

## **Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission** ***Approved at the June 17, 2017 Meeting***

May 15, 2017 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, William King, Deborah Masterson, Peter Schur and Charles Smith, *Members*

Members absent: Adrian Catalano, *Alternate*

Staff present: Susan Maycock

Members of the Public: see attached list

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Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02pm, gave an overview of the agenda and discussed meeting procedures. He noted that no alternate would need to vote but they could otherwise participate fully.

### **HCM-370: 35 Willard Street, by Scott Zink of 35 Willard St LLC. Construct a six (6) foot tall fence.**

Ms. Susan Maycock, staff, gave an overview of the property and the project. She stated that the applicant had come in March with a proposal for a solid six (6) foot fence that was denied and was returning with a different fence design.

Mr. Scott Zink, owner, said the purpose of the fence was to shield the view of the dilapidated property next door. He presented the new application for a 4 ½ foot solid fence with a 1 ½ foot lattice topper along the south side of the property because the Commission had recommended he alter his March proposal. The gate and solid board fence on the previous proposal along the rear of 35 Willard were also changed to under four (4) feet. He said that the photos submitted showed how the new fence would fit in better with the neighborhood.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the Commissioners had questions for the applicant. Ms. Dortz asked why he was proposing 4 ½ feet instead of 4 feet with 2 feet of lattice. Mr. Zink replied that he thought the proportions looked better with 1 ½ feet of lattice. Mr. King asked about the fence at 31-33 Willard Street and 5-7 Dinsmore Court. Mr. Zink said it is mostly 6 feet and there were three rows of 6 foot fence in line nearby.

Dr. Schur asked if they intended to paint the fence, and Mr. Zink replied that the fence would be painted the color of the trim on the house (BM White Dove). Ms Dillenseger asked if the fence in front of the property would be lower. Mr. Zink confirmed that it would in order to allow light through; the front fence would be a 3 ½ foot picket fence similar to the one on the corner of Brattle and Willard.

Ms. Dortz noted that there is an alleyway from Mt Auburn Street to 35 Willard and wanted to know whether the new fence would block the view through that alley. Mr. Zink said that it would but that the view was not nice.

Mr. Van Sickle said that he had looked at the property and could understand why they had come back for this fence. The property at 35 Willard is hard up against the neighbor's trash cans and poorly kept up building. Almost every other house around has a 6 foot fence. In reviewing the order establishing the district he noted that one of the objectives is to "conserve views through yards and between houses to maintain the pattern of visual layering that characterizes streetscapes in the Neighborhood while respecting the residential privacy of individual properties." Ms. Dortz asked if they could end the fence at the back of the house to preserve the through views. Mr. Zink replied that both neighboring houses were in equally bad shape so any views are not good.

Ms. Maycock asked Mr. Zink to describe for the Commission the offers he has made to the owners of the neighboring building at 185-187 Mt Auburn Street. M. Zink explained that he has offered to rebuild and paint their deteriorating decks because they look dangerous and new decks would benefit the neighborhood. He said he is making some progress on these offers, but the first time he offered they told him flat "no." Ms. Dortz asked if he would keep working with the father and son next door if the fence goes up. Mr. Zink said that he would.

Mr. King stated that the district guidelines actually talk about trash cans and other fixtures whose location may not otherwise be practically screened from public view, and that this provision would allow this exemption to the 4 foot fence rule. Ms. Masterson was concerned with consistency since the commission wanted the 6 foot fence across the street taken down to 4 feet. Mr. King said that the provision for visual layering and the ability to see that layering is designed to protect views that are nice. The flexibility to screen out unattractive layering, such as large compressors, is also important. He thought that there is a special issue here, so he was in favor of the fence as submitted. Ms. Dillenseger noted that the trash can would still be visible from the street.

Mr. King made a motion to approve the fence as submitted.

Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 3 (Mr. King, Mr. Smith, Dr. Schur) in favor and 2 (Ms. Masterson and Ms. Dillenseger) against.

**HCM-375: 13 Hilliard Street, by Hilliard Cambridge Investment LLC. Exterior renovation of house including windows, clapboards, and new egress door.**

Ms. Maycock presented an overview of the property's history and the project.

The owners Michael Kelly and Dan Adelson of ADCO Realty asked their architect Mark Boyes-Watson to present the project. Mr. Boyes-Watson began by pointing out that the house currently has three units and that the general condition is "pretty ropy" (poor). They are planning to make it a two-family house and stay within the current envelope. The configuration of the units, one in front and one in back, would be more like town houses. Most of the changes will be in the back and on the left side; they have tried to limit any changes facing Hilliard Street. The project will need a Special Permit from the BZA as well as HCMNCD approval.

He showed slides of the current condition of the property, pointing out the driveway that also goes to 11½ Hilliard and the trellis that runs between 13 and 15 Hilliard. He stated that the retaining wall and landscape along Hilliard were very important to the previous owners (Iten and De Coursey Fales) and that the project will work to retain the look of the current landscaping as much as possible. At the end of the

project they anticipate that the house should look very similar to what it is now, except that it won't be falling down and that the windows won't be a mixture of eras and styles.

Mr. Boyes-Watson then compared photos of the existing and proposed building, looking at each elevation. Beginning with the south elevation facing Hilliard Street, the only changes are to the windows on the later shed dormer. The new dormer windows will be taller and similar to the new windows in the rest of the house. The two chimneys will remain.

Most of the changes on the east elevation are at the very back where a door and two windows on the first floor will be removed. They are keeping the single main door but would like to be able to use the existing deck above front door so they are proposing to add an 8" high metal railing for code compliance.

The rear or north elevation is not visible from any street. Windows and new French doors with sidelights will be added in place of an existing door.

