower maintenance clad windows.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if curved windows could still be made and if the owner planned to put in flat glass. The owner said she lives on the 2nd floor and was not aware that some of the 1st floor windows had curved glass, but could not afford to have custom windows with curved glass made for the 2nd floor.

Comments were received from the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street commented that the curved windows in the district are being lost and that a better solution should be found because they are a fascinating original element.

Comments were offered by the Commission.

Ms. Litchfield said that she prefers original wood windows and was in favor of retaining the curved glass in the corner units. With high-end storms, original wood windows can be just as energy efficient as new replacements. She noted that you can feel a huge difference in the historic appearance of a building

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when windows are replaced, especially curved windows. The owner said the existing windows are a wreck and she just wants new windows that operate since the current ones don't move.

Mr. Hsiao said that if more of the windows were original he would view this application differently. However, he felt this was a compelling argument because of the contemporary windows that have already been installed at the property from various decades. He said one could make an argument for achieving consistency with the chosen replacement windows. Ms. Goodwin said that normally if all the original windows were intact the Commission would deny replacement windows. The owner said she could understand if all four (1st and 2nd floor) curved windows still existed perhaps she would have considered it, but that her preference and that of the 1st floor neighbors was to minimize maintenance. The new windows will still be wood, but with Fibrex (fiberglass) cladding.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application as submitted based on the inconsistency of the existing windows from different replacement projects, encouraging the owner to retain the historic 2-over-1 glazing pattern where it originally existed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Redmon, which passed 6-0.

MC-3921: 19 Centre St., by 19 Centre St. Condo. Association Trust. Replace exterior cladding on modern rear addition.

The property under review is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which triggers a binding review on behalf of the Commission. The residence was originally constructed in 1842 at 21 Centre St. but was moved to its current site in 1909. The portion of the building under review in the current application is a modern rear addition that has minimal public visibility. The addition is clad in vertical tongue-and-groove cedar boards, which were last replaced six years ago. The house is currently divided into three condo units. Due to recurring problems with water damage and rot, and a desire for a material with a longer lifespan, the applicants are proposing to replace the vertical cedar boards with horizontal HardiPlank (fiber-cement) siding. The windows would be trimmed out with a lighter colored trim to match new corner boards.

Staff conducted a site visit and inquired with the owners and the contractor about rainwater mitigation on the flat roof of the addition. The contractor had recently modified the roof to accommodate a larger drain and increase the roof pitch to better direct water towards the drain.

Ms. Goodwin asked how the top of the wall was intended to be finished, and Mr. Redmon suggested cap flashing.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the owners had priced out cedar clapboards, to which the owners said that HardiPlank was less expensive and that it came with a 25-year warranty. Mr. Redmon posed the question of whether the reveal of the HardiPlank would match that of the existing clapboards on the side elevations of the house.

Ms. Perrault noted that the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards for new additions state a preference for distinguishing non-original portions from the original structure and that she was very concerned about the horizontality of the proposed new cladding. The owners said one could argue that the frequency of needed replacement of vertical siding due to water infiltration could be seen as a failed

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experiment. Mr. Redmon affirmed that this would be both a new material and a different installation. Ms. Goodwin asked for the stated language of SOI standard #9 regarding new additions, to which Ms. Perrault said additions should be clearly distinguishable as being constructed in a different era.

Questions were accepted from the public.

A resident of 10 Dana Street (Ms. A. Marsh) asked how long the project would take and noted that, while the addition is not very visible from the street she has a very clear view of this addition from her window. The owners were uncertain exactly how long it would take.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street added that she also looks down onto this addition from her residence. She said it is very clear that this is a modern cube and that the orientation of the addition and its windows is distinctly vertical, while the original house is anchored by wide pilasters and clad in horizontal clapboards. She was unsure how successful horizontal siding would be in this location.

Margaret McMahon of 14 Highland Avenue said she felt horizontal boards would be ugly and look phony. She had always thought this stucco and suggested stucco as an exterior finish. Mr. Redmon said you could use stucco, but that it is not ideal for the given climate and would be prone to cracking. Wood or HardiPlank are more forgiving in freeze-thaw conditions.

