

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Wednesday, October 22, 2025, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

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

Absent: Charles Redmon

Staff present: Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public: See attached list

This meeting was held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MCOct22> 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 856 3530 8575.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao made introductions and called the meeting to order at 6:05.

MC-7388: 9 ½ Centre Street, by 9 ½ Centre Street Condo Trust/Scott Wolff. Replace siding and window trim with fiber cement and PVC.

Ms. Crosbie gave a brief overview of the building. Bianca Lopes and Rik Lynch, project managers from Brigs LLC, were present as owners' representatives. Ms. Lopes shared her screen and went over the proposal to replace the wood shingle siding with fiber cement clapboard siding and replace the trim with Azek. She explained that they will be using two colors, a lighter one on the top half and a darker shade on the bottom half. Mr. Lynch pointed out that the detailing on the top, the cornice and dentils, will remain. Ms. Lopes noted that the trim piece right underneath the dentil detailing will be replaced.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked if the window trim will match the existing trim. Mr. Lynch replied that they will copy the details as best they can in pvc. Mr. Hsiao asked about the porch. Mr. Lynch answered that the porches will remain. Mr. Hsiao asked about the existing siding, and it was confirmed as wood shingles. Mr. Lynch stated the intention is to install fiber cement clapboards with a ribbed pattern.

Mr. Hsiao asked if there would be corner boards. Mr. Lynch answered no. Mr. Hsiao asked if they will replicate the flare that occurs on each level. Mr. Lynch said they match as best they can.

Mr. Hsiao asked why they are replacing the wood shingle siding with fiber cement siding. Mr. Lynch said the homeowners want a material that is long-term and won't need repainting. Mr. Hsiao asked if the existing siding is okay. Mr. Lynch explained that about half of the siding has to be replaced because of water damage.

Commissioner Monika Pauli asked if the front façade could keep the existing siding and replace the other sides with fiber cement. Mr. Lynch replied that the client wants the whole building sided with the fiber cement.

Commissioner Nan Laird asked if the siding is pre-painted. Mr. Lynch said yes. Ms. Laird asked if the new siding would look like the original siding. Mr. Lynch pointed out that new siding will have a ribbed pattern that looks like wood.

Commissioner Catherine Tice asked if replacing the shingles in kind would be too expensive. Mr. Lynch confirmed that it would be too expensive.

Public Questions and Comments – none

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao explained that while he understood the desire to minimize maintenance, the Commission advocates for the restoration of original materials because of their specific characteristics and noted that wood has a quality endemic to this historic period. He referred to Ms. Pauli's suggestion to replace three sides that are less visible with Hardieplank and restore the front façade. Secondly, he stated that changing the shingle siding to clapboard is a significant alteration, and Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to show fiber cement options in the product line include a shingle approach. He reiterated that the proposal is a substantial change in the character of the structure, and it's one of four buildings constructed in the same style and materials. He expressed appreciation for maintaining the cornice detailing but noted that replacing the window trim with pvc can be tricky, and people often end up just using flat stock, eliminating the architectural detailing. He encouraged the applicants to work on replicating the profiles of the window trim.

Mr. Hsiao motioned to reject the proposal as submitted and recommended trying to restore the wood shingle siding on the front façade and consider fiber cement shingles instead of clapboards. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

MC-7331 (CONTINUED) 84-86 Ellery Street, by 84 Ellery Street LLC c/o Patrick Barrett III. Demolish building and construct 6-story structure.

Ms. Crosbie gave a brief introduction to the case, which was continued from a hearing in August.

Mr. Patrick Barrett III, Esquire, noted that they have returned to the Commission with a revised design that preserves the main front structure as per the Commission's request. He also pointed out that Eleanor Raymond, noted architect and activist who grew up in the house, had at one time expressed ambivalence toward the building. He also mentioned that they had communicated with the neighbors and agreed to add plants in the rear.

Architect Dan Anderson explained that they will be repointing and repairing the existing structure and will maintain the two front entries and do other necessary repairs, but would like to replace the windows, most likely black clad, 2/2 divided lights. He mentioned the lot is two lots combined, totaling 10,850 square feet, and they are going to remove the two later additions in the rear. He pointed out that they will remove approximately 5,000 square feet of paved area, increase open space, reduce the heat island effect, and enhance permeability. He further stated they are going to preserve the large specimen tree in front. He confirmed that their proposal is still by right. He showed the site plan and referred to Mr. Barrett's

conversation with the abutters, who preferred to have a row of hornbeams planted in the back. He went over the height of the proposed addition, 74'-9" to the parapet, and said the headhouse for the stair and elevator access is exempted from the height. Mr. Anderson then went over the shadow studies. He then presented the layout explaining that there will be a side entry and lobby for the new 6-story structure in the rear, separated from the existing entries in the front building. He said they are looking at 50 to 53 units, but it hasn't been finalized. On the fourth floor, they are proposing a green roof with a contemplative space that could also be an additional private open space as another amenity. He also pointed out the chamfered corners of the building that will accommodate pollinator gardens or additional green roof space that is not accessible. He explained that the strategy is to relieve some of the bulk of the building by stepping back about four feet from the floor below, and in those cases, have some additional visible green roof space. The top floor will have a green roof area with wildflowers and grasses, and a small gathering space adjacent to the head house. He showed a rendering of the roof deck with seating areas, a pergola, and an entry from between the headhouses.

