

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

May 2, 2011 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2nd Floor

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Carole Perrault, *Member*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Commission Members Absent: Lestra Litchfield, Charles Redmon, *Members*; Siobhan McMahon, *Alternate*

Staff: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3845: 117 Amory Street, by Gregory Hyde and Andrew Shinn. Replace siding with clapboards; convert staircase to balcony; add windows on two structures; add head house, solar panels, and green roof to rear brick structure.

Staff presented images of the property, which consists of an 1867 Greek Revival frame house with a 1914 first floor store addition at the front of the lot and a 1921 brick garage across the back of the lot. The owners have been in the process of rehabilitating the front building by installing insulated windows to match the original muntin profile, removing artificial siding and re-cladding the exterior in cedar clapboards. The current proposal involves work on both the house and former garage space.

Proposed changes to the main house include replacing the non-original concrete staircase to the second floor with a balcony, reintroducing 2 double hung windows at the raised basement level, and installing a trellis over the each window header to support a natural, climbing-vine sun shade.

The former garage building is now living space. The current proposal is to replace the existing roof with a green roof and gardens, construct a rooftop head house and sunroom, and install a series of solar panels along the front edge of the roof, directly behind the parapet. A portion of the brick garage's front wall will be reconstructed above the overhead door, from the lintel to top of the parapet wall with a stepped edge over the center bay.

Ms. Goodwin suggested the owners examine the brackets supporting the 2nd-floor balcony to ensure they can handle the proper load.

Ms. Perrault asked about the solar panels and general scope of work on the garage. The owners said they planned to install radiant heat in the garage building that would be powered by the rooftop solar panels. Masonry repairs would be limited to the center bay and parapet. The garage door was rebuilt last year.

Ms. Myers pointed out that the proposed changes required the approval of the Board of Zoning Appeals, which staff confirmed. The owners stated that the nature of the variance was for an increase to the allowable FAR.

Ms. Tuffy asked what the roofing material for the stairwell head house would be and the owners stated that it would be glass in order to allow natural sunlight into the living space below.

Multiple letters of support from abutting property owners were submitted to the Commission for their review as part of the hearing.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Hsiao said he felt this was an ambitious project and commended the owners on their proposal. Hsiao said the vocabulary of the rooftop addition was whimsical, and that the current design reads as two different buildings. He suggested the owners create a visual rendering of what the work will look like using a photograph of the SE view from across the street. This could be helpful to see how the current design works and perhaps help them create more stylistic ties between the main house, the connecting link, and the rear building. This could be accomplished through the use of similar window glazing patterns, matching railing balusters, and repeating the roof shape of the main house on the garage head house.

The owners said they were aiming for an industrial look on the garage to preserve the more utilitarian feel of the original structure. The use of the horizontal cable rail allowed the most light onto the roof garden while remaining a visual transparency. The windows in both buildings would be finished in the same paint color to help unify the two structures. Exterior paint color was discussed and Ms. Tuffy suggested the owners consider paint consultation with Historical Commission staff.

Ms. Goodwin commended the owners on their energy conscious design and stated that the project would be a great improvement to the once destitute garage building.

Mr. Hsiao moved to accept the application as submitted with the following condition:

- Consider integrating design details between the main house and garage building to further unify the two buildings

Ms. Perrault seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3849: 29 Ware Street, by Claus de Bansa. Add window shutters and alter basement windows.

Staff showed images of the property, which is the end unit in an 1886 brick row house development designed by architects Joseph and William Richards. The side elevation faces Broadway, making all of the proposed work publicly visible. The proposal calls for the addition of 2 windows at the basement level on the Ware Street bay, 1 basement-level window in the easternmost bay on the Broadway façade, and the addition of window shutters throughout the property's exterior.

The new windows to be 2-over-2 Marvin wood double hung windows with simulated divided lites, painted black to match the existing windows. Each window will be set into a window well to match the existing basement windows.

The Commission noted that the framing elements and window headers of the proposed windows on Ware Street did not align with the existing windows. They also questioned why the new windows did

not have curved brick lintels to match the existing window. The architect said there is a structural beam behind the masonry that dictated lowering the height of the new window headers.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the glass in the existing bay window was curved. The architect said that the existing glass was, but that the replacement windows will not have curved glass. He thought the unmatched window heights felt odd and, although he understood the technical challenges that are involved, suggested creating a recessed pocket on the interior in order to raise the new window headers up to match. The architect said the interior framing runs parallel to Ware Street. Ms. Goodwin also suggested cutting back and reframing to accommodate the new, full-height window openings. An increase in height of about 2 brick courses was thought to be an appropriate adjustment, bringing the headers up to the water table and using a steel lintel to support the opening.

The proposed window shutters are louvered, structural-grade PVC in a black finish by Atlantic Premium Shutters.

