

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, August 5, 2025, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Catherine Tice, Katinka Hakuta

Absent: Charles Redmon, Nan Laird, Monika Pauli

Staff present: Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public: See attached list

This meeting was held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MC0852025> 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 824 5361 4535.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions and called the meeting to order at 6:04.

MC-7326: 29 Ellsworth Avenue, by Lucy Hadden & Will Brockman. Construct dormer.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, gave a brief history of the building.

Architect Frank Shirley explained that the owners wish to age in place. He then presented elevations of the proposed dormer. He is also proposing to alter some of the fenestration in the rear, which is not visible from a public way. He also pointed out that they were originally proposing skylights but decided not to include them.

Commission Questions

Ms. Hakuta asked if there were solar panels on the roof. Mr. Shirley explained that solar panels are located on the other side of the roof.

Public Questions or Comments - none

Commission Comments

Ms. Hakuta commented that the design makes sense and noted that the dormer is set back from the front of the house.

Mr. Hsiao agreed with Ms. Hakuta and stated that the design is fine as proposed.

Mr. Hsiao motioned to approve the proposal. Ms. Tice seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

MC-7332: 1 Myrtle Avenue, by Fan Wang & Marc Wagner. New addition, decks, and fenestration alterations.

Ms. Crosbie gave an overview of the property and noted previous reviews by the Commission on this property that began in 2019. She also went over the review criteria.

Ms. Ann Wang, one of the applicants, explained that her family is expanding, which is why they are adding another floor. She stated that the building had been poorly constructed and at one point, a sewer pipe exploded. She is looking to install better windows and make the house passive. She then went over the roof decks, solar panels. She mentioned the intention to take

advantage of the views on the south side and limit the number of windows in the rear to be less intrusive to neighbors.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked about the third and fourth floors. Ms. Wang went over all the floors. Mr. Hsiao asked to confirm that they are adding 606 square feet. Ms. Wang confirmed that is correct. Mr. Hsiao then shared his screen to show a Google view of the property to see the façade on Myrtle Avenue and clarify the changes, including the removal of the roof and window alterations.

Mr. Hsiao asked if they had any 3-D views. Ms. Wang replied that the architect did not do any 3-D drawings. Mr. Hsiao explained that 3-dimensional views help with understanding the massing, especially with this amount of change, and that it's helpful not only for the Commission but for the owner as well.

Public Questions

Ms. Tia Chapman of 6 Myrtle Avenue asked about the calculations for the additional square footage. Ms. Wang responded.

Mr. Sheraz Choudhary of 2-4 Myrtle Avenue inquired about the gross square footage, the open porches, the flood resiliency in the basement, and asked how this information provided by the applicant can be validated. Ms. Crosbie answered that there will be additional departments that review the project.

Ms. Patricia Mian of 32-34 Magnolia Avenue asked for clarification on where the building is expanding. Ms. Wang shows the drawings and points out the location.

Public Comments

Mr. Ori Porat of 22-24 Myrtle Avenue commented that the applicant's stated intention of moving into this building goes against all the information he has gathered concerning their previous development projects.

Ms. Chapman expressed concern over the safety of the street, noting that children play there. She further stated that the proposed project poses fire and safety issues.

Mr. Choudhary stated that the work that has occurred on the site has been unsafe. He also urged the Commission to take a closer look at the drawings because there are errors, including the basement information.

Commission Comments

Ms. Tice commented that the entire profile of the proposal has nothing to do with the original style of the house; the plans show a complete abandonment of the house's historical features.

Ms. Hakuta agreed with Ms. Tice and stated that the proposed building doesn't make any sense in this neighborhood. She advised the applicant to review the City's multi-family housing guidelines.

Mr. Hsiao stated that the Commission can't comment on use, and this is essentially a two-family structure becoming a larger two-family structure. He also stated that other City agencies

will review the proposal for safety, traffic impacts, mitigation, etc., and that it's all part of the permitting process. Mr. Hsiao further commented that it's unfortunate that there is no 3-dimensional depiction of the proposal, which makes it difficult to fully understand these substantive changes. He pointed out that the gable roof is a signature element of the structure in a prominent location, so it's very visible. He also explained that the applicant would benefit from a 3-dimensional model and advised that the applicant go back to the architect to incorporate historic features and make it less jarring, and that right now it's very radical. The windows are jumbled. This is a traditional classical Cambridge house, and the location and style of windows are important. Materials are also important, such as wood siding. He also suggested consulting with CHC staff for advice.

Mr. Hsiao moved to deny a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted with the recommendation that the applicant review the details to bring back some of the character of the house, including the window proportion and pattern, and engage with the staff on the details. Ms. Tice seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

The minutes from the May 5, 2025 and June 9, 2025 were approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present August 5, 2025**Panelists:**

Lucy Hadden and Will Brockman
Frank Shirley, architect
Ann Wang and Marc Wagner

29 Ellsworth Avenue
Frank Shirley Architects, Cambridge
1 Myrtle Avenue

Attendees:

Ori Porat
Tia Chapman
Sheraz Choudhary
Patricia Mian

22-24 Myrtle Avenue
6 Myrtle Avenue
2-4 Myrtle Avenue
32-34 Magnolia Avenue