

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, April 5, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*, Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

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/MCNCDapril2021>.

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 **830 0457 6963**.

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

Case MC-6112: 12 Fayette Street (Continued), by 12 Fayette Street Ventures LLC. Construct new building in rear of lot, alter rear portion of existing structure, reconfigure windows, remove chimney.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property.

Mr. Sean Hope, one of the applicants, stated that they had reviewed the public comments and are confident that they can build without impacting the existing trees, and that the project landscape architects will present their design tonight.

Ms. Alison Hammer, the architect, presented slides and responded to concerns expressed at the previous hearing. The proposed new building has been lowered 1 ½ feet, passive elements are to be incorporated. The roof has been tilted in to reduce the bulk, and additional window detailing will make the windows look less flat. Regarding exterior colors, they are consulting with a list that the CHC provided of houses in Cambridge that have been painted in historically appropriate colors. The glazing on the third floor has been reduced, and the railings have changed to cable. The first floor has been lowered six inches. They are now proposing to remove 11 and ¼ feet from the rear of the existing building, maintaining an “inward” looking layout of the two structures. Ms. Hammer also showed massing studies, a slide showing variations, and elevations and perspectives.

Landscape architect Erin Hossaini-Fitch presented the proposed landscape - more space between buildings, shared driveway with permeable paving, also using native plant species such as hydrangea and viburnum propose to rejuvenate the ecology. The tree protection will extend beyond the canopy to protect the roots. She went over ornamental plantings, metal picket fence, granite posts, a low fence for visibility, sugar maple to replace the dead tree in the

front. The goal is to create multi-seasonal interest. There will be an arbor for pedestrian entry. Native small trees such as Amelanchier will also be planted.

Applicant Andrew Collins stated that they had met with neighbors to address concerns. They are also consulting with an arborist on the trees and a passive house consultant. He mentioned a passive project in Somerville that they are working on and learned a lot from.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked the landscape architect to identify what plantings are existing and what is proposed. Ms. Hossaini-Fitch replied showing the plan.

Commission member Charles Redmon asked what the proposed siding is. Ms. Hammer answered fiber cement with mitered corners. Mr. Redmon asked what size, Ms. Hammer replied most likely 5-inch reveal.

Mr. Hsiao asked the building was lowered 18 inches. Ms. Hammer replied yes. Mr. Hsiao asked if the first floor was lowered. Ms. Hammer said yes, 6 inches. Mr. Hsiao asked if the 2-story portion came down? Ms. Hammer replied yes and maintained the parapet.

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked to clarify grade change. Ms. Hammer explained the grade change.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the water drainage issues. Mr. Collins responded that any runoff is the result of grade runoff from adjacent properties and they always capture their own water, they are familiar with DPW requirements, they have to capture and recharge on site, collect rainwater to recharge basin. They will use pervious paving, and enhance the landscape.

Mr. Hsiao asked about passive house renewables. Mr. Collins answered possibly solar panels, it's in the mix.

Ms. Litchfield asked how passive principles would be implemented and was this always planned for the house or considered after the meeting. Mr. Hope replied that he counselled Andy et. al. to look at passive, but they can't assume full passive house, cannot commit to it. Mr. Redmon asked what would be included. Mr. Collins answered extra thick walls for thermal bridging, window glazing, additional insulation, air tightness – 6 pascals? Continuous ventilation, energy recovery ventilators (ERV). Mr. Redmon asked will the windows be operable. Mr. Collins replied yes.

Ms. Litchfield noted she didn't see anything in the design that makes this a passive house. Mr. Collins replied that the floorplans have been adjusted to allow more insulation, the house works as a system, in winter it won't go below 55 degrees, in summer sufficient to keep cool. The overall goal of the passive house is kilowatt per square meter. Mr. Redmon asked about the window details. Mr. Collins answered that the windows will be more recessed.

Public Questions

Mr. Regina Barzilay asked about 3d renderings as seen from Antrim Street. Ms. Hammer showed 2 renderings, before and after, and fenestration. Ms. Barzilay noted that she couldn't see adjacent property. Ms. Hammer showed 3d rendering. Ms. Barzilay stated that they were just boxes, what do neighbors really see? Mr. Hope replied that they don't have what she is

looking for. Mr. Hsiao interjected that the Commission is charged with what is visible from a public realm and that they have provided views.

