

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, August 2, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*

Absent: Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Margaret McMahon, *Alternat*

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sara Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/MCAugust2>.

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 864 1271 2329.

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

Case MC-6225: 14-16 Myrtle Avenue, by Lilly Lee. Alter front entry porch and basement windows.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the house.

Mr. Jookun Lim, the applicant's representative, explained the proposal to reconstruct the front entry with a second floor balcony and construct window wells on the right side of the house.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked if Mr. Lim is proposing one continuous window well or separate window wells. Mr. Lim replied he discussed it with Ranjit, the Head of Inspectional Services, and Ranjit recommended separate window wells as they are less controversial.

Commission member Monika Pauli asked if he is changing the siding. Mr. Lim replied no.

No public questions or comments

Commission Comments

Ms. Pauli said the proposal looks fine especially if it's all wood. Mr. Lim responded that it is.

Commission member Charles Redmon said he had no comment and moved to approve the proposal as presented. Ms. Pauli seconded it, and the motion passed 3-0.

Case MC-6226: 51 Amory Street, by Christian Galvao. Alter front porch.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the Queen Anne style "Swiss cottage" house built in 1880.

Mr. Christian Galvao, the applicant, presented his proposal to construct a new entrance with mudroom along with altering the roof over the front bay and porch.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked for clarification on the front steps, expressing concern that stepping down immediately upon exiting the door could be problematic. Mr. Galvao replied he could move the

step. Mr. Redmon also asked about the transition. Mr. Galvao said there is one tread before you step down. Ms. Pauli conjectured the distance to the sidewalk might have been reduced over the years.

Mr. Redmon asked about handrails. Mr. Galvao answered that he was told they are not required but would consider installing a wood handrail.

Mr. Redmon asked about the gutters. Mr. Galvao responded that he is not adding gutters, that water does not flow onto the public path, that the existing gutters seem to be fine. Mr. Redmon noted there could potentially be staining on the house. Mr. Galvao agreed.

Mr. Redmon asked about the exterior color. Mr. Galvao said he would like to paint a similar color but more maroon with the window frames a little darker.

Ms. Pauli asked about the vertical siding. Mr. Galvao replied that the siding will be sanded and repainted.

No Public Question and Comment

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon stated that the proposed mudroom was a foreign shape that appears somewhat odd, some of the house's details are lost. Is that what you want to achieve. Mr. Galvao said he does want to simplify it but wants to respect the character of the house. Mr. Redmon asked about the pitch of the new roof. Mr. Galvao answered it will be the same pitch as the house.

Mr. Hsiao expressed concern over the practicality of the step right outside of the door, most people don't expect a step down as they exit.

The porch does extend the relationship of the whole house since it also captures the bay.

Have you looked at other options that keep the Houses on the street have more extensive porches. The insertion of the mudroom introduces an added complexity. Mr. Galvao said he did look at the other options. He likes the bay window being an independent element. He did look at other houses and saw other alternatives but didn't think they were completely successful. He didn't think the house on St. Mary was successful. He looked at materials that tied in with the existing materials of the house and fence.

Ms. Pauli said to extend the granite steps further out. She said the proposal is simple but it's competing with the house. it would be good to further simplify this new element, possibly simplify the roof line, eliminate the wingwall. There must be a way to add volume that would look a little more harmonious.

Mr. Redmon agreed with Ms. Pauli - make the entrance flush with walkway and then step down, creating a transition space, or lower the floor which is probably easier.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal and recommended consideration of modifications that were discussed including lowering the floor, extending the granite steps forward to the sidewalk to provide more maneuverability. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed, 3-0.

Case MC-6227: 99 Inman Street, by Santino Ferrante. Construct new exterior door.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property.

Mr. Santino Ferrante, the applicant, explained the proposal and showed a picture of a similar basement entrance at 113 Inman Street.

Commission Questions

Ms. Crosbie asked if this location was the only option. Mr. Ferrante replied yes and felt that that its location 20 feet back from the street would be okay and that it is only a service entrance.

Ms. Pauli asked how wide is the proposed door. Mr. Ferrante answered 30 inches.