Mr. Redmon suggested that the Architects Committee could meet on-site to view mock-ups of potential materials if they wished to explore several options, including:

- wide cedar lap siding
- flush-board siding similar to that used on the primary elevation of the house

Mr. Hsiao said he tended to agree that horizontal siding would be a mistake for this addition, as it could result in a “dressed up box” and a cheap imitation of the materials on the original house. He understood the water issues, but the design of the addition was Modern and thought an historic approach would be unsatisfying. He also suggested exploring a flush-board approach using horizontal shiplap siding, making the corners equally flush. All of the extra trim currently proposed may not be saving the owners any money.

Mr. Redmon said the photos of the existing conditions show a great amount of water damage. He felt that the recent roof changes have probably addressed that problem so the next siding installation will probably last longer.

Ms. Goodwin supported setting up an Architects Committee meeting and Mr. Hsiao directed staff to provide a list of historic preservation contractors practicing this type of specialty to assist the owners in bidding out the siding mock-ups. The meeting was continued until further material samples could be reviewed by staff and the Architects Committee.

MC-3922: 14 Dana Street, by Dana Street Development, LLC. Demolish rear carriage house and construct new rear structure. Repair and rehab front building.

Commissioner Perrault recused herself from deliberations because she is an abutter to the property under review and joined the general public in the audience.

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A redevelopment plan is proposed for the site, which consists of a 2-1/2 story Mansard house at the front of the lot and rear carriage house.

The rear carriage house being considered for demolition was originally constructed in 1886. Permit records show that in 1941 an ell was removed from what was then referred to as the garage. After many years of deferred maintenance to the rear carriage house/garage, citations were issued in 2005 for code violations and repairs were mandated for safety reasons. As part of the work completed five years ago, a new ridge board was installed and rafters were reinforced. Current photographs of the structure show considerable deterioration on the exterior and multiple steel jacks on the interior to keep the 2nd-floor loft area from collapsing. An engineer's report was included in the application materials provided by the developer which made a determination that the rear carriage house/garage was not structurally sound.

The front house was originally constructed in 1858, with later additions completed in 1896. The front vestibule was constructed in 1899 and the exterior was re-sided with cedar shingles in 1934. This structure retains its original wood windows. The rear ell off the main house steps down from 2 stories to one and is tight to the north property line. This section of the Main House is proposed to be demolished as well.

New construction on site would consist of a 2-story rear ell off the back of the Main House that would be similar to the existing conditions, but with 2 garage stalls on the 1st floor and living space above. Connected to that section, and springing off at a 90-degree angle to the south would be an additional, 2-story residential wing designed in a manner evocative of the historic carriage house. Each unit has been designed to incorporate outdoor deck space, one of which would involve notching out a portion of the original Mansard roof on the top floor, rear elevation.

The project team members were present to field questions from the Commission, and added the following details regarding the proposed redevelopment:

SETBACKS

- Rear: The team noted that the existing carriage house is pushed all the way back on the lot, directly abutting the neighbors' properties. Their proposal would alleviate that condition, opening up a 15' setback at the rear of the property.
- North Side: Although it would be further away from the north property line than the existing 16'-wide ell, relief would be needed to construct the new rear ell because it continues an existing non-conformity.

DENSITY

- Zoning allows 3 residential units as-of-right; The proposal is for 3 units

F.A.R.

- The current proposal is in compliance with the allowable F.A.R. for the site

OPEN SPACE

- The footprint of the structures on site does not comply with current open space requirements for the size of the lot. The new development would increase the open space on the lot, bringing it into compliance.

Ms. Goodwin asked if they had explored reusing the existing structures on site. Peter Quinn, the project architect, said that the condition of the carriage house made it very challenging. In addition, they could not have put windows on either the rear or side elevations of that structure without violating various

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codes. Another goal in rebuilding the rear ell was to find a way to hide the cars and minimize the visible parking spaces on site.

The height of the “new carriage house” was discussed as a concern. The historic carriage house is currently shorter than the 2-story section of the rear ell. The height of new structure would be considerably taller.

Ms. Myers raised concerns about the 3rd-floor balcony on the rear of the Main House. Mr. Redmon noted that it could be visible from Harvard Street, but no photographs were taken from that vantage point.

Ms. Litchfield inquired about the condition of the existing cedar shingles. The architect said it was in good shape with the exception of those down around the driveway area.

Architectural details and ornament on the 1858 structure were discussed. It was noted that there would be two new window openings on the side elevations. Venting is to be directed out of the roof. The cornice and trim details are to be repaired or replicated to match in wood. The front stairs could be granite, or whatever the Commission finds most appropriate.

