

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

APPROVED AT THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2016 HEARING

Monday, May 2, 2016, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl. Meeting Room, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Lestra Litchfield and Sue-Ellen Myers, *Members*; Margaret McMahon and Charles Redmon, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; and Monika Pauli, *Member*

Staff present: Samantha Paull and Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Lestra Litchfield, Commissioner, assumed the role of chair, as the Chair and Vice Chair were absent. She called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. She reviewed the agenda as well as meeting procedures. She designated all present would be voting.

Ms. Samantha Paull, staff, noted that *MC-4958: 1385 Cambridge Street, by Weinman Properties. Exterior renovation and alter storefront* had withdrawn their application.

MC-4944 (continued): 104-106 Amory Street, by 104-106 Amory Road LLC. Alter exterior, construct third story addition, and construct new dwelling in rear.

Ms. Samantha Paull, staff, gave an overview of the structure's history and a brief recap of the previous proposal.

Mr. Mark Boyes-Watson, architect for the project, introduced himself and the owner, Mr. Ara Barsoumia. Mr. Boyes-Watson outlined the changes from the previous plan to the existing and noted that they worked to reduce the impact of shadows. He added that the proposal included alterations to the main historic structure's ell and enlarged the third floor roof deck access to allow for three decks. Mr. Boyes-Watson noted that the shutters were removed from the plan.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commissioner, asked what exterior material was proposed for the new building. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they were hoping to use flush clapboards with no joint lines, to help keep the mid-block structure calm.

Ms. Litchfield asked what material was proposed for the roof. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they were looking at a standing seam metal roof, but Mr. Barsoumia was hoping to use copper.

Ms. Litchfield asked what material was proposed for the foundation. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they were hoping to use concrete as it was pushed down low to the ground, where it was visible they were considering using stucco.

Ms. Litchfield asked what design was proposed for the decks on the top floor. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that the railings were designed to be more solid as to mask clutter from the residents; he added that they

needed 42 inch railings, but were open to looking at doing something more visually light and open. Ms. Litchfield said as proposed they looked heavy and less like a cupola than in the previous design.

Mr. Redmon asked what the railings of the new mid-block structure would be. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they were looking at using a wire system. He noted that they had also considered using glass but were concerned that it would look too modern. Ms. Litchfield recommended using something open for both structures.

Ms. Litchfield asked for questions from the public.

Mr. Samir, abutter at 110 Amory Street, asked Mr. Boyes-Watson to clarify what he meant by no foundation. Mr. Boyes-Watson responded that the mod-block structure would be situated close to the ground without a raised foundation to help it disappear. He added that the front structure's foundation would remain. Mr. Samir asked how deep the basement was and if there was living space. Mr. Boyes-Watson responded that it would be living space.

Ms. Jackie Stein, abutter 105 Amory Street, asked if the penthouse would affect shadows across the street. Mr. Boyes-Watson directed her to the shadow study and noted that with the 15 to 20 foot setback from the edge of the roof, it would have little to no impact on the neighboring structures as the neighboring three-family structures shadowed most of the block. Ms. Stein asked if this would add to the parking problem on the street. Mr. Boyes-Watson responded that they were provided three (3) off-street parking spaces. Ms. Stein asked how construction would impact parking. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they were hoping to use only one space for the duration of the project. Ms. Stein expressed concern with the dumpster being emptied regularly. Mr. Ari replied that he would work to prevent the problems that the neighborhood experienced with the previous owner's dumpsters.

Mr. Ben Walker, abutter at 98 Amory St, asked how the architect measured the height of the 3-deckers in the area. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that they used their knowledge of 3-deckers in the area. Mr. Walker replied that his building was actually 35 feet versus the 39.5 feet that was noted in your plans. Ms. Corrine Train, abutter at 98 Amory St #3, asked if the error impacted the shadow study. Mr. Tobias showed the shadow study and noted that the shadows would not substantially change for the four (4) foot height difference.

Ms. Laura Dial, abutter at 110 Amory St, asked if the 3rd floor space served as open space for zoning purposes or if it was optional. Mr. Boxes-Watson replied that it did not serve a zoning purpose but was required for access to the decks.

Mr. Mike Lary, abutter at 97 Amory St, asked if the project as proposed conformed to current zoning. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied yes. Mr. Lary asked if the project included efforts to mitigate drainage. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that the project is required to mitigate all stormwater on site. Mr. Lary asked how that would be achieved. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that a civil engineer would draw up a plan and added that many times it was achieved with buried tanks either through a drywall or a large tank dependent upon soil conditions. Mr. Ari noted that they would be reducing the existing pavement in the backyard.