Mr. Redmon asked about the front porch noting that the drawings don't reflect what is there now. Mr. Ferrante stated that they were old drawings but just wanted to use them to show the proposed basement entrance.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the basement entrance will look just like 113 Inman Street. Mr. Ferrante answered no, that they will need a railing on the left side and he wants it to be appear less visible, he can't figure out what to use instead of metal railings. And he doesn't think the concrete has to be so visually apparent and he'd like to use brick for the retaining wall going down to the basement.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the chain link fence. Mr. Ferrante said he wasn't sure who it belonged to. Mr. Hsiao said it would be good to know in order to figure out the railings because it could play into how he handles the railings.

No Public Questions or Comments

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon what is the paving in front of stairs in the front of the house. Mr. Ferrante answered grass because of the construction but could possibly put in brick. Redmon suggested to bring the brick to the stair in back and then go down the steps.

Mr. Hsiao agreed stating that the existing grass will be gone with the construction and paving would be necessary and the continuation of the brick would be logical. Mr. Hsiao suggested a simple railing on the wall ff you don't own the chain link fence. There won't be any grass left anyway.

Mr. Redmon suggested just using brick all the way around the house to the steps in rear.

Mr. Ferrante asked if he should remove the step-up. Mr. Redmon said the step-up is okay.

Ms. Pauli suggested stepping stones. There are drainage issues to consider.

Mr. Hsiao recommended just thinking through the design, starting at the steps.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal and recommended considering what kind of paving to use and how it joins the wall and handrail, and recommended staff review. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed, 3-0.

Case MC-6112: 12 Fayette Street, by 12 Fayette Street Ventures LLC. Confirm final approved drawing set and findings for Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Crosbie summarized the appeal and the decision letter by the Cambridge Historical Commission.

Mr. Sean Hope, one of the applicants, asked that since the submitted drawings reflect the last Architects Committee meeting with no changes, do they need to go through a presentation. Ms. Crosbie replied yes for full clarity on what is being proposed.

Ms. Alison Hammer, the architect for the applicants, presented the drawings including the alterations to the existing house and new house that consists of an L-shaped plan with basement, two stories, penthouse with bedroom suite, with future review of materials, paint colors, trellis details by staff. Ms. Hammer also presented the landscape plan and noted they hope to discuss some of the details with abutters.

Commission Questions

Ms. Pauli asked if the square footage hasn't changed. Ms. Hammer confirmed it has not.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the landscape plan, noting the the paved area in the back and rear patio don't reflect the latest layout. Ms. Hammer replied that was correct, the landscape plan has to be updated to reflect that. She showed the floor plans with the reduced deck.

Mr. Redmon asked who will be on site to supervise the tree health. Mr. Collins responded that Mr. Dan Kathard is the arborist who will be on site while the excavation work is done. Mr. Redmon asked if he has been on the site and reviewed their proposal. Mr. Collins said yes. Mr. Redmon asked if the arborist is comfortable with what they are doing. Mr. Collins replied yes he is, he's recommended root stabilization,

Ms. Pauli asked about the rear deck and its potential impact on the trees, it looks close to the trees. Mr. Collins said the arborist will be present during the excavation for the footings. Mr. Hsiao asked if the deck will be reconsidered if there is a potential negative impact. Mr. Collins said yes, the trees take precedence. Ms. Hammer clarified that the footings for a deck are very different from footings for a house, only 2 footings that won't take up much real estate. Mr. Collins noted that other options can be considered if it's determined to be detrimental to the tree roots, such as a deck attached to the house, not free standing.

Public Question/Comment

Amy Melzer of 45 Antrim Street stated that the Commission has the authority to reduce the project by 30% and consider the impact on the district as a whole, otherwise they are setting a precedent, what is the argument for not reducing the size of this project. Ms. Melzer referred to the letter read into the record and that 80 residents signed it. She also stated that each Commission member should explain the impact of their decision. If you do reduce the size, you will be taking the concerns of the neighbors seriously.

