

Approved 8/10/09

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

**Monday, June 8, 2009 at 6:00PM, Lombardi Building, 831 Massachusetts Ave.,
basement conference room**

**Members present: Bill King, Robert Banker, Deborah Masterson, Grenelle Scott
Jim Van Sickle, Chair (arrived late)**

Staff present: Paul Trudeau

Members of the Public: See attached list

As acting senior member, Mr. King called the meeting to order at 6:05PM, noting that Mr. Van Sickle would be arriving late. He introduced the Commission, reviewed the meeting procedures, and outlined the agenda for the meeting.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-47: 9 Foster Place, by Rory O'Connor. To replace front steps and construct storage shed.

Mr. King noted that Mr. Van Sickle was an abutter to the property and would have recused himself from hearing the case if he were present.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the property and described the existing stair configuration and streetscape views.

Mr. O'Connor said the existing stairs were in poor condition and he wanted to reduce the stair projection towards the street. He said the new stairs would be constructed of brick to match the foundation of the house, and would have bluestone treads and wrought iron handrails. He said the storage shed would have a cedar shake roof and was to be used for bicycles and a snow blower. A neighbor to the north had requested that the height of the shed be reduced, and he had submitted a revised drawing showing the shed height 10" lower and pulled back further from his neighbor's fence.

Mr. King asked for questions of fact from the Commission.

Ms. Masterson confirmed that there would be steps coming down from both sides of the landing. Mr. O'Connor said that was correct.

Mr. King asked if the shed required a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). Mr. O'Connor said it did. Mr. King advised to not lower the roof pitch of the shed beyond what was being proposed.

Mr. King asked for questions or comments from the public.

Phillip Miller, 10 Foster Place, said Mr. Connor's stair proposal was in response to the tightness of the street, and the new design would make it easier for neighbors to back their cars out.

John Greenup, 65 Sparks St. and record owner of 45 Foster St., said he was in support of the proposal.

Mr. King asked for comments from the Commission.

Ms. Masterson MOVED to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the front stair and shed proposal as submitted. Mr. Banker SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 4-0.

Mr. Van Sickle arrived and assumed the Chair.

HCM-49: 98 Foster Street, by James Connor. To remove clapboards and install fiber cement siding; install metal trim.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the house and described the existing conditions. He said the house currently had vinyl siding. The contractor had removed the vinyl siding on the right wall and found asphalt shingles over the original wood clapboards. The asphalt shingles were removed and the clapboards appeared to be in good condition.

Mr. Connor explained that he had decided to use HardiPlank fiber cement siding on his house because of the lack of maintenance required.

Ms. Masterson asked if there was a sample of the fiber cement material. Michael Portanole, the contractor, presented a sample.

Mr. Banker asked how the fiber cement siding was installed. Mr. Portanole said it was installed just like wood clapboards.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for an explanation of the aluminum trim. Mr. Portanole said the trim had a PVC coating and could easily bend around the window trim. Mr. Van Sickle ~~confirmed that~~ ^{asked if} all of the window trim would be covered. Mr. Portanole said it would, and much of the trim would need to be altered for the installation; the aluminum trim would not be an exact match to the existing window moulding profiles. Mr. Van Sickle asked if the window mouldings would be re-installed. Mr. Portanole said they would not, but the aluminum would be shaped to re-create the profiles.

Ms. Masterson asked why the applicant did not want to work with the existing wood clapboards and trim. Mr. Portanole said because of maintenance and expense.

Mr. Banker asked if the soffits were rotted. Mr. Portanole said they were not, but the aluminum trim could bend around the fascia and soffits boards to match the existing profile.

Ms. Masterson asked if every window would be covered with aluminum trim. Mr. Portanole said they would. He said the house would be stripped down to the sheathing and wrapped in Tyvek before installing the fiber cement siding.

Mr. King said fiber cement siding was still a relatively new building material and he was unsure about the maintenance-free claims. He said it was a hot topic in the preservation community because there was not much precedent to go on. He said the current presentation did not give a good visual representation of how the siding would look once installed. Mr. Portanole said the siding would be staggered to look like wood clapboards.

Mr. King said low-income housing agencies had pitched fiber cement siding to the Cambridge Historical Commission for grant-eligible buildings, but the agencies could not provide information on the longevity of the product or potential problems. Mr. Portanole noted that the HardiPlank brand had a 50 year warranty.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of buildings in Cambridge with fiber cement siding for comparison.

Mr. Portanole said the proposal was for a wood-grained finish on the siding. Mr. Van Sickle said a smooth finish would be more appropriate. Mr. Connor said that was fine.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if there was a possibility of shrinkage in the siding. Mr. Portanole said the HardiPlank manufacturer claimed it would not shrink.

Ms. Masterson asked if the staff position was that the existing clapboards could be restored. Mr. Trudeau said the clapboards appeared serviceable. Mr. Connor said he did not want to have to paint every few years.

Ms. Masterson asked if the fiber cement siding was a fire retardant. Mr. Portanole said he was not sure.

Mr. King said he had heard of sealant products that could be applied over wood, which protected the outside but did not allow the wood to breathe on the inside. He asked if HardiPlank was similar. Mr. Portanole said the Tyvek wrapping would allow the house to breathe on both sides of the siding. Mr. Van Sickle noted that fiber cement siding was installed similar to wood clapboards, which allowed for breathability.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for questions and comments from the public.

Ed Serues, 100 Foster St., said he supported the proposal as submitted.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for comments from the Commission.

Mr. King said the Commission was responsible for preserving the appearance of buildings in the district. He said the fiber cement siding was preferable to vinyl siding, but he was cautious of setting a precedent for other buildings on the street. He said the smooth finish option would be more appropriate.

Mr. Van Sickle agreed, noting that the question of preserving original materials should be reserved for more historic individual buildings. He said he was concerned about the aluminum trim details and wanted more information. Mr. Portalone said the different window casing profiles made it difficult for a consistent trim installation, but the PVC aluminum trim was durable and fastened better. He said he hoped to make all the window casings flat for more consistency, and the trim would project past the clapboards. Mr. King suggested that the trim details be delegated to staff for final review and approval.

Mr. Banker asked Mr. King to elaborate on his concern for precedent. Mr. King said the review for these types of materials was always on a case-by-case basis, and for this proposal he considered the fiber cement siding to be preferable to vinyl.

John Greenup asked if the HardiPlank could be repainted a different color. Mr. Portalone said it could.

Mr. King MOVED to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted, with the condition that the fiber cement siding have a smooth finish and that the details of the aluminum trim installation be delegated to staff for final review and approval. Mr. Banker SECONDED the motion.

Ms. Masterson said she appreciated the Commission's direction on the case, but was not convinced it was the best route.

Mr. Connor noted that many of the original clapboards had already been replaced. Mr. Portalone said it would be difficult to restore the existing clapboards.

Mr. King said he appreciated Ms. Masterson's comments.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for a vote on Mr. King's motion. The motion PASSED 4-1, with Ms. Masterson opposed.

Minutes: 3/9/09

Mr. Banker MOVED to approve the minutes for the 3/9/09 meeting as submitted.
Mr. King SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

There being no further business, Mr. King MOVED to adjourn the meeting. The
motion PASSED 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Trudeau", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Trudeau
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public who signed in for the 6/8/09 Half Crown-Marsh NCD Meeting

George Kent	2 Foster Place
Phillip Miller	350 Third St.
Rory O'Connor	9 Foster Place
Ed Serues	100 Foster St.
Jay Connor	98 Foster St.
John Greenup	65 Sparks St.
Michael Portanole	98 Foster St.