Ms. Litchfield noted that the Commission received all the letters submitted.

Mr. Allen Speight of 33 Antrim Street asked what is the total square footage above and below grade. Ms. Hammer replied 2,939 sf plus 940 sf in the basement, totaling 3,879 sf. Mr. Speight asked Mr. Collins about runoff. Mr. Collins stated that there is a depression in the rear of the site and it's below the adjacent grade. Mr. Speight asked for an explanation and Mr. Collins said he would be happy to meet with him.

At 6:56 Mr. Hsiao left the meeting.

Mr. Frank O'Brien noted there's no affordable component, a wall of housing considered not advisable at the last meeting

Phyllis Bretholtz of 65 Antrim Street said she treasures the trees and open space and is worried that the new building will mean the loss of open space, that there are no front yards and the buildings are positioned to allow backyard green space. How will this impact the neighborhood on the whole? Ms. Hammer replied that there is a 30' rear setback that is significant and will maintain the open space, also noted that all the trees are being preserved.

Heidi Samojluk of 37 Antrim stated this is their backyard, and asked from where is the 30' setback, from the house? Ms. Hammer replied yes. Asked is there affordable housing? Mr. Hope replied that it is market rate, noting that they are proposing a 2-family development when it could have been 5 units.

Ms. Hallie Speight of 35 Antrim Street asked why not an attached addition. Mr. Hope replied that being attached would have a negative impact. Mr. Collins stated that he had met with an abutter on site and reduced by 11 feet. Mr. John Gorman noted that Collins reached out to him. Ms. Hammer explained that because of codes and ordinances, adding to the existing building would trigger a special permit whereas what they are proposing is as of right. She also noted that it has little impact on the streetscape and the existing historic building is being preserved.

Public Comment

Ms. Crosbie read out letters opposing the project.

Mr. John Pitkin presented slides of aerial views of the open spaces in the city and neighborhood, describing a tree lane and their importance as part of the City's Urban Forest Master Plan. Mr. Pitkin urged the Commission to consider an attached addition.

Mr. Hugh Russell of Corliss Place stated that he met with the design team and that they responded to his concerns. He is not opposed to infill but supports his neighbors in asking that an attached scheme be developed.

Ms. Heidi Samojluk agreed with the neighbors, that more and more people want to live in Cambridge, that the character of the neighborhood will be lost with this scale of development.

Ms. Barzilay stated that the setbacks are being violated. Mr. Hope answered that they have reviewed this with Inspectional.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield thanked the applicants for coming back, but the Commission had asked for alternative schemes.

Mr. Redmond stated that he would like to see them try attaching the building, did they look at this? He went on to say that they're hearing from the abutters that the massing is not working, the height of the building is the most concerning. Commission member Margaret McMahon stated this feels like excessive infill to her, too much project for the location.

Ms. Litchfield noted this project is a 3,000-square foot, five bedrooms house behind a house, and she understands they could do more units but it still requires a binding review, it's a suburban house in an urban neighborhood.

Mr. Redmon noted that this is larger than a carriage house, it should be 2 stories, not 3. He noted that attached or detached is a tricky question. Mr. Litchfield concurred, an attached can also be too large.

Commission member Monika Pauli stated that her first impression is that it is a sad, modern twin of the existing house, it has the form of the mansard but not as graceful, she would rather see a gable roof, a carriage house, so the massing would be less monumental. It does not fit there like it should. From the street it's not that bad but from the back it's big, it looks like a design by committee, something is lost. Sometimes it's better to go back to the beginning, right now it's not a happy compromise. She noted how challenging it is.

Mr. Redmon asked the applicants if they would come back with alternatives. Mr. Hope asked for more direction and emphasized that they are not taking down any trees, and also noted that there is a diversity of housing in Cambridge and that this proposal is conforming. A connected house would require a BZA hearing and the applicant would have to prove hardship. He also noted that personal views from Antrim are not under the Commission's purview.