Regarding exterior materials, Mr. Anderson explained the building will be fully passive house certified, and they are looking at a vertically oriented fiber cement panel and architectural wall system that comes in custom colors, and they are looking at neutral colors such as gray to complement the existing brick of the front mansard, and horizontal banding. A slight recess at each floor helps to break down the massing, with 2/2 windows, either casement or double hung, and an entry lobby system for the new apartment entry. He then showed the proposed balconies that are partially recessed with a metal rail system and possibly a wood upper rail. He then showed various views of the proposed building.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked about the front building and their intentions with the hipped portion of the roof. Mr. Anderson said they are looking at removing the hipped portion because of the views from the new building and water management issues. Mr. Hsiao asked if the proposal for the roof is to create a green roof that is not accessible. Mr. Anderson replied that they are considering it, they have designed it right now for access, at least for maintenance, and there is an opportunity to have a small seating area. He pointed out it's not intended to be a walkable roof, just enough room for possibly two benches.

Mr. Hsiao asked if they are proposing to remove the chimneys on both sides of the structure. Mr. Anderson answered that they are exploring combining or separating the existing structure from the passive house portion; and if it's incorporated into the passive house, then keeping the chimneys would be a challenge from an air sealing standpoint. And right now they are proposing to remove them.

Mr. Hsiao then referred to the elevations and asked if the intention is to connect the existing building with the addition or keep them separate. Mr. Anderson answered that at the moment, the floor plates do not fully line up, particularly the ground floor where they need to comply with 521 CMR and make it fully accessible. The second floors may or may not line up, but it turns out that the third floor aligns pretty closely to where the mansard breaks to the hipped roof.

Mr. Hsiao asked if they had explored scenarios where the portion of the new addition directly behind the historic front house is more symmetrical. Mr. Anderson replied that they did play with it a bit and decided to break up the mass, and the upper windows help direct the view out more towards the park and give a little more dynamism to the design.

Commissioner Nan Laird asked why they were considering casement windows and asked if the middle window is fixed. Mr. Anderson explained that it's difficult for double-hung windows to meet air barrier standards because of the sealant around them. He mentioned they are looking at a passive house-rated window system and are looking at several options, including an awning-type window or windows that tilt. Ms. Laird asked about the windows on the top floor. Mr. Anderson said that there will be a wall of windows on the top floor, and some of them will open. Ms. Laird asked about the other windows. Mr. Anderson replied that at the moment, there is a mix of windows, and they're still developing a compositional strategy to make the addition more dynamic with a variety of window types and openings. Ms. Laird asked about the existing structure, and Mr. Anderson said they are not sure if the existing building will be residential.

Commissioner Pauli asked about the siding. Mr. Anderson replied that five stories will be one color and the sixth story will be a different color with a different orientation of the siding, and the chamfered corners will be a contrasting color. He further explained that they don't want it to feel like it's broken up into too many pieces either, and they're taking cues from the existing building.

Commissioner Hakuta asked how much of the proposed exterior will still change, specifically the windows, if they are still figuring out the unit layouts. Mr. Anderson replied that the window layout will not change significantly and that their compositional strategy gives them some flexibility, but again no significant changes.

Public Questions

Diane Rubin of 59 Dana Street stated that she lives on a back lot on Dana Street abutting their property and asked about the location of the mechanical equipment. Mr. Anderson replied that there will be mechanical equipment on the roof, but the extent of it has not been determined; but whatever equipment is up there will be set back and there will be screening, most likely six feet high.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street stated that she thought the bird's-eye view image of the building looked different from the other drawings and asked if this was a computer imaging issue. Mr. Anderson answered that it's most likely the angle of the view that is making it look different. Ms. Meyer asked about the height of the sixth floor and how it compares with the other floors. Mr. Anderson explained that all the floors are the same height and pointed out that there is a parapet, so the upper floor looks a little bit taller. Ms. Meyer asked for clarification on what is proposed on the mansard roof, such as seating areas or railings. Mr. Anderson answered that whatever ends up on the roof will be set far back enough that it wouldn't be visible. He also explained that the green roof is not intended to be walked on, and they are still working out the design. Ms. Meyer asked if they could grow a tree on the roof, and

Mr. Anderson replied that there could be planters with ornamental trees, but typically the green roof has a shallow growing medium that supports wildflowers and sedum.

Elena Saporta, 102 Ellery Street, asked when the rear additions were constructed. Ms. Crosbie responded that it was 1894. Ms. Saporta then asked about the window alignment and if they could align them on the left since they appear to be so with the central portion and also on the right, so that it's a more symmetrical response to the existing structure. Mr. Anderson answered that they were taking liberties with the living spaces, but they could go with a larger window or try to get the alignment. He also noted that it wouldn't be so perceptible in reality as opposed to looking at an elevation.

