

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Monday, December 1, 2014, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Charles Redmon, *Member*; Monika Pauli, Margaret McMahon, Sue-Ellen Myers, *Alternates*

Commission Member(s) absent: Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. She gave an overview and discussed procedures. Ms. Goodwin designated alternates Ms. Monika Pauli and Ms. Sue Ellen Myers to vote on MC-4611: 25 Maple Avenue. Ms. Margaret McMahon and Ms. Myers, were designated to vote on MC-4613: 324A Harvard Street. Ms. McMahon and Ms. Pauli were designated to vote on MC-4614: 15A Ellsworth Avenue.

MC-4611: 25 Maple Avenue, by Jeffrey Taylor. Enlarge basement windows and construct window wells.

Staff showed slides, gave a brief overview of the structure's history and introduced the property. Ms. Goodwin noted that the review was a binding review. Staff confirmed that it was located within the Maple Avenue National Register District. Ms. Kelly Speakman, architect of record, asked staff to confirm the binding review status of the application as it was under 750 square feet.

Ms. Speakman presented the application and outlined the areas affected by the proposal as reflected on the boards she brought to the meeting. She stated that they were hoping to increase the size of the window on the front elevation and two windows, behind the pedestrian door on the right elevation. She noted the plans reflected a new bulkhead in the rear of the structure, but that it was not visible from a public way. The windows would also have large light wells added to them to allow for additional light and air. Ms. Speakman motioned to owners and noted that they were working to get approval from the board of zoning appeals to drop the basement slab. She continued that the basement had a 6'8" ceiling height and was not tall enough to have code compliant living space. Ms. Speakman noted that the space was being used only for mechanical equipment and that the owners hoped to have space for a workshop as well as additional living space. She motioned to the plan boards she brought noting that the area in blue was the area proposed for additional living space and measured 738 square feet.

Ms. Lestra Litchfield, Commissioner, asked for clarification of the windows on the right (north) elevation and if the walkway to the rear yard was going to be maintained past the proposed window wells.

Ms. Speakman responded that the walkway will not extend past the existing pedestrian door on the right (north) elevation as there is a driveway that extends along the left (south) elevation of the property.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the door led directly into the basement and if the proposed bulkhead in the rear was an additional means of required egress. Ms. Speakman responded that yes it was for access and

egress requirements, but also would allow for mechanical equipment to be easily brought in and out of the basement.

Ms. Goodwin asked what was located in the basement currently. Ms. Speakman responded mechanical equipment and the laundry. Mr. Jeffrey Taylor, an owner, added it was a dark and dusty space, that was hard to use.

Ms. Sue-Ellen Myers, Commissioner, asked how deep the proposed window wells were. Ms. Speakman added that as proposed they were approximately three feet deep, close to the width of the existing walkway. Ms. Speakman noted that there was still space on that elevation between the wells and the property line, as the fence reflected their property line (she motioned to the photograph on the slide).

Ms. Margaret McMahon, Commissioner, asked if there was a bathroom proposed in the basement. Ms. Speakman replied that she was still working out the interior details with the owners, however if the BZA grants approval they would be able to utilize the entire space to code.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were questions from the public. No members of the public spoke on the application.

Ms. Goodwin noted that she hoped they would consider adding a door with glass instead of the additional light wells. Ms. Speakman responded that the owners and she had discussed the option of a half glass door and were hoping to use one, however it would not give enough light to the far corners of the basement and window wells were still necessary to have maximum usability of the space.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commissioner, asked if there were steps just inside the existing door that went down to the basement. Ms. Speakman replied yes, and there were stairs inside the structure that went down to the basement. She said the stairs will be reworked and there will be a landing. Ms. Speakman continued that the new stair will be code compliant.

Mr. Redmon asked if they had thought of adding an additional window and well on the rear elevation. Ms. Speakman referred to the plans, noting that as there was a stair, deck and new bulkhead on the rear elevation, there was limited room. Ms. Litchfield noted that it appears that these windows will not get much light into the basement but are rather more for egress. Ms. Speakman noted that the windows will provide egress but the main egress is provided by the pedestrian door and as such the windows become a quality of life issue for this living space.

Ms. Goodwin stated that she did not have a problem with what was proposed. Mr. Redmon stated that you would barely know anything had been done. Ms. Speakman responded that was the idea.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Ms. Myers and Ms. Pauli voting.

MC-4613: 324A Harvard Street, by Dong Shen & Lisa Utzinger Shen. Demolish existing sunroom enclosure and reframe for finished living space.

Ms. Pauli recused herself from this item as she is a neighbor of this property.

Ms. Paull showed slides while giving a brief history of the property and the scope of the application. She confirmed that the review was non-binding.

Mr. Edrick vanBeuzekom stated that the subject property was a townhouse style unit in the middle of the block which had limited visibility due to its location. He handed out photos which better illustrated the area proposed for alteration than the staff's slides from the surrounding streets. He noted that the proposal was to add an additional bedroom to the unit by removing the sunroom enclosure, constructing walls and extending a shed roof out over the space. He noted that the other end unit had done the same a number of years ago. Mr. vanBeuzekom added that the space would have a large corner window to maintain the existing panoramic views as best as possible. The space measured 10 feet by 16 feet and as they were using a space which was included in the FAR they wouldn't be adding additional square footage, only conditioning it. He added that the applicant would be required to seek a special permit as the structure was built in the required setback. He noted that they were proposing to use the same siding and aluminum clad windows.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the current windows were metal. Mr. vanBeuzekom replied yes.