Mr. Daniel Meager, abutter at 108 Amory Street, asked if the copper roof would be reflective. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that while copper roofs start out shiny, they dull quickly and age into a green patina. Ms. Litchfield added that it only takes a few weeks to dull.

Mr. Peter Hawkins, abutter 112 Amory St, asked if the windows were all necessary on the cupola for access to the roof decks. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied no.

Ms. Litchfield asked if there were any more questions from the public. She said

Mr. Lary added that he felt like the structure would cast a shadow at 7:30am across the street.

Mr. Hawkins said he would like to find a good way to achieve privacy for the abutting 3-deckers from the roof decks. He expressed his concern about the space being turned into living space or used as an office. Ms. Litchfield said that the Windows lightened the structure's massing visually and noted that there was mechanical equipment planned for the area which would prevent the space from being used as living space. Mr. Boyes-Watson confirmed that the space would not be substantial enough for an office.

Ms. Corrine Tran, abutter at 98 Amory Street, asked if the mechanical equipment could be added to the basement. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied that the interior space was best utilized when it was not located in the basement, and that feeding lines down from the attic was easier than feeding them up from the basement. Ms. Tran said it didn't sound like it was necessary. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied no, but it would only reduce the space by three (3) feet. Ms. Litchfield asked if the mechanicals could all be added in the basement instead. Mr. Ari said yes but you'd lose at least 20 sqft per unit because of the returns and duct work coming up from the basement. Mr. Walker said it would be helpful if the roof decks were removed, then the stairs would go away and the space could be smaller for just the equipment. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied it would only reduce the space about six (6) inches in height.

Ms. Stein said she preferred a picket fence to a chain link. Mr. Ari said he was happy to work on that.

Mr. Don Foote expressed concern over the efficiency of mechanicals in the basement pushing conditioned air up to the third floor.

Mr. Daniel Leiber, neighbor at 108 Amory Street, said that he was there representing the building. He expressed concern over the modern character of the mid-block structure and felt it was out of character with the area. He said that the abutters would appreciate open greenspace instead of the mid-block building, which was part of the reason for the clerestory third floor addition.

Mr. Brian Larabee, neighbor at 98 Amory Street, said that he was excited that the building had sold and was hopeful for a positive project. He expressed concern about site management and the clerestory addition; nothing that it seemed to be an afterthought versus being integrated into the building.

Mr. Mike ____, neighbor at 97 Amory Street, said that he felt that the back building was the essence of what was not working with the proposal. He said that infill buildings are problematic. He continued, stating that the proposed clerestory seemed to be dissonant to the current design of the historic structure.

Ms. Laura Dial, neighbor at 110 Amory Street, said she was concerned about the impact of the clerestory third floor addition and its potential shadow impact.

Mr. Ben Walker, expressed concern over the clerestory addition and felt that the drawings were inaccurate. Mr. Mike agreed.

Mr. Samir said that it would be nice to maximize the greenspace between buildings as much as possible with parking.

Ms. Litchfield asked if there were any more comments from the public, there were none. She closed the public hearing.

Ms. Litchfield said the comments from the previous meeting were still valid, as she expressed the Commission's historical concern over the construction of mid-block houses. She encouraged the abutters who didn't support mid-block infill, to take it up with zoning, as it was more of something that could be tackled with zoning. She continued, saying that from a developer's point of view the idea of a detached home in the city with private greenspace isn't common, she expressed a preference for one large, shared yard versus the two structures, one of which required a clerestory addition for rooftop decks.

Mr. Redmon agreed with Ms. Litchfield that the Commission struggled with mid-block construction and that the issue was not going away. He noted that the Commission's job was to help shape projects to fit in with the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhood. He said that the proposal was improved from the previous proposal, noting that in the new proposal the mid-block structure appeared subservient. He commended them on working to reduce the shadow impact of the mid-block structure. Mr. Redmon added that the addition of a modern structure versus a historic replica was appropriate; noting that it reflected the time in which it was built. He suggested that the applicant model the landscaping and work with abutters on that component of the project.

Ms. Litchfield recommended reducing the height of the solid portion of the railing, and to work with the neighbors on a railing design. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that the railing had potential to be more visually permeable without impacting the views.