Susan Bernstein of 82 Ellery Street said she was happy with what she was seeing, comparing it to how the library has the old building and a modern addition. She asked about the construction timeline. Mr. Barrett thanked Ms. Bernstein and said that they have to go through numerous other applications, which could take six to eight months, and the construction could be about 24 months. He also stated that they will communicate with neighbors and have a construction management plan. Ms. Bernstein expressed concern regarding the potential noise levels. Mr. Barrett replied that they like to do a pre-construction survey of the abutting properties, including foundations, and they would notify neighbors prior to any major work being done.

Ms. Saporta asked if a structural assessment had been made of the existing structure to see if it could support a green roof. Mr. Anderson said that a study had not been made yet, but the green roof they are proposing would not add a significant amount of weight. Ms. Saporta noted that her home is covered with ivy, and she receives a lot of compliments, and wondered if they considered a green screen. Mr. Anderson replied that it's a great idea that they could pursue.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer stated she was pleasantly surprised by the revised design but is still concerned with the differences between the drawings and views. The top floor looks larger, and she wished the parapet could be lowered. She also expressed concern about removing the hipped roof, but understands the issue with the views from the apartments. She also pointed out that brick, vertical panels, and horizontal bands will read as different textures in certain raking daylight.

Ms. Rubin thanked the applicants for planting trees in the back and said that it's important as a corridor for birds, but she is still concerned about the roof deck and the amount of noise that might result.

Commission Comments

Ms. Laird commented that the revised design was a tremendous improvement, more consistent with the feel of the neighborhood, and thinks the reduction of units will enhance the viability of the building in the neighborhood.

Ms. Pauli said she was glad to see the original structure preserved and thinks the new addition should be relatively simple, not too many colors, and even be symmetrical or at least calmer

and not try to compete. She hopes there will be a good plan for garbage removal and that there will be sufficient light and space for the trees in the back.

Ms. Hakuta commented that although color is not in the Commission's purview, she does like the color scheme that showed the bottom five floors in a light gray-green tone and the top floor in a darker green. She also stated that green screens would enhance the building and appreciated the effort to preserve the building and to work with it.

Mr. Hsiao concurred with the Commissioners that this new approach is much better with the preservation of the front building, that it makes an enormous difference, and it is now clearly more of a piece with respect to the neighborhood, park, and street. He referred to Ms. Pauli's previous comment and added that he thought that quieting down the back building, even with asymmetrical and compositional moves going on, would benefit the project. He pointed out on a side elevation where there is a color change, it's intentionally driven by the recesses occurring in the plane; it's more dynamic if the planes are shifting back and forth elevationally. It looks like the building is being carved into the balconies and is absolutely contributing to that feeling. He further explained that when the color shifts when there is no planar shift, it doesn't work as well. When you change the color just to change the color, it looks flat, Mr. Hsiao suggested revisiting that strategy.

Mr. Hsiao appreciated the top-floor setback because it diminishes the apparent bulk of the project, and it also accentuates the fact that you're creating a kind of contemporary nod to the mansard roof on the front building, because you're creating a different plane of treatment. He also commented that the entry canopy feels clunky in the way it's attached to the side of the building, particularly in one of the renderings. He suggested seeing if there's a way to take cues from the front building because there's a certain elegance where the porch vis-à-vis the column structure, and the thin edge on the roof that's a stronger clue with respect to detail and intention that can be done in a contemporary way - it's a more elegant profile.

Mr. Hsiao then discussed the chimneys, which he described as a contributing factor in the appearance of the building from the front and strongly encouraged the architect to explore a way to retain them. He explained that in other projects, where even if they no longer function, chimneys are contributing factors with respect to the design, and if the hip roof portion is being removed, it's important to retain some vestige, particularly when viewed up and down Ellery Street. Mr. Hsiao stated this warrants further study, vis-à-vis trying to see if there's a way to maintain the chimney expressions on the sides of the building. Mr. Hsiao also commented that the revised design is a much-improved approach to the project overall and that compositionally, with some further nuances and further studies, it's very close. He then mentioned the entryway and suggested that the corner could be even more expressed, that right now it's a single window vertical expression, but if they want to acknowledge that this side of the building is the main entrance, they're not really doing enough. He suggested looking at expanding the corner window positioning, which could lighten the corner in that view. It should be visible and clear to folks coming into the building. As the main entry, it should be special. Mr. Hsiao again thanked the applicant for the revised design, which is a big improvement.

Mr. Hsiao motioned to approve the proposal with the condition that the design is revised for review at an Architects Committee, including the issues that were discussed, including maintaining visible chimneys, revising the entry canopy, simplifying some of the moves on the elevations, and revisiting color shifts in relation to planar shifts.

Ms. Laird seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present October 22, 2025**Panelists:**

Bianca Lopes, project manager	9 ½ Centre Street
Rik Lynch, project manager	9 ½ Centre Street
Patrick Barrett, attorney	84-86 Ellery Street
Ender Saricay, applicant	84-86 Ellery Street
Dan Anderson, architect	84-86 Ellery Street

Attendees:

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Susan Bernstein	
Elena Saporta	102 Ellery Street
Rob	
Diane Rubin	59 Dana Street