On the west elevation they are adding a door in place of a window, changing the layout of some of the windows, and rebuilding the existing dormer.

Mr. Van Sickle wanted to clarify what could be seen from the public way: nothing on the north or east elevations and very little on the west elevation.

In response to a question, Mr. Boyes-Watson said that all existing fences will stay but that the fence between 13 and 15 which belongs to Pebble Gifford is in poor condition and will be rebuilt. The fence along the driveway is on the neighbor's property and is about three years old.

Mr. Van Sickle questioned the proposed six over one windows, and Mr. Boyes-Watson said that he would rather go back to six over six windows throughout. Ms. Maycock agreed that six over six would be more appropriate for the period of the house. Mr. Van Sickle asked if any of the windows can be saved but was told no because of deterioration from water damage. Mr. Boyes-Watson described the new windows as wood with insulated glass and true divided lights<sup>1</sup>.

Ms. Dillenseger asked if the basement windows would be replaced or altered. Mr. Boyes-Watson replied no.

Ms. Masterson asked which façade needs zoning relief. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that it is on the side facing 15 Hilliard where there is not enough setback. He said that the owner Ms. Gifford is fully in support of the project but wants to choose the style of the door on that side. Mr. Van Sickle asked that the CHC staff also review and approve the style of the new door.

Mr. Van Sickle called for any comments from members of the public.

Priscilla McMillan, 12 Hilliard, said that she liked the plans very much, but wondered if the lilies of the valley in the front of the house can be maintained. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that the construction will damage them, but that the intent is to plant the same kind of garden as what is currently there.

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<sup>1</sup> Upon later discussion with the applicant, it was clarified that simulated divided lights were proposed, not true divided lights as mentioned at the hearing.

Sandy Starr, 9 Hilliard, expressed concerns about the deck over the entryway since his bedroom is directly across from the deck and questioned whether the intent was to make the deck usable. He said that Iten Fales had blocked off the door onto the deck and that he was concerned about noise if the deck was used. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that the door is still there and that in the new plans the deck would open off a bedroom, and they expected it to be used. Mr. Starr also expressed concern about the landscape plan since a big tree has already been cut down. He hoped that the developers would talk to him about screening between the two houses. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that he would be happy to talk with him and to plant screening in the strip along the neighbor's fence that is about 12" wide.

Ms. Dortz asked about the location of the condensers. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that they would be at the very back, facing 9 Hilliard, but that they could also put one on each side. Dan Adelson said that they would be happy to work with the neighbors on any reasonable requests.

Ms. McMillan asked about the driveway material. Mr. Adelson said it would be cobblestone or similar material but that a firm decision had not been made yet. In response to Mr. Starr's question about the number of parking spaces, Mr. Boyes-Watson said there would be two, as there are currently.

The discussion returned to the condensers. Mr. King asked if there would be two condensers and if there were other possible locations. Mr. Boyes-Watson confirmed two, but that the location is not yet sure. The location they are proposing is the one furthest from any other property. There will be no problem meeting the noise ordinance regulations, and condensers can be screened. Mr. Starr suggested that they consider the jog at the very back of the lot, and they said they would look at all possibilities.

Ms. Dortz asked if it wouldn't be better to build a new wood railing 8" higher than the current railing at the front entrance and deck instead of adding a metal railing to the existing. Ms. Maycock said that a new railing built to code often looks odd because the proportions are wrong, and adding the metal extension would preserve the original. Mr. Van Sickle agreed.

Questions from the public ended, and the commissioners began deliberations. Ms. Masterson said that she liked the project. Dr. Schur said that he likes to see these old houses get fixed up, but that as an abutter of an abutter he felt that he should recuse himself. Mr. Van Sickle then designated Ms. Dortz to vote in Dr. Schur's place. Mr. Smith agreed with the change to six over six windows. Mr. King said that he wanted to make sure the commissioners were clear about what they didn't know: what the material of the deck railing will be and where the condensers will go. He was comfortable having the CHC staff deal with the deck railing. For the condensers, he wondered whether the applicant would be willing to notify the abutters about the condenser location, and if the abutters had an objection, the issue would go to the staff and the staff would decide whether it needed to go back to the HCMNCD for review.

Ms. Masterson made a motion that the application be approved as submitted with the following changes: 1) that the style of the windows be six over six with true divided lights<sup>2</sup> throughout the house; 2) that the applicant will notify the abutter Sandy Starr of the location of the condensers and that if Mr. Starr has objections to that location or locations, that he will notify the CHC staff within 10 days to determine whether the issue needs to go back to the HCMNCD for a hearing; and 3) that the design and material of the railings on both stories of the entrance porch be delegated to CHC staff.

Mr. King seconded the motion and it passed 5 -0.

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<sup>2</sup> Upon further discussion with the applicant, it was clarified that simulated divided lights were proposed.

## **Minutes**

The minutes from the meetings on September 9, 2016, October 24, 2016, January 23, 2017, and March 20, 2017 were reviewed and the corrections were approved.

## **Old Business**

The issue of meeting space came up, and it was reported that the commission would continue to meet at 831 Massachusetts Avenue unless or until another acceptable space can be found that is accessible, has parking, and is near public transportation.

Dr. Schur made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned about 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Maycock  
Survey Director

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

Michael Kelley	Owner	300 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave, Needham, MA 02494
Dan Adelson	Owner	300 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave, Needham, MA 02494
Scott Zink	Owner	4 Morrison Rd, West Wakefield, M
Mark Boyes-Watson	Architect	30 Bow St, Somerville, MA 02143
Jesse Taylor	Architect	30 Bow St, Somerville, MA 02143
Priscilla McMillan	Neighbor	12 Hilliard Street
Dick Clarey	Resident	15 Brookford Street
Sandy Starr	Neighbor	9 Hilliard Street

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