Two large, carved brackets support a canopy over an entrance in the rear ell. The Commission asked if they were original to the house but staff said there was no documentation in the architectural survey files that either supported or refuted if they were original.

Windows were discussed. The architect said he would propose using a clad wood window in a 2-over-2 glazing pattern to match the original windows. Ms. Myers asked if they were removing the oval window on the side of the 1899 vestibule, since it was not shown in the drawings. The architect noted it was omitted from the plan unintentionally and would remain unchanged. Mr. Redmon pointed out a discrepancy between the floor plan and the elevation with regard to window openings.

Questions and comments were received from the public.

Margaret McMahan of 14 Highland Avenue asked if there would be more green space in the new plan, which the developer said there would be.

Artemis Marsh of 10 Dana Street had three questions:

Q: What was the expected timeframe for the construction?

A: They are scheduling for 6-8 months of construction, with intentions to begin work in the Fall, pour the new foundation before Winter, work inside during the Winter months and complete the project by late Spring 2012.

Q: How would noise be controlled and who would be in charge of complaints?

A: Ben Rogan (President, Highland Development) said he would make his cell phone number and email address available to the abutters to immediately address any complaints.

Q: What would be done to control the rodents during the demolition work and prevent infestation of the abutters' properties?

A: The city requires that you have an expert on site to dispose of any rodents properly and avoid just such a problem.

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Mr. Rogan said he specializes in urban infill projects and mentioned several other projects in Cambridge that the abutters might be familiar with as examples of successful past projects.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana said that she lives on the 1st floor of the building to the south of this site and that 17 units would be affected by this project. Questions and comments from the residents included:

Q: What is the proposed height of the new carriage house?

A: 31.9'

Q: The bay window on the south elevation of the new carriage house would infringe upon the abutters' privacy

A: This could possibly be redesigned.

Q: Would security lights be installed that could spill bright light onto their property

A: No.

Q: While the plan shows garage space for 2 cars, there would be 1 additional car in the driveway. Had they considered underground parking?

A: No.

Q: Where will any proposed air conditioning condensers and mechanical units be located?

A: Two would be at the rear of the structure, in the middle of the east elevation at grade level. One would be on the North Elevation, just east of the garages.

Comment:

- Outdoor patio and deck space could be problematic and cause noise issues, since they already hear low-level noise occurring out on Centre Street.

Ms. Meyer added that she appreciated the additional setbacks being created with the current plan, but these other issues raised by the neighbors of the project needed to be addressed.

Mr. Redmon had a conflict that required him to leave the meeting and offered his comments for the record. He complimented the project team, saying they had been very inventive about repositioning structures on the site. He had the following comments and suggestions regarding the plans as submitted:

- The 3rd floor rear balcony set into the Mansard was awkward and should be reworked or eliminated
- The window bay on the rear structure facing 10 Dana could also be reworked or eliminated
- The fence as rendered appeared to be a solid 6' fence; it was recommended that a "good neighbor" fence that is solid to a height of 4' with 2' of lattice on top would approve the appearance of the fence
- The rear building, as designed in the plans, is much further away from 10 Dana than the current carriage house building
- Rather than a series of small canopies over multiple entrances, the roof could be designed as one continuous roof that wraps the inner corner of the new L-shaped addition.
- A more detailed landscape plan is needed for the Commission's evaluation of the finished site

Sergey Petrov of 10 Dana Street raised concerns about the construction start time in the morning and noted that many people in their building work from home.

Linda DeHart of 10 Dana Street said her living room and kitchen windows will be directly across from the proposed garage doors and she is concerned about the exhaust fumes. Also there are trees on along their shared property line that she would not want to lose as a result of the construction work. She hoped any new plantings along the south property line would remain low. Otherwise she liked the proposal and

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applauded the applicants on their efforts. The architect ensured that they intended to plant low shrubs in that location.

A written statement in opposition to the demolition of the carriage was received from John McKenna of 10 Dana Street, which was read for the public to hear.

Mr. Rogan said he would love to meet with the neighbors from 10 Dana Street and coordinated a time and date to have an open forum to address their concerns prior to moving forward with the design.