Ms. Myers and Ms. McMahon agreed with the other Commissioners.

Ms. Myers made a motion to accept the proposal as submitted with the following conditions, (1) the applicant work with the abutters and staff on creating a more visually open railing; and, (2) the applicant look at adding trees into the landscaping. Mr. Redmon seconded the application. The application was approved 4-0.

MC-4955: 7 Fayette Street, by Jon Arnason. Replace windows and alter window openings.

Ms. Paull showed slides and gave a brief overview of the project.

Mr. Don Foote, contractor for the project, gave an overview of the application. He stated that the property was a two family structure, where the first floor was rented out and the owners occupied the 2nd and 3rd floors. He noted that many windows on the structure had been previously replaced about 15-20 years prior and had started to fail. He said the proposal was to replace the windows with new vinyl, black two over one windows with an interior muntin, preserving the exterior trim details. He added that the proposal included altering four (4) windows located in the bathroom and kitchen, removing the window and thru-wall AC units, repairing the holes, and installing two new skylights on the rear gambrel roof.

Mr. Litchfield asked if the applicant had considered installing simulated divided light windows instead of the interior muntins. Mr. Foote responded that it was discussed but it was not in the budget as it was

about a \$10,000 difference. Mr. Jon Aranson, an owner, added that they felt adding the muntin pattern back in was a better choice versus a one over one product.

Ms. Myers asked if they were proposing to replace the first floor windows in the future. Mr. Aranson replied yes, that they were starting with the second and third floor first then moving to the first. He added that they hoped to remove the vinyl siding in the future. Ms. Myers asked if they were adding central air to both units. Mr. Aranson replied yes.

Mr. Redmon asked if they were replacing the windows on the porch structure. Mr. Foote replied that the porch was currently only enclosed with storms. Mr. Aranson said they were hoping to open the porch back up in the future.

Mr. Redmon said that the Commission would prefer to see the exterior muntins. Ms. Litchfield added that as they were already investing in replacement windows she would advocate for the addition of the exterior muntins, which would be more noticeable when the owner removes at a later date. She added that she was aware of the added cost, and felt that it was a better long term choice.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to reject the application as submitted. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

MC-4957: 56-58 Amory Street, by Johnson Shing & Rebecca Chung. Construct dormer addition, alter exterior, and construct decks.

Ms. Paull showed slides and gave a brief overview of the project.

Ms. Caitlin Kunzle, architect and representative for the project, gave an overview. She introduced the owners who were present. She said the application consisted of constructing a dormer addition, adding two rear decks, and altering the front porch. She noted that the front porch alterations were driven by snow problems and presented the two options.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the applicant had considered snow breaks. Ms. Kunzle replied that it was considered but felt that snow breaks were a last resort as they did not offer a permanent fix of the problem. Ms. Myers expressed concern over the permanent alteration as there was a sibling house next door.

Mr. Redmon asked how they arrived at the size of the rear deck on the second floor. Ms. Kunzle responded it was driven by the existing footprint and the desire to cover the cellar entrance on the rear. Ms. Litchfield expressed concern with the darkening impact it would have to the first floor. Mr. Johnson Shing, an owner, said the windows are for a bedroom and as the neighbors were so close, the shades were frequently closed on the interior.

Mr. Redmon asked where the doors for accessing the deck on the second floor were located. Ms. Kunzle replied that they were located in the bump out.

Michael Richards, neighbor at 25 Highland Ave, said that snow bars were very helpful at addressing snow fall issues.

Mr. Redmon suggested the owner talk with a slate roofer about the snow fall issue. Ms. Litchfield concurred and said she was concerned with losing the historic porch for something that happened a few times a year. Ms. Kunzle offered a third option which preserved much of the historic fabric, historic columns, and extended the stairs and shed roof to the sides. The Commissioners agreed this was the best option. Mr. Redmon said that the rear deck seemed large and felt that it would reduce the massive feel to eliminate the sides and not have the deck extend the full width of the house. He supported the 3rd floor addition. Ms. Litchfield agreed and recommended that the applicant work with staff to add a small shed roof overhang over the rear doors if it was needed.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to accept the proposal as submitted with the following conditions: the 3rd design option for the front porch and narrow the deck on the rear elevation to the width of the ell. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

MC-4960: 20 Greenough Avenue, by James & Colleen Kochman. Alter window openings, remove chimneys, and alter exterior.