The Commission asked staff if there were other examples of row houses with shutters in the district. Ms. Tuffy said that there were similar brick row houses, but that she could not immediately recall anything other than sporadic, unit-by-unit shutter installation on those other properties. Ms. Goodwin asked whether the architect had seen shutters designed with a faux tilt rod – a bar that runs vertically down the center of the shutter and would have traditionally been used to operate the louvers. Ms. Mahoney said she had not considered that specific detail.

When discussing the proposal to install shutters on all three facades of the property, it was determined that existing shutter hardware is only present on the Broadway elevation and the rear elevation, but not on Ware Street. It was thought that, because Broadway would have always been a highly traveled street, it would make sense to have shutters over those windows to block out roadway dust and noise. Ware Street is a more private, less traveled street.

The owner said he liked the look of window shutters and wanted a high quality substitute material rather than wood since he had concerns about the maintenance of wood. The architect, when asked by the Commission about potential for fading due to UV exposure and weathering, said she had used this product on a previous project and it has not faded yet – even on the South Elevation – in the 7-8 years since their installation.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application with the following conditions:

Basement Windows

- match the height of the new window headers up to the underside of the masonry belt course

Shutters

- select a shutter type that could possibly be operable
- eliminate the shutters proposed for the Ware Street elevation since, unlike on the Broadway elevation, there is no existing hardware to suggest shutters were ever installed on that side of the building

Ms. Perrault seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3817 (amendment): 109 Inman Street, by Inman Development, LLC. Proposed window and door alterations, rear roof deck and site work.

Staff reviewed the previous scope of work to convert an 1871 Mansard into a 5-unit condominium building. That application was approved by the Commission at an earlier public hearing. The current application was submitted to request alterations to the previous plans including relocation and removal of windows, changing window opening sizes, and converting a window opening to a doorway.

In reviewing the altered plans for the Left (South) Elevation, Ms. Goodwin asked why Option 2 showed raised sill heights. Mr. Powell said the raised sills would accommodate additional counter space along the kitchen wall. Ms. Pauli felt that the full-height windows shown on the Left (South) Elevation – Option 1 were preferable to Option 2. Mr. Hsiao agreed, but added that he would prefer if the windows could remain in their current location.

Ms. Perrault asked if the rear ell of the building is publicly visible. Ms. Tuffy said that it was not, due to the proximity of 107-1/2 Inman at the rear of the lot, and the placement of the adjacent building at 111 Inman.

Ms. Goodwin asked how the developer had decided to finish the primary elevation, following the Commission's earlier comments regarding the potential for restoring window bay details. Mr. Powell said they were in the process of removing the artificial siding and that there were panel details intact on the window bay that could be repaired or replicated.

Mr. Powell said that the proposed doorway on the right side of the building, set back from the front wall, would be located in a first floor bedroom and used to access a private deck. For both privacy and security concerns, he was proposing a window with only ¾-glass rather than a French door. Mr. Hsiao suggested making all of the exterior doors the same for a more consistent approach.

A perimeter fence has been discussed between the developer and the adjacent property owners on Inman Street. Rather than a 6-foot fence around the rear and side elevations, staff had suggested finding an acceptable point along the side elevations to transition the 6-foot fence down to a shorter, 4-foot fence. Mr. Powell would like to install a 4-foot open picket fence at the front of the property, next to the sidewalk. Ms. Goodwin suggested continuing the 4-foot open picket fence around the corners to the sides of the property to create a return.

Mr. Hsiao noted that the site has two properties from different time frames on the same lot and multiple areas where hand rails, deck rails and fencing are being proposed. He encouraged the developer to try to simplify these elements and create a unity in their design to prevent a complexity of competing details. The simpler these details could be, the better it would serve the overall design. He also agreed with Ms. Goodwin about the preference for a 4-foot open picket perimeter fence and thought that the transitional height fence is a riskier design, especially if it was only proposed along one property line. It was thought that the fence and railing styles should match one another, rather than compete. Ms. Perrault agreed that the design should be kept as simple as possible. Ms. Myers clarified that the emphasis should be on uniformity of the design rather than run the risk of over-simplification.

Ms. Perrault asked what the parking setup would be. Mr. Powell said they would be repaving the existing driveway.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the changes submitted in the current application with the following conditions:

- The goal of the developer should be to take a more consistent approach to design elements such as window scale, window patterning, handrail and fence styles.
- Uniform doors throughout the building are preferable.

Ms. Pauli seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3855: 107-115 Prospect Street, by Whole Foods Market. Erect a metal-frame and glass wind screen under existing doorway canopy.

An application was received to install a wind break in front of the existing main entrance to the grocery store, within the dimensions of the existing overhead canopy. The metal and glass enclosure is a Kawneer system that will be independent of the building and could be dismantled in the future.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Ms. Perrault moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Minutes

Ms. Perrault moved to approve the minutes of the April meeting. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 5/2/11

Greg Hyde	117 Amory Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Andrew Shinn	117 Amory Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Leslie Mahoney	architect, 29 Ware Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Travis Powell	45 Sudbury Road, Weston, MA 02493
Claus de Bansa	29 Ware Street, Cambridge, MA 02138