Heidi Samoljuk of 37 Antrim Street stated that when Amy mentioned how many people signed the letter to the Commission, there was audio interference and would like Amy to state how many people supported the letter. Ms. Melzer stated that 80 residents signed the letter.

Ms. Crosbie read out the three letters that were submitted opposing the proposed project with its current square footage.

Commission Comments

Ms. Pauli asked for clarification on zoning and the Commission's authority. Ms. Crosbie stated that the Commission can require a reduction of up to 30% but the district order is not clear if that pertains to the whole property or just the proposed new construction, it is a gray area.

Mr. Hope mentioned that it's important to note this lot allows five dwelling units, and that in this case far less is being proposed, and they are still being accused of building too much. He also stated that the impact of the two structures still allows for air and green space. He also noted that's important to know the abutter on the left had opposed a connected addition.

Mr. Redmon commented that the shadow drawings show that this site is less impactful than other infill projects in the neighborhood where buildings have been built behind other buildings.

Mr. Hsiao went over the net reduction that has occurred over the previous reviews asking for a final percentage of reduction.

Mr. Redmon said the shadow drawings are very telling of the neighborhood in general, there's a collection of infill buildings similar in bulk to the proposed building. And the proposed building is not inconsistent with what has previously been allowed in the neighborhood. As to other comments, he responded that many fall out of the Commission's purview, including the number of housing units. Preserving trees is a concern and the applicant has engaged with an arborist to monitor tree health. The idea of "excessive or unprecedented infill" comes down to individual ideas of what constitutes excessive infill.

Ms. Pauli said she wished that "excessive infill" was better defined. Ms. Burks said it's relative to what is being proposed. Ms. Burks also said that these findings of fact can be included in the motion and suggested referring to the goals of the district.

Ms. Hammer answered the previous question regarding reduction in square footage, and it comes to a 15% reduction.

Mr. Hsiao said he appreciates the feedback that this project has garnered, it is a challenging environment with competing interests, the Commission's role is to mitigate impacts. Our tools are based on the limitations on what we're charged with. They have a right to build something much denser and they have reduced the square footage and it might never be enough to satisfy the neighbors' concerns, there are a multitude of concerns to take into considerations.

Mr. Redmon referred to guidelines and the five general goals stating the Commission has responded to each, and the proposed submission does not violate any of these goals - the proposed scale and massing is not inconsistent with what has been constructed. Mr. Redmon reiterated that it did not appear to be unprecedented or excessive infill.

Ms. Crosbie noted the location within the setbacks as part of the findings. Mr. Redmon concurred and added that open space is being retained. Mr. Hsiao added that the placement of the proposed structure preserves open areas for adjacent properties.

Mr. Hsiao also noted that the landscape approach has taken into consideration all the mitigating factors regarding tree health, drainage, green space which is significant.

Ms. Crosbie noted the preservation of the existing historic house as part of the findings.

Ms. Burks said to make note of the date of the plans, and that the landscape plan has not been updated yet but will be. Details including materials, trellis, window specs and trim to be delegated to staff.

Ms. Pauli stated that if any changes occur during construction with respect to the trees that CHC staff is consulted.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal according to the findings of fact and conditions that were discussed. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed, 3-0.

Minutes for the June 7, 2021 hearing Committee meeting was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on August 2, 2021

Panelists:

Alison Hammer, architect
 Sean Hope, applicant
 Scott Zink, applicant
 Andrew Collins, applicant
 Christian Galvao
 Santino Ferrante
 Jookun Lim
 Lilly Lee?

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51 Amory Street
 99 Inman Street
 14-16 Myrtle Avenue

Attendees:

Sue Butler
 Howard Blum
 Gao-wen Shao
 Hallie Speight
 Allen Speight
 Hugh Russell
 Amy Meltzer
 Philip MacArthur
 Heidi Samojluk
 Regina Barzilay

14 Clinton Street
 11 Fayette Street
 9 Fayette Street
 33 Antrim Street
 33 Antrim Street
 1 Corliss Place
 45 Antrim Street
 45 Antrim Street
 33 Antrim Street
 39 Antrim Street