Ms. Paull showed slides and gave an overview of the structure and proposal.

Mr. James Kochman, an owner, outlined the proposal. He said the proposal was to remove the small window on the second floor in the kitchen, remove the chimney, add skylights, enclose a roof deck, and install a pair of windows on the rear elevation. He noted that this would allow for them to have additional useable space. He mentioned that they were looking into adding a fire escape on the rear elevation as well.

Mr. Redmon asked why the owner was proposing to remove the chimney. Mr. Kochman replied that they were hoping to gain the interior space, which measured approximately three (3) feet by five (5) feet. Ms. McMahon lamented the loss of the chimney.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to reject the application as proposed because the loss of the chimney represented a loss of historic fabric. He noted that the other components of the project did not represent a loss of character or fabric. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

MC-4961: 27-29 Highland Avenue, by Goodwin Highland, LLC. Alter window openings.

Ms. Paull showed slides and gave an overview of the structure and proposal.

Mr. Kevin Gorham, owner, gave an overview of the project. He said he was hoping to save the chimney, but had to rework the interior plan to achieve that, which was the reason behind his proposal to alter the windows on the dormers. He continued that the windows would be altered to allow countertops and a bathroom to be constructed, on the left elevation two windows would shrink and on the right elevation, one would shrink. He said that after staff had met with him to discuss the project, he discovered the original siding and some other historic details that he intends to preserve, like the original wood windows to bring the structure back to its former glory.

Ms. Litchfield asked if he could clarify which windows he was proposing to alter. Mr. Gorham said the dormer windows, one on the main house's left elevation and on the rear for the fire escape. Ms. Litchfield

asked if he considered reducing the size of all three (3) windows on each dormer to maintain consistency. Mr. Gorham replied he'd be happy to. Mr. Jim Kochman added that shortening all three (3) windows would help to maintain the symmetry.

Ms. Myers asked staff if the dormers were original. Ms. Paull replied that she was not certain, if they weren't original they were still very early as they had wood windows that were in good shape.

Ms. Litchfield asked if everything was proposed to be replaced if the window was shortened. Mr. Gorham replied yes. Ms. Litchfield asked what windows were being proposed. Mr. Gorham replied Pella Architect Series. Mr. Redmon asked if he would consider retaining the historic full frame and creating an infill panel in the lower portion as it would keep the character. Mr. Gorham said he was happy to consider it.

Ms. McMahon commended him on the restoration of the siding. Mr. Gorham noted that it was in excellent condition but that the shingles needed to be replaced on the top floor.

Mr. Mike Richards, neighbor at 25 Highland Ave, said he noticed extensive renovations in the area and was happy that the owner wasn't proposing to rip everything out. Mr. Gorham said he wanted to keep as much as possible. Mr. Richards said it sounded nice and looked like the project would be an improvement.

Mr. Redmon said that the goal was to maintain the historic trim so the framing would be the same size, but the applicant would be permitted to install an infill panel under the shortened window. He added that all windows on each elevation should be consistent. Mr. Gorham said he would prefer to shorten all three windows on the left elevation and use an infill panel on the right elevation.

Ms. Myers made a motion to approve the application as submitted with the recommendation to create uniformity in the dormer window alterations by using infill panels consistently across the three windows on the left elevation and to use an infill panel to enclose the window on the right elevation while retaining the historic trim details. Ms. Litchfield noted that they should retain panels across all windows on the left elevation for consistency. Ms. Myers accepted the amendment. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Redmond seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

Jon Aranson	Owner	7 Fayette Street
Ara Barsoumia	Owner	104 Amory Street
Levi Tofias	Architect	30 Bow Street, Somerville
Johnson Shing	58 Amory Street	58 Amory Street
Caitlin Kunzle	Architect/Owner Rep	89 Newton St, Unit 1R, Somerville
Peter & Louise Hawkins	Abutter	112 Amory St, #2
Laura Dayal	Abutter	110 Amory Street
Samir Dayal	Abutter	110 Amory Street
Kevin Gorham	Owner	27-29 Highland Ave
Daniel and Rachel Lieber	Abutters	108 Amory Street, #3
Rebecca Chung	Owner	58 Amory Street
Jim Kochman	Owner	20 Greenough Avenue
Brian Laivee	Abutter	98 Amory Street
Corinne Trann	Abutter	98 Amory Street
Ben Walker	Abutter	98 Amory Street
Michael Richards	Abutter	25 Highland Ave

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.