Ms. McMahan noted that the plans were appropriate for the style however she felt that the loss of the greenhouse was disappointing as it added a grace note to the severity of the architecture of the structure. She asked if the plans included removing the wall AC units. Mr. vanBeuzekom stated that it would be nice to change the entire unit to central or add a mini-ductless split system but that had not been discussed during the planning stage that they were in.

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Ms. Myers and Ms. McMahan voting.

MC-4614: 15A Ellsworth Avenue, by ZLP, LLC. Full exterior renovation, enclose rear porches for conditioned living space and add window wells.

Ms. Paull showed slides, gave a brief background of the property's previous alterations and overview of the proposal. She confirmed that the review was non-binding.

Mr. Campbell Ellsworth, architect, presented the proposal in more detail. He stated that as the lot was only 31.6 ft wide, which was non-confirming for its zoning designation, and had a minimal setback on the left elevation, the bump out on the right elevation was removed to get equipment into the rear of the property to begin work under the previously approved COA. He stated the proposal varied from the previous application and would revert the two-family structure back to a single family dwelling. He directed the Commission to the plans in the application that reflected an egress window for the basement under the bay on the front elevation. He noted that the window well was proposed on the front elevation as the left elevation had such a small setback a window well would not have been possible, nor would a well on the right elevation as the driveway is located along the right side of the structure.

Mr. Ellsworth mentioned that on the rear elevation they were proposing to enclose rear porches that were included in the existing FAR. The plans reflected that the porches would be converted into

bathrooms. He continued that the application proposal primarily focused on restoring and cleaning up the exterior of the structure. He added that as the basement ceiling height was already over seven (7) feet tall, they were able to add additional living space without having zoning problems in the basement. He noted that the plans included removing the aluminum siding, salvaging original materials as possible and installing new wood clapboards to match the historic siding where needed. They wanted to preserve the details as much as possible, he said.

Mr. Redmon asked if the final treatment was clapboard. Mr. Ellsworth responded yes.

Ms. Goodwin asked about the size of the window well and if that was the smallest that it could be to meet egress requirements. Mr. Ellsworth responded that it could be smaller if they only did one window there, as the well must meet egress requirements beyond the bay. Mr. Redmon said he could push the window out to the side toward the front door instead of forward toward the sidewalk. Ms. Goodwin added that the window well won't bring in much light because of the cantilevered bay. Ms. Pauli suggested windows with wells flanking the bay instead. Mr. Ellsworth noted that a window could be added there. Ms. Goodwin responded that a window under the bay provided less impact on the front elevation however. Ms. Litchfield asked if they could add a window well to the right side elevation. Mr. Ellsworth responded that it was not possible as that side had a driveway. Mr. Redmon suggested that they consider bringing the sidewalls in to follow the shape of the bay which would prevent the corners from getting so close to the sidewalk and seeming as large. Mr. Ellsworth said he would look at it. Mr. Warren Zhu, an owner, stated that they were proposing to include a hedge in front of the bay which would minimize the effect of the well visually.

A neighbor was present but had no questions.

Mr. Ellsworth stated that they would look at minimizing the impact of the window well. Ms. Paull asked if they were proposing to replicate the historic brackets. Mr. Ellsworth wasn't aware that there were brackets and stated that he was opened to it. Ms. Paull showed him the survey photo which showed the structure's architectural elements, most of which had been removed to install the aluminum siding. She said she could scan the survey photo and provide Mr. Ellsworth with a copy for reference regarding the details rather than adding conjectural features. Ms. Pauli asked if Mr. Ellsworth was open to adding shutters as well, which were reflected in the survey photo. He said he could look into it, however he wasn't certain how historic they were as the windows on the arched window in the gable end had rectangular shutters.

Ms. McMahan asked why so many skylights were proposed. Mr. Ellsworth responded that the roof comes down to a knee wall and it may be that they do not put them all in during construction. Ms. McMahan noted that there were a lot of skylights proposed, especially on the north elevation. Mr. Ellsworth noted that the house had a nice yard and they wanted to maintain that.

Maureen O'Connell, a neighbor, added that the left side setback was so close and that one would need more light there. Mr. Ellsworth replied that yes, the south side was dark and they were hoping to do what they could to bring more light in on that elevation.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the application as presented with consideration of investigating a way that the egress well will have minimal impact on the front of the house and to have staff out when

pulling off the aluminum siding to discuss the proposed materials. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Ms. McMahon and Ms. Pauli voting.

Minutes

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to approve the November 3, 2014 minutes, Ms. McMahon seconded the motion. It was approved 5-0 with Ms. Myers, Ms. McMahon and Ms. Pauli voting. Mr. Redmon did not vote as he was not present at the November meeting.

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Ms. Pauli and Ms. Myers voting. Meeting was adjourned at 6:52pm.

**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

Jeffrey Taylor	25 Maple Avenue
Ruth Taylor	25 Maple Avenue
Kelly Speakman	30 Bow Street, Somerville, MA
Edrick vanBeuzekom	33 ½ Union Square, Somerville, MA
Lisa Shen	324A Harvard Street
Warren Zhu	15A Ellsworth Avenue
Maureen O'Connell	17 Ellsworth Avenue
Dong Shen	324A Harvard Street
Campbell Ellsworth	267 Norfolk Street

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.