

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, June 28, 2021 - 5:30 PM

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

Staff Present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: see attached sheet

*Mark Golberg, as an abutter to an abutter, was an attendee and did not vote.

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/AHjune2021>.

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 **874 7464 7330**.

Commission Chair Mr. von Wentzel called the meeting to order at 5:35, made introductions and explained the procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-713: 53 Raymond Street, by 53 Raymond Street LLC. Demolition of single-family residence and construction of new single-family house

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property and presented historical background.

The owner, Matt Hayes, explained that he is proposing a new building that will re-engage with Raymond Street and maintain the scale of the existing front portion of the house and provide an elegant presence on the street.

Ms. Katya Podsiadlo, the landscape architect, presented the overall design explaining that they are maintaining existing setbacks, curb cut, and driveway. Existing trees are to remain, and new evergreen trees and shrubs will be planted to provide screening and an understory. In response to neighbor's concerns regarding privacy, specific areas will be planted for screening. These plantings will be installed ahead of construction in order to get established. The front fence will be eliminated to open up the property to the neighborhood. Natural stone will be used for walkways, steps, driveway, and boulders will be placed for accents. The existing timber wall will be replaced with a granite retaining wall; they will also use reclaimed granite curbing and bluestone paving. There is a five-foot grade change, the first floor elevation will be lowered, and several patios are located around the house, keeping a mostly woodland setting.

Ms. Maryann Thompson, architect, described the design intent to create a friendly relationship to the street, provide a clear entrance and create a more modern aesthetic in the back, nestled into the landscape. Materials include painted wood clapboard, a standing metal seam roof, and a stone base. Trim will be a Shaker style flat stock that feels "New Englandy."

Mr. Zac Cardwell, architect, described the windows and presented an overlay showing the proposed outline over the existing building footprint. He presented elevations, showing the gable roof in front and flat roof in back, cedar rain screen, larger windows in the rear, and described the fenestration.

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Commission Questions

Commission member Heli Meltsner asked about the trim and if there will be contrasting color. Mr. Cardwell explained the trim and said there will be some contrast in color. Ms. Meltsner also asked about the roof extension on the side. Ms. Thompson replied that it's an entrance to a mudroom.

Commission member Lee Campbell asked about the garage as viewed from the driveway. Mr. Cardwell explained it's the same style as the house. Mr. Campbell asked about the house's set-back from the sidewalk. Mr. Hayes replied it's aligning with the adjacent garage façade. Mr. Campbell asked why a metal standing seam roof. Mr. Hayes answered that he likes the look of metal roofs and that it introduces a more contemporary feature as opposed to mimicking earlier styles in general. Ms. Thompson noted that this metal roof is a much higher quality material than asphalt shingle roofs.

Ms. Hamacher asked the reasoning behind demolishing the existing building since it's an early example of mid century modern. Mr. Hayes replied that the house is not in great shape, that he wanted to create something more contextual to the neighborhood. The existing building has meandering add-ons, and there are structural issues. Mr. Cardwell added that some of the additions have no foundations, and to restore them would require a great deal of alteration, and the arrangement of spaces is not ideal, there's no cohesive vision.

Ms. Hamacher asked for a clarification on the fencing on the landscape plan. Ms. Podsiadlo responded, explaining the different types of fences and that they are working with the neighbors for a more unified look.

Commission member Art Bardige asked if they are considering solar panels. Mr. Hayes replied yes, it will be panel ready, but won't go too far so as to let the homeowner receive tax benefit.

Mr. Von Wentzel asked for staff direction in making determination. Ms. Crosbie responded with district guidelines pertaining to demolition review and new construction.

Commission Comments

Ms. Meltsner commented that this is a nice project, it's a riff on Greek Revival but updated in proportion and material, it's in a traditional mode but reads as modern. The applicant has done a good job of fitting it in the neighborhood and protecting adjacent neighbors' privacy. Regarding demolition of the existing house, Ms. Meltsner noted that this house is not a significant example of the modern style and is not contributing to the district.

Mr. Campbell stated he is generally in favor of the project, he had questions about the landscape, but they have been answered satisfactorily. He noted there are no vistas into this property, and that the neighbors have expressed support with their concerns addressed by the applicant.

Ms. Hamacher noted that it's always sad when a building comes down but can support this project.

Mr. Bardige commented that he doesn't see a reason to keep the building, he likes the new design and thinks it's beautiful.

Mr. Von Wentzel stated that preserving the existing trees during construction will be a challenge and hopes they will succeed.

Ms. Hamacher moved to approve the proposal as presented because the existing structure is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined eligible, the existing structure is in advanced disrepair and restoration is not financially feasible, and the new design enhances the enjoyment of the district by providing pedestrians views into portions of the property; and that there will be staff review of materials during final design development/construction and visible changes to the landscape plan. Mr. Bardige seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie
Preservation Administrator

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Members of the Public Present June 28, 2021

Matt Hayes (applicant)	Ellsworth Ave
Maryann Thompson (architect for applicant)	
Zac Cardwell (architect for applicant)	
Katya Podsiadlo (l.a. for applicant)	
Mark Golberg	35 Raymond Street
Nancy Brickhouse	nbrickhouse@cfa.harvard.edu
Joan Friebely	jfriebely@comcast.net
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Addresses are in Cambridge unless otherwise specified.