

DRAFT Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, March 28, 2022 - 5:30 PM

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

Absent: Theresa Hamacher

Staff Present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: see attached sheet

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/AHmar2022>.

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 **859 9632 1106**.

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

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-744: 107 Washington Avenue, by Dennis Scannell. Replace deck with covered porch.

Mr. von Wentzel recused himself for the case because he is an abutter. Vice Chair Mark Golberg took over as Chair.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, presented slides of the property.

Mr. Kevin Richard, the contractor and builder for the project, described the proposed covered deck that will replace an existing deck, including the sloped roof and screened-in panels.

Commission Questions

Ms. Crosbie asked for confirmation that the project requires a special permit. Mr. Richard replied yes.

Commissioner Heli Meltsner asked if the material will be wood. Mr. Richard answered yes, it will be thermal treated exterior trim, and added that he also likes to use upcycled rice husk which is impervious to rot, and he doesn't like composite materials.

Commissioner Lee Campbell asked about the proposed roof. Mr. Richard replied that it will be a flat rubber roof. Mr. Campbell also asked which direction the elevation is showing. Mr. Richard answered that the image is east facing.

Mr. Golberg asked for clarification of the view directions as shown on the drawings. Mr. Richard explained the views.

Mr. Bardige asked if there are zoning issues since a roof is being added. Mr. Richard responded that he is applying for a variance because of the FAR changes due to the adding of a roof.

Mr. von Wentzel asked if it's a variance or special permit required because there is quite a difference between the two. Mr. Richard said that Inspectional Services suggested a special permit.

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Mr. Golberg asked about the façade drawing, Mr. Richard clarified the drawing, and clarified that there are steps, but they are not covered by the roof.

Mr. Golberg asked about railings. Mr. Richard confirmed there will be railings. Mr. Golberg asked what other details will be incorporated. Ms. Meltsner interjected that it really isn't very visible so that details will not be noticed. Mr. Richard replied that he builds in the spirit of the property and style, he likes the design to look like it's always been part of the house.

No Public Questions or Comments

Mr. Dennis Scannell, the homeowner, clarified about the variance and explained that the City stated that a special permit is required as well as Commission review.

Commission Comments

Ms. Meltsner stated that it's fine, it's not very visible and is appropriate.

Mr. Bardige agreed with Ms. Meltsner, he had no issues with the proposal.

Mr. Campbell concurred with Ms. Meltsner.

Mr. Campbell motioned to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Meltsner seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

AH-725: 25 Hillside Avenue, by Eric Anton Verploegen and Virginia Spanoudaki. Demolish 3rd floor sunroom and construct addition.

Mr. von Wentzel chaired this portion of the meeting. Ms. Meltsner, who is an abutter to this property, recused herself.

Ms. Crosbie introduced the project and gave a brief overview.

Mr. Eric Verploegen, the applicant, presented images of the sunroom built in 1998. He pointed out the plastic covering the windows to deal with leaks, one of the main reasons for the project. He also explained that the deck has some deterioration and showed a view from the street. He stated they are proposing to remove the sunroom and reconstruct a new one.

Ms. Virginia Spanoudaki, applicant, stated that the existing sunroom is not insulated so it's cold in the winter and hot in the summer. They are proposing to keep the door in the same location, but the space would be square, not an octagon. They are also proposing 2/2 windows to match the rest of the house, and a sloped roof. Cladding will match the house.

Mr. Bardige asked to see the plan view again and confirmed it's just getting squared off.

Commission Questions

Mr. Golberg asked about insulation. Mr. Paul Pressman, the architect, explained that the present room was built to 1998 energy standards, it's not comfortable for half the year, and it leaks. To make it habitable it needs a fully insulated 6-inch wall, 10-inch rafter system sprayed with foam. The wood windows will match the house and the proportions as best as they can. He explained the room will expand 18 inches on the sides but there will be no increase in width to the back of the property – it's a simple rectangular room. Ms. Spanoudaki mentioned that the leaks occur on the sides.

Mr. Pressman described the project as more a room than a sunroom with windows that will be Marvin or Pella and will be operable.

Mr. Golberg asked about the proposed muntin size on the new windows, 7/8 or 5/8. Mr. Pressman said they'll get the narrower width but stated that you do pay a premium for it, and he will be speaking with JB Sash who specializes in historic windows.

Mr. Campbell asked about the roof shingles and if they'll match. Mr. Pressman said it's a slate roof, the roof needs to have a shallow pitch for the window height and still fit to the side of the building. An ice and water shield will be installed with shingles on top.

Mr. von Wentzel asked to clarify the roof. Mr. Pressman answered that ideally slate and copper would be used but they are prohibitively expensive so asphalt shingles would be best, but since the roof is shallow, he wants to use a higher quality "underskin." He also reiterated matching the windows and clapboard siding to the house.

Mr. Bardige asked if there are zoning issues. Mr. Pressman said yes. Ms. Spanoudaki said she initially thought a variance was needed but then was told to apply for a special permit, it's already non-conforming.