Ms. Litchfield responded that the Commission is charged with reviewing "excessive infill," the Antrim Street comments are viable. The Commission has reviewed a lot of these types of projects, the most successful ones worked with the Commission. She noted that 378 Broadway was a very difficult project, a lot of people were not happy, but the Commission was able to navigate that project. Mr. Redmon noted that there are similar issues of 378 Broadway to 12 Fayette including rear views from houses, a lot of programming. Mr. Redmon suggested they come back to address/mitigate the full 3rd floor. Ms. Pauli asked them to look at a different roof configuration. Mr. Redmon suggested looking at a house across the street from where he lives on Highland Avenue.

Mr. Redmon motioned to suspend further review and have an Architects Committee meeting and that the applicant look at reducing the bulk and massing, especially the 3rd floor, based on programming, explore different rooflines, look at the ground floor. Ms. McMahon seconded, all in favor, the motion passes, 4-0.

Case MC-6102: 14 Bigelow Street (Continued), by Reed Shea and Avia Navickas. Construct two new entrances and window well, alter existing front porch/entry, construct addition in rear.

Ms. Crosbie briefly summarized the property background.

Mr. Reed Shea, the applicant, described the revised drawings.

Mr. Redmon asked to see the original floor plan and confirmed that the rear addition width was reduced, set back further from left wall, back extended as a straight line from existing.

Ms. Crosbie asked if the applicant is removing a chimney and adding a new one. Mr. Shea replied yes. Ms. Crosbie asked if he confirmed there's enough width on the side to accommodate a new entrance, Mr. Shea replied yes.

Ms. Litchfield asked what has changed on porch supports. Mr. Shea replied nothing.

Public Questions

Mr. Doug Gesler of 16 Bigelow Street asked how many tenants were going to be entering on the side. Mr. Shea replied fewer than today, the unit is being reduced from 5 bedrooms to 4 bedrooms. Mr. Gesler asked about the basement. Mr. Shea answered there is 1 tenant, it's a 1 or 2 bedroom proposed for basement. Mr. Gesler asked how many entrances to basement. Mr. Shea replied 2, that sprinklering eliminates the need for additional entrances. Mr. Gesler asked about the material of the proposed chimney. Mr. Shea said he did not know yet. Mr. Gesler asked about the foundation. Mr. Shea responded concrete below grade and could be faced with brick veneer. Mr. Gesler noted that all but one building on Bigelow is brick or granite. Mr. Gesler asked about porch and stairs. Mr. Shea replied they will extend as little as possible, there's a 3-foot landing, 4-5 steps down. Mr. Gesler asked about addition. Mr. Shea replied it's a 9-foot addition. Mr. Gesler asked about size of roof deck. Mr. Shea said he did not have that information handy, that he could bring railings back from the edge. Mr. Gesler expressed his concern that there are three front entrances very close together and lots of people will be coming and going. Mr. Redmon interjected that as neighbors they can work this out. Ms. Litchfield agreed. Mr. Gesler expressed concern over potential shade as a result of the addition.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about roof dormers. Mr. Shea responded that there will be no change to the roof. Ms. Meyer asked about proximity to abutters, noting that it's a large roof deck, you might want to make that smaller. Mr. Shea responded that it will only be for personal use.

Ms. Crosbie read out several letters with comments, Sylvie and Michael Potts, Pierre and Marie Humblet.

Ms. Jean Reiser of 16 Bigelow Street noted that the scale and significance of the front is important, and the entry addition makes the side very crowded. She also noted that 30 Maple Avenue is bigger and not on two levels.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield stated the setback looks great, and the roof deck could be smaller.

Mr. Redmon said Mr. Shea did a good job retaining the width of the addition.

Ms. Litchfield emphasized the need to talk with neighbors.

Ms. Pauli noted the front entry is very complicated and needs to be drawn well with shop drawings to make sure it will work, the newels going down looks busy, and recommends staff review of final drawings. She also noted that if they put in a gas fireplace they won't need a chimney, but if there is a chimney it should be brick.

Ms. Litchfield noted that details can be delegated to staff.

