

DRAFT Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, September 20, 2021 - 5:30 PM

Commissioners Present: Constantin von Wentzel, *Chair*; Mark Golberg, *Vice Chair*, Levin Campbell, Heli Meltsner, *Members*,

Absent: Art Bardige, Theresa Hamacher, *Alternates*

Staff Present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Eric Hill, Survey Director

Members of the Public: see attached sheet

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/AHsep2021>.

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 868 0826 7077.

Commission Chair Constantin von Wentzel made introductions and explained the procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-724: 7 Walnut Avenue, by Matthew Fisher. Second floor addition; new dormer, balcony, and turret; alterations to front façade and porch, fenestration, doors, and siding; and alter rear shed.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property and presented historical background, noting it is listed on the National Register.

Mr. Paul Hajian, the owner's architect, presented slides of the project for his client who is expanding their family, and discussed the building's anomalies – windows and doors don't line up, the additions from the 1980s have no relation to the structure. The goal is to restore the building and transform the 1980s additions. Mr. Hajian described a code violation for the stair to the top level which does not have the required clearance. He proposed constructing a turret which will be connected to the existing dormer by a shed dormer, re-centering the front entrance, removing the aluminum siding and installing cedar shingles on the altered portion of the house and clapboard on the existing portion. The goal is to delineate between existing and new. He also proposed removing the roof of the rear addition for a balcony. The owners also would like to renovate the shed in the rear to a home office using the same architectural vocabulary. The windows will be replaced with wood/aluminum that are more energy efficient and last longer.

Commission Questions

Commission Vice Chair Mark Golberg asked about the shingling. Mr. Hajian explained that the shingling would be on the upper level, and clapboards on the lower level. Mr. Golberg asked about the rafter details on the shed. Mr. Hajian replied that the garage/shed originally had rafters. The renovation would include the main doors becoming fixed faux doors that would be insulated, and the entrance will be on the side.

Commissioner Heli Meltsner asked if the windows on the second floor are original. Mr. Hajian answered that some are original such as the ones on the front, and some windows were relocated. Ms. Meltsner asked why replace the windows. Mr. Hajian replied they are not in great

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

condition, they want more energy efficient windows that will last a long time. Ms. Meltsner asked about re-centering the front façade. Mr. Hajian stated he is increasing the balance on the front façade, the upper window is not symmetrical. Mr. Hajian explained the turret window alignment with the existing window. The use of shingling will draw the eye up.

Commissioner Lee Campbell asked about the proposed windows. Mr. Hajian answered they are 6/1, the large window in the turret is fixed and the others are double hung. Mr. Campbell asked if he modeled the turret on others in the neighborhood. Mr. Hajian said yes. Mr. Hajian went on to explain that the existing dormer is awkwardly located, and the turret would resolve the corner with the front façade.

Mr. von Wentzel asked if they are removing the shutters. Mr. Hajian replied yes. Mr. von Wentzel asked if all the windows will be 6/1, Mr. Hajian answered yes.

Ms. Meltsner asked to explain the front door. Mr. Hajian described the previous alterations and that he will put back the window that was removed. He also mentioned a door on the side that he would eliminate.

No Public Questions

No Public Comment

Commission Comments

Mr. Golberg noted that it was an interesting proposal and that he was comfortable with it. He understands the architect's intention to keep some of the character but also make it work for the family.

Ms. Meltsner stated she was uncomfortable with the turret, and that the other changes were minor in comparison. She noted that the house is actually neo-classical and has not changed that drastically, the changes have been minor. It's still a significant building. Ms. Meltsner stated she understood the motives for adding more space, but designing a turret is going backwards in time and she is uncomfortable with this approach. It's also impacting the front façade and the regulations discourage altering the front façade.

Mr. von Wentzel noted this proposal was a significant change to the existing structure and was surprised that the stairway could not be accommodated by the dormer. He also stated that he was uncomfortable with replacing all windows with such a stylistic departure including materials and noted that the character is changing dramatically.

Commission member Lee Campbell asked if there was any input from neighbors. Mr. Meyer replied that he reached out to all the abutting neighbors, and there were no concerns from the individuals he was able to speak with.

Mr. von Wentzel stated that he was reluctant to approve the replacement of windows on the front façade.

Ms. Meltsner stated that the windows were secondary to the proposed turret which destroys the character of the house. She suggested the applicant come back with another scheme that does not go back in time.

Mr. von Wentzel noted that it is very visible in the National Register District. He also noted that if they don't alter the stairs they don't need to add the clearance. Mr. Hajian replied that

they need to do a good job improving the interior and understands Ms. Meltsner's comments, and that they did devise other schemes, but that the turret concept seemed to work the best. Mr. Golberg reiterated that they should look at 21st century forms.

Mr. Campbell suggested looking at a long shed dormer. Mr. Hajian answered that they did look at that option but felt the turret was better.

Mr. Golberg asked about the front entry. Mr. Hajian replied that they want to put back some of the historic character to the front entry.

Ms. Meltsner noted that she likes the entrance, it's just the turret that bothers her. She suggested looking at a building on Arlington Street with a turret that integrated an open porch.

Ms. Crosbie suggested that the applicant consider continuing the hearing and return with other schemes that they considered, as well as additional information on the condition of the windows.

Mr. Meyer agreed to a continuance. Mr. von Wentzel closed the hearing.

Mr. Campbell moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Meltsner seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:48.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie
Preservation Administrator

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District**Members of the Public Present
September 20, 2021**

Matthew Meyer, applicant
Paul Hajian, architect

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Addresses are in Cambridge unless otherwise specified.