

## Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Tue., Sept. 4, 2012 at 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Carole Perrault, Charles Redmon, *members*; Sue-Ellen Myers, *alternate*

Commission Members absent: Monika Pauli, *alternate*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-4143: 405 Broadway, by Hamlin and Glenys Jennings.** Add new covered entrance porch onto existing front vestibule.

The single family house under review was originally constructed in 1862. It was extensively remodeled in 1987. The current proposal is to extend the roof of the existing vestibule out towards Broadway in order to create a new, covered porch. The staircase would remain in its current location, but would be reconstructed in stone. The balustrade above the existing vestibule would be replicated and extended around the perimeter of the new porch roofline.

The property owners explained that they recently had the front doors of the house restored and that one concern was protecting the wood from the elements. As part of the 1980s renovations, a front porch had been approved but was never constructed. It was the thought of the owners that the completion of the open front porch would improve the overall appearance of the house.

The project architect answered the Commission's question about the basis for the new porch design by stating that he took cues from the house's original Italianate details.

Mr. Redmon asked whether brackets that appear in the renderings for the proposed alterations were part of the scope. The architect said that they were not proposed to be added as part of this project. The sole focus of this project would be to construct the open front porch.

Mr. Hsiao asked if a grade change was intended, since the plans suggest only one step up to the new porch. The architect said the rise of the stair and existing grade would remain unchanged.

Staff asked for information about the finish materials for the porch construction. The architect stated that it would be constructed using wood and not composite materials.

Ms. Goodwin noted that this house was already stripped of much of its original Italianate details as part of the 1980s remodel, and therefore the new porch makes reference to elements of the architecture that are no longer there. She raised the question of whether it might be more appropriate to keep the design of the new porch simple. Specifically, the detail in the new porch columns and brackets may be too ornate.

Mr. Hsiao added that the character of the porch design seems to be elaborated versus what exists on the building. He seconded the idea that perhaps the approach should be towards simplified shapes. Eliminating the suggested bracketing was thought to be a way of accomplishing this goal.

Ms. Litchfield suggested using the existing balustrade above the vestibule as a cue for the proportions of the new porch and its ornament. She supported the idea of an added open porch.

Paint schemes, although not under the purview of the Commission, was briefly discussed. The current balustrade incorporates the body color of the house as a secondary color. The point was raised that traditionally all trim elements were historically painted one unifying paint color and that this approach could be considered as part of the front entrance expansion.

Mr. Jennings agreed with the comments to simplify the design details. The architect said they could explore reducing the intricacy of the corner columns and perhaps eliminate the recessed panel detail at the column bases.

Ms. Goodwin suggested the possibility of leaving the current balustrade in place and not extending it over the new porch roof.

Mr. Hsiao pointed out the new porch's proximity to the existing arched doorway along the sidewalk entrance. The arched entrance was felt to be very straightforward and, along with the simplified geometry of the 1980s renovation, could inform the design of the proposed front porch.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the proposal to construct an open front porch with the following comments:

- The detailing of the porch should be further explored, with a focus on simplifying the framing elements and eliminating the existing bracket design
- The extension of the existing balustrade might be reconsidered, and
- Once revised drawings have been completed, the owners have the option of requesting an Architects Committee meeting on site for final comments

Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

**MC-4144: 369 Harvard St., #3, by Leslie Wilcox.** Rebuild existing roof deck with the addition of a pergola.

The review of changes to the property is binding, due to its designation on the National Register of Historic Places. This 3-story brick Mansard was constructed in 1876. It is significant as the former residence of William F. Bradbury, who served as the first headmaster of the Cambridge Latin School.

The house is located on a corner lot, with the side elevation facing Trowbridge Street. The existing deck is visible from Trowbridge, and the proposed pergola would be minimally visible from Trowbridge due to its placement in the far southeast corner of that roof surface. This work was prompted by the discovery of roof leaks and a need to tear up the existing roof deck to replace the underlying rubber membrane.

Mr. Redmon asked if the reconstructed wall around the deck would be the same height as the existing wall. The project manager said the intention was, in order to meet current building codes, to construct a solid 3' foot wall to match the existing design with an additional 1' open-style rail on top.

Ms. Goodwin commented that the wood railing would be an improvement on the existing T-111 material.

The property owner said she intends to paint the new railing gray to match the rest of the trim on the building in the hope that it would blend in better.

No questions or comments were received from the public.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the application. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

### Minutes

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 2012 meeting. Sue Myers seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, September 4, 2012**

Tuny McMahon	14 Highland Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139
Leslie Wilcox	369 Harvard St., Cambridge, MA 02138
David Powers	26 New Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Mr. & Mrs. Hamlin Jennings	405 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139
Christopher Dallhaus	Design Associates, 1035 Cambridge St., Cambridge, MA 02141