Public Questions

Ms. Meltsner asked about drainage. Mr. Pressman replied that they are using gutters and downspouts. Ms. Meltsner asked where the downspouts will drain to. Mr. Pressman answered that they will meet the existing gutters on the front of the house facing the street.

Commission Comments

Mr. Golberg stated that he wonders if there were another roof product that would better match the existing roof, but he is fine with the proposal overall.

Mr. Campbell commented that it's an improvement and doesn't think the roof will be visible, but the sides will look much better.

Mr. Bardige remarked that the proposal is a fine addition.

Mr. von Wentzel said he has had the same issue with the roof and suggested that using slate would be more appropriate and recommended saving the slate that will be removed for the work.

Public Comments

Ms. Meltsner read her statement explaining that new construction should be distinguished from the original to reflect the chronology of the building's alterations more accurately. She noted that it should be subservient to the original structure and described the proposal as a conventional cottage from the last century, it does not look contemporary. She also remarked that the open eave, slanted roof has no connection to the existing mansard roof. Ms. Meltsner expressed concern with its heavier appearance, that it is much less transparent. She suggested that this could be mitigated with a lighter structure with more glass than wall. This will appear more contemporary which would be better. Regarding the roof Ms. Meltsner stated that if it was flat, it could still meet the original roofline and you would avoid the problems with the pitch.

Mr. Pressman replied that the approved 1998 addition was very contemporary, and they wanted to mimic it. He said if they were looking to make it historic, they would have designed

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a mansard roof that would meet the existing mansard. He said they tried to do something in keeping with what was built in 1998 and the earlier structure.

Ms. Meltsner said what is there now is more contemporary and what has been designed does not look 21st century, it's simple in an entirely different way.

Ms. Spanoudaki explained that they want to build something more functional and agreed with Ms. Meltsner about it should not look like the 19th century. She pointed out that the problem with more glass is that it poses a problem with insulation. They like more glass for more light, but the impact on the ambient conditions is an issue. She also said they are considering skylights and that she thinks the windows could be a little bigger. Mr. Pressman said the existing space is uninhabitable. He remarked that with all glass you get a greenhouse that requires a lot of cooling and heating. He speculated that the existing sunroom probably didn't work from the beginning. He said his clients want a room as bright as possible and to insulate the roof which is not currently insulated. Mr. Verploegen mentioned that the glass goes right to the ground which is problematic. Ms. Spanoudaki said they want as many windows as possible. Mr. Pressman said he has worked on several projects like this.

Mr. Golberg suggested that maybe the issue is that the addition is modern but not contemporary. What's proposed doesn't look of the current time.

Ms. Meltsner agreed with Mr. Golberg and said that possibly a flat roof would work. Ms. Spanoudaki replied that she's nervous about flat roofs because of the problems they've had with water issues, and it's been a struggle dealing with water coming in. Mr. Pressman clarified that even flat roofs have a little pitch, but he thought a box attached to the mansard would be too jarring.

Mr. Von Wentzel wondered if having an exterior walk area on a mansard is already something that was not done at the time so it's already a modern element. He said this reminds him of a building at the corner of Arlington Street and Washington Avenue where they wanted to walk out of a mansard onto a flat roof system with a baluster. Perhaps by virtue of simply having a third-floor roof deck system it automatically reads as something added later.

Mr. Bardige said he approves of the project, but he would like to see the applicants continue the conversation with Ms. Meltsner to further discuss what she has in mind which could be very helpful. Ms. Spanoudaki said that's fine, and that they would like more windows and are open to this but just want something that works and is energy efficient.

Mr. Golberg pointed out that there's a premium associated with U or R factor for windows and suggested instead making the walls or roof thicker or using rigid insulation on the exterior of the studs.

Ms. Spanoudaki said they will look at all options.

Mr. Meltsner commented that he hopes the applicants can resolve the design soon so they can enjoy the space.

Mr. Pressman said that what Mr. Golberg suggested requires wrapping with rigid foam and adding nailers vertically and sheath that again so there's a nailing base for clapboards – this increases the cost. Mr. von Wentzel responded that the insulation is not under the purview of the Commission.

Mr. Campbell noted that only the west face is really in the Commission's purview, and a narrow view at that, and that the other sides are not visible, so they fall out of the purview.

Mr. Bardige stated that he would like the applicants to continue the conversation with Ms. Meltsner but not have to come back to the Commission. Ms. Crosbie pointed out that the approval can include a recommendation that the applicants meet with the Meltsners to discuss possible revisions and that final review can be done by staff.

Mr. Bardige motioned to approve as presented with the condition that potential adjustments based on consultation with the neighbors be reviewed by staff. Mr. Golberg seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

The November 2021 minutes were approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:31.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie
Preservation Administrator

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March 28, 2021**

Virginia Spanadoukis, applicant	25 Hillside Avenue
Eric Verploegen, applicant	25 Hillside Avenue
Paul Pressman, architect	Newton, MA
Kevin Richard, builder	107 Washington Avenue
Eric Scannell	11 Walnut Avenue

Addresses are in Cambridge unless otherwise specified.