

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, January 5, 2026, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Catherine Tice, Katinka Hakuta, Charles Redmon, Nan Laird, Monika Pauli

Absent:

Staff present: Allison Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public: See attached list

This meeting was held via online Zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MC120125> 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 841 0608 7156.

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

MC-7445 (CONTINUED): 22-24 Myrtle Avenue, by Ori Porat. Partial demolition and construction of an addition.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, gave a brief overview of the case that was continued from the previous month.

The applicant, Ori Porat, explained the different options that he and his architect, Elena Razeto, explored to reach the final design, which is now a unified modern design. Ms. Razeto mentioned she removed the "top-heavy" look by adding a distinct band between the facade and the roof parapet. The color palette features white shiplap, gray board and batten, and blue stripes/sashes. Mr. Porat cited his deeply held religious beliefs and personal history as the reason for the blue/white scheme and pointed out that there are other vibrant houses on the street. The proposal also includes a green roof with a common deck, flower bed parapets, and permeable paving for the walkways to manage drainage. An external fire escape was added on the north side as a "placeholder" as they continue navigating recent changes to the city's fire code. The elevator was moved to the front to reduce shading on neighbors' properties. Ms. Razeto also mentioned that the rear decks were positioned specifically to balance the impact on the most impacted adjacent property, and she presented shadow studies.

Commission Questions

Commissioner Katinka Hakuta asked if the fence would extend in front of the building. Mr. Porat answered that the fence will not go in front.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the floor-to-floor heights. Ms. Razeto went over the height of each floor. Mr. Hsiao asked to see the plan with the fence line to clarify the location. Ms. Razeto showed the fence line on the drawing. Mr. Hsiao asked to see the renderings and asked if the building would be in the same location and not any further out front. Ms. Razeto confirmed that the front of the building will be in the same location and not extend any further to the front.

Commissioner Catherine Tice asked if this building would be the tallest on the street. Ms. Razeto confirmed that it will be the tallest.

Public Questions and Comments

Frank Benesh-Lee of 14 Myrtle Avenue cited a City ordinance, stating that the project violates height and setback restrictions. He also commented that there is a bulk control plane, the 45-degree angle from the street, that is being violated by the placement of the headhouse. Mr. Porat explained that he has met with Inspectional Services already about the project.

Chiara Gerhardinger strongly opposed the project and asked how the Commission can allow a project like this to happen in a neighborhood conservation district. Ms. Crosbie explained the changes in the City Ordinance in 2023 that removed size and shape from the Commission's jurisdiction, although it can be discussed.

Fan Wang of 1 Myrtle Avenue echoed Mr. Benesh-Lee's assertion that the project does not comply with zoning and has approached the BZA to determine compliance. She also stated that the revised design is still incompatible with the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Porat questioned Ms. Wang's claim of being an abutter when she has never lived there.

Helen Walker of 43 Linnaean Street asked if the applicant and architect could further study the window placement because of the building's proximity to neighbors. Ms. Razeto answered that they actually did revise some window locations on the right side.

John Cunha of 23 Line Street mentioned that he has met with the applicant, and he is concerned about the resulting shadows impacting his solar panels and the amount of energy generated. Mr. Porat responded that he recognizes that there will be an impact, but he didn't think it would be that detrimental.

Suzanne Blier of 5 Fuller Place commented that she hopes the question regarding compliance with zoning will be resolved. She also referred to an earlier comment by the applicant about the recent City Council election and support for the new zoning, saying that new Councilors are questioning the new zoning as it does not really address housing for lower incomes. She also commented on the color choices, suggesting they look at more subtle hues.

Jeremy Flower of 18 Myrtle Avenue commented on the window placement and the impact on privacy and stated that the window relocations still don't address this. He also called out the fire escape and stated that it could be used as a balcony, further negatively impacting privacy. Mr. Porat responded that in the fifteen years that he has lived here, he has never used the existing fire escape.

Julianne Smith of 19 Line Street commented that she also has solar panels that will be impacted. She further stated that she installed the panels at the encouragement of the City of Cambridge.

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao thanked the applicant for rethinking the design approach, which is now more consistent, and he also appreciated the mitigation of the massing. Mr. Hsiao recommended

looking at the windows again to mitigate privacy concerns. He also commented that the parapet is an improvement, but thought the new color scheme could use further study and suggested consulting with CHC staff. Mr. Hsiao also appreciated the fencing for privacy and screening. He suggested further studying the location of the fire escape to minimize impact while also complying with the building code. Regarding public comments on the overall size and setbacks, Mr. Hsiao stated he understood people's frustration, but the Commission has to operate within the established parameters, and encouraged attendees to communicate their concerns with the City Council. He further stated that the Commission is challenged with trying to mitigate the concerns of competing interests.

Commissioner Monika Pauli commented that she sympathized with the neighbors but noted that the impact could have been greater.

Ms. Tice commented that we live in a community, and context does matter, and explained that cities all over the world incorporate different styles of architecture, and it's this blending of different styles that gives a place character, as well as a blending of people. She encouraged homeowners to think of their neighbors.

Commissioner Katinka Hakuta remarked that the purview of the Commission is to encourage the preservation of neighborhood buildings and encourage new construction that complements the existing buildings. The project does not comply with either, but given what the Commission is charged with in terms of jurisdiction, there isn't a lot that the Commission can do, and it's a very difficult situation.

Mr. Hsiao agreed with Ms. Hakuta and suggested looking at modifying the colorway to make it more restrained. Ms. Hakuta clarified that the exterior color is not within the Commission's jurisdiction and comments are only recommendations. Ms. Crosbie asked Mr. Porat if he would consider adjusting the amount of color on the building, and Mr. Porat said he could do that. Mr. Porat also responded to the comments on blending and said he has been a victim of hate crimes.