Mr. Hsiao said he also applauds the team's effort, noting that there are lots of details to be considered in this project. He had concerns about the fenestration pattern at the rear of the building, commenting that there was a lot going on. He advised that a model would be better to understand the complexity of forms and the overall massing. Since the new rear structure was peaking at 32 feet, and it would be 10 feet higher than the existing roof ridge, that would account for a pretty tall mass. Further questions and comments were:

1. The garages and entrances were at different grades. Can they be adjusted to put them at the same height?
2. The fenestration pattern is more visible at the rear and they should think about buffers and achieving privacy from both the occupants' and the neighbors' standpoints. The south setback complies, but consider being a good neighbor.
3. He would appreciate a 3-dimensional development
4. The carriage house now wants to be quiet. The fenestration pattern could calm down. Also it is a fine line between borrowing from the existing language while also demarcating the new construction as a proud addition

Ms. Goodwin agreed with Mr. Hsiao's comments. She felt the addition should be simplified as much as possible, especially looking at it from the rear. She asked if there would be basements in units 2 & 3, and the architect said there would be 7' high spaces on the lower level.

Ms. Myers supported the other Commissioners concerns about the busyness of the design.

Ms. Litchfield said that by pulling the rear structure forward and raising the roof height it looked so much bigger than the carriage house now appears. Mr. Rogan said they could play with the roof pitch and height to minimize its impact. Mr. Hsiao suggested turning the roof of the rear structure 90 degrees so that it would shed less height toward the neighbors. He said a model could help them work that out and assist in walking through the comments of the neighbors. The architect said he had proposed a hip roof originally.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application with the following conditions:

- To lower the height of the "new carriage house"
- A further developed landscape plan was needed
- Make an attempt to simplify the fenestration and cut-outs on the rear portion of the building with respect to the adjacent neighbors
- The shape and design of the rear structure's roof needs further study
- The 3rd floor balcony on the Main House needs further study
- Refine the details of the plan to address such elements as the window trim, balustrades and original ornament correcting any plan irregularities
- Provide 3-dimensional imaging of the neighborhood context

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Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3938: 37 Dana Street, by Tomasz Mrowka and Gigliola Staffilani. Change window opening into a door on the front porch and install new windows on the rear addition.

The property under review is an 1888 Queen Anne designed by architect George Nichols that underwent renovations most recently in 1992. The current owners wish to have greater access to the wrap-around porch from the dining room, rather than solely through the front mudroom. To accomplish this they are proposing to convert one of the existing windows under the covered porch (in the southeast corner of the house; side elevation) into a full height doorway. Window on a non-original rear window bay are also proposed to be replaced. Staff illustrated that this area of the property has minimal to no public visibility.

The property owners did not appear at the public hearing. The project architect, Shannon Finley of Joseph Kennard Architects, acted as representative for the owners.

Mr. Redmon commented that the rhythm of the sill line on the porch is important.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the new door would remain at 39" in width, and the architect confirmed it would, adding that the new door trim would be a flat stock.

Ms. Perrault raised concerns that while this could be a 1st step, it could lead to further, incremental changes that cumulatively have a much more negative impact on the property's historic integrity. Ms. Litchfield echoed that sentiment, saying it could potentially lead to a snowball effect.

Questions were received from the public.

Margaret McMahan of 14 Highland Ave. asked how the owners currently access their side gardens. The architect said typically by way of the front door, but that perhaps stairs down from the side porch would be a later project consideration.

Ms. Goodwin said she understood Commissioner Perrault's opposition to lowering the sill height, but also could see the owner's desire to have greater access to the porch.

Mr. Hsiao said that Federal-style porches would often have windows that carried down to the floor level but that this was not a Federal-style building.

Ms. Myers moved to approve the application as submitted.

Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 4-1.

Minutes

Ms. Litchfield moved to approve the minutes of the June meeting [no cases were reviewed in July]. Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

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Members of the Public

Who Signed the Attendance Sheet 8/1/11

Chris Killip	19 Centre St., #2, Cambridge, MA 02139
Mary Halpenny-Killip	19 Centre St., #2, Cambridge, MA 02139
J. Swartwood	19 Centre St., #1, Cambridge, MA 02139
A. March	10 Dana St., #4, Cambridge, MA 02138
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St., #404, Cambridge, MA 02138
Sergey Petrov	10 Dana St., #508, Cambridge, MA 02138
Rick Howes	121 Mystic Ave., #13, Medford, MA 02155
Mark Donohoe	14 Otis Street, Wakefield, MA 01880
Arthur Stowe	10 Dana St., #211, Cambridge, MA 02138
Linda DeHart	10 Dana St., #210, Cambridge, MA 02138
John Zamparelli	14 Dana St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Shannon Finley	for 37 Dana St., Cambridge MA 02138