Mr. Redmon explained that the stairs going down in front is tricky, the applicant will need drawings on all levels as well as sections, and should ask architect for more drawings.

Ms. Litchfield reiterated that a gas fireplace would be better. Ms. McMahon concurred, stating that gas fireplaces are great and easy to use with the flip of a switch.

Mr. Redmon moved to accept the submission as presented with the conditions that the applicant work out the details so it works, consider eliminating the chimney and using a gas fireplace, and that staff reviews final drawings prior to permit. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion carries, 4-0.

Case MC-6148: 101 Antrim Street, by Judith A. Ryan and Cara L. Presseau. Extend existing dormer.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property.

Ms. Malvina Lampietti, architect, presented slides of the property which has been in the same family since 1900. Ms. Lampietti explained the need for more headroom through the extension of the existing dormer.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked if the materials will be the same. Ms. Lampietti replied yes.

Ms. Pauli asked if it can be wood siding. Ms. Lampietti said possibly. Ms. Litchfield noted it's just a suggestion.

Ms. Crosbie read three letters of support.

No further public comment or questions.

Commission Comments

Ms. McMahon stated it looks better.

Mr. Redmon concurred.

Ms. Litchfield stated that it is a nice addition.

Mr. Redmon moved to approve the proposal as submitted. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passes, 4-0.

Case MC-6150: 8 Greenough Avenue, by Tomer and Orly Ullman. Replace and reconfigure windows, modify basement entry and add areaways.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property.

Ms. Catherine Truman, architect, presented the proposal for turning the 2-family house to a single-family home.

No public questions or comments.

Ms. Litchfield asked about the windows. Ms. Truman replied Marvin SDL with wood trim.

Mr. Redmon asked if all the windows are already replacement windows. Ms. Truman replied yes, and they will be improved.

Ms. Pauli asked if the casings are original, Ms. Truman answered they will be retained.

Commission Comments

Ms. McMahon noted the west side is very dramatic, very modern in appearance and very startling. Mr. Redmon agreed, suggesting the architect look at a common window size. Ms. Litchfield agreed at looking at a similar vocabulary. Ms. Truman explained that they were going for a modern look, that houses evolve. Ms. Pauli stated that this wall has such a mish mash, maybe the back is all glass. Ms. Litchfield noted that the large window could have a transom as a transition. Mr. Redmon noted that having the dormer windows come down is nice.

Mr. Redmon asked about the window size, Ms. Truman said the headboard in the bedroom is driving the location of the window.

Ms. Litchfield stated that the three modern windows need to feel more a part of the house.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal with the recommendation to look at other options for west façade windows and to submit to staff for review. Ms. Truman asked about restoring the front porch, Ms. Crosbie answered that it could be approved by staff. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passes, 4-0.

Minutes for the February 1, 2021, February 10, 2021 Architects Committee, and March 1, 2021 meetings were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on April 5, 2021

Panelists:

Alison Hammer, architect	ahammer@hammerdesign.com
Sean Hope	sean@hremassdevelopment.com
Scott Zink	scott@zredevelopment.com
Andrew Collins	
Erin Hossaini-Fitch, landscape architect	
Reed Shea	14 Bigelow Street
Catherine Truman, architect	
Malvina Lampietti, architect	

Attendees:

John Gorman	14 Fayette Street
Sonia Sake	32 Carleton Road
Gao-wen Shao	9 Fayette Street
Marie Humblet	13 Bigelow Street
Hallie Speight	33 Antrim Street
Allen Speight	33 Antrim Street
Hugh Russell	1 Corliss Place
Helen Snively	1 Fayette Park
Katherine Ellin	2 Corliss Place
Amy Meltzer	45 Antrim Street
Heidi Samojluk	33 Antrim Street
John Pitkin	18 Fayette Street
Regina Barzilay	39 Antrim Street
Doug Gesler	16 Bigelow Street
Jean Reiser	16 Bigelow Street
Phyllis Bretholtz	65 Antrim Street
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Michael Potts	12 Bigelow Street
Sylvie Tomczyk-Potts	12 Bigelow Street