Mr. Hsiao reiterated what is within the Commission's current purview and motioned to approve the project with conditions including further study of the window placement in order to provide more privacy for the neighbors; further refine the landscaping as the project progresses including material selections; and recommended further study of the colorway, but again noted that color is not within the Commission's jurisdiction. Ms. Tice seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

MC-7446 (CONTINUED): 406 Broadway, by S&J Broadway RE LLC. Demolish structure and construct 6-story building.

Ms. Crosbie gave a brief introduction to the case that was continued from the previous month.

The architect, Geoff Farrell, explained that they responded to concerns raised at the last meeting by simplifying the design, including removing metal panels and now using brick as the primary material, regularizing the window patterns, and reducing the amount of ground-floor glass to look more residential. He showed elevations, balcony details, street elevations, and shadow studies.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked to see the streetscape and elevations again, and asked if the drawings were accurate as to what is visible on the roof. Mr. Farrell confirmed that the drawing is correct and that the penthouse is set back.

Public Questions and Comments

Suzanne Blier of 5 Fuller Place commented that it looked like a factory, and that she is disappointed, the design is still too busy and needs to be further simplified. She suggested iron railings instead of glass to complement the building. Mr. Farrell explained that he simplified the materials and is using neutral tones.

Debbie Shapiro of 402 Broadway asked about deliveries and the potential impact on Goodman Road, which is a narrow street. Mr. Farrell responded that trucks will park on Broadway, but he cannot control what drivers will do.

Alessandro Doria of 3 Ellsworth Avenue commented that the building is out of character with the neighborhood and that six stories is too tall for Broadway. He suggested looking at doing a four-story brick building. He went on to say the proposal is not preserving the urban landscape.

Helen Walker commented that the proposed window alignment would impact privacy on neighboring properties and wondered if the architect could revise it. Mr. Farrell answered that he could look at the window placement and said that they are preserving existing foliage and fencing. Ms. Walker also pointed out that an abutter has an outdoor gymnasium pavilion at the property line. Mr. Farrell said that there is a fence on that property line that will remain. Ms. Walker commented on the proposed brick detailing at the top story and cautioned that it will retain water, and they will have to replace the window lintels.

Chiara Gerhardinger of 3 Ellsworth Avenue commented that the proposal is an eyesore and that 34 units without any additional parking are going to ruin the neighborhood, and these new units are not going to be affordable.

Suzanne Lee of 9 Goodman Road commented on the potential traffic impacts on Goodman Road with FedEx, UPS, and other delivery services pulling up on the street and blocking cars. She also mentioned the number of turnovers, causing further disruption on moving days.

Commission Comments

Ms. Hakuta began the discussion by expressing appreciation for the applicant's effort to revise the design in response to feedback from the last meeting.

Ms. Tice asked if they would consider a separate delivery entrance on Broadway to mitigate the potential impacts raised by the neighbors regarding Goodman Road. Mr. Farrell answered that they are willing to explore options for another entrance for deliveries. Ms. Tice also appreciated the revisions, but still wished it looked more like the other multi-family housing on Broadway.

Mr. Hsiao commented that the design needs further simplification and reducing the color palette to two tones, brick and trim, to visually relate more to other buildings on Broadway. He also suggested wrapping the frame on the west elevation and scaling back the top floor to

reduce the perceived mass. Mr. Farrell said he was open to looking at a two-tone color scheme and fitting the building more into the family of brick buildings on Broadway.

Ms. Hakuta motioned to approve the proposal with the condition that the applicant address further simplifying the color scheme as discussed, further study the top floor, and look at wrapping around to the side, and have changes reviewed by CHC staff. Mr. Hsiao seconded. Ms. Tice and Ms. Pauli opposed; the vote was tied, and therefore, the motion did not pass. Ms. Tice asked to continue the hearing to address these issues. Ms. Pauli agreed with Ms. Tice and said the proposed project is very inappropriate. Mr. Hsiao concurred and asked the applicant if he agreed. Mr. Farrell confirmed for his client to continue the hearing.

The December 3, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present January 5, 2026

Panelists:

Ori Porat, owner	22-24 Myrtle Avenue
Elena Razeto, architect	Razeto Architecture LLC
Geoff Farrell, architect	Joe The Architect
Alberto Cabre	Joe The Architect
Joe Stromer	Joe The Architect
Sam and Sunny Zuo, owners	406 Broadway

Attendees:

Kevin F. Branley	402 Broadway
John Cunha	23 Line Street
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Brian Branley	402 Broadway
Michael Russem	28 Myrtle Avenue
Daniel Salomon	6 Cleveland St
Elisa Flower	18 Myrtle Ave
Suzanne Lee	9 Goodman Road
Debra Shapiro	404A Broadway
Jeremy Flower	18 Myrtle Ave
Juliann Smith	19 Line Street
Felix Rieper	44 Dana Street # 2
Martin Wartak	23 Myrtle Avenue
Helen Walker	43 Linnaean Street
Catiana jp	City of Cambridge
Rebecca Fuentes	City of Cambridge
Fan Wang	One Myrtle Ave
Marc Wagner	One Myrtle Ave
Nora (Jody) Sharpe	3 Ellsworth Ave
Nonie Valentine	
Frank Benesh-Lee	14 Myrtle Avenue
Chiara Gerhardinger	3 Ellsworth Avenue
Alessandro Doria	3 Ellsworth Avenue
Deborah Belle	
Steve Jerome	
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Place
Steve Minichiello	404 Broadway
Lily Lee	
Barbara Hirsh	44 Dana Street
Jacquelyn Fahey Sandell	8 Clinton Street
Adam Manacher	48B Dana Street
Michael Powers	
James Williamson	Churchill St