

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, August 30, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, *Members*, Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Absent: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Monika Pauli, *Member*

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/MCNCDaug30>.

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 **827 2246 5746**.

Commission Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and made introductions and explained the meeting procedures.

Case MC-6245: 66 Antrim Street, by Alexander and Whitney Van Praagh. Install solar panels on roof.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the house.

Mr. David Bridge, from Great Sky Solar described the proposed solar panels and configuration, mentioning some revisions due to a new chimney.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked the distance from the edge of the panels to the roof ridgeline. Mr. Bridge answered 5 to 6 inches. Ms. Litchfield asked the distance from the eave line. Mr. Bridge replied approximately 6 to 8 inches.

No public questions or comments

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield noted that the drawings don't show the buffer from the ridge line or eave and those are important elements to the Commission.

Alternate Margaret McMahon stated the panels look fine.

Commission member Charles Redmon noted that it looks like they are using two different sized panels. Robin Truhan from Great Sky Solar explained the different dimensions and stated that the more aesthetically pleasing panels will be towards the front. Mr. Redmon asked about the connections. Ms. Truhan replied all the panels are connected the same way with a snap-in rack, an all black ultra rail low to the roofline.

The owner, Mr. van Praagh, commented that the 2 different panels are for different areas of the roof.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

Case MC-6246: 100 Antrim Street, by James and Linda Ito-Adler. Install synthetic siding.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and noted it is a non binding review.

The owner, Mr. James Ito-Adler, explained he bought the property in 1977 and has been researching materials for the siding and feels the Certainteed vinyl shingles will work the best. The shingle size will be the same and will be installed over the existing shingles. He also described the trim will be replaced with pvc, and the door details will remain. And he will be using gray shingles. He also noted other houses in the neighborhood that have been similarly altered.

Commission Questions

Ms. McMahon asked if the existing shingles are in bad shape because they don't appear to be in the pictures. Mr. Ito-Adler responded that the condition varies, that it's worse in the back of the house. He also explained that the cost to re-shingle and repaint is too high.

Mr. Redmon asked about the shingle exposure. Mr. Ito-Adler responded 7 inches.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the corners will be replicated. Mr. Ito-Adler replied that the corner posts will be the same color as the shingles.

Public Questions

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked for some clarifications, including consideration of spot replacing and cornerboards. Mr. Ito-Adler said they prefer the look of shingles and want to install all vinyl shingles. The cornerboards will be right-angled pieces that will lock into the shingles.

Public Comment

Ms. Meyer commented that because there's another house on the street in vinyl, it is not a precedent. She noted her issues with faux materials and that they don't let the building breathe.

Mr. Alex van Praagh who lives across the street commented that it is an unfortunate choice of materials and noted the negative health consequences of manufacturing and using vinyl and pvc. He also mentioned that the neighborhood has lots of examples of quality craftsmanship and that vinyl would detract from the character of the neighborhood.

Ms. Meyer urged the applicant to maintain the wood frames around the windows in order to maintain some of the character of the house.

Mr. Ito-Adler stated that the door and windows will remain but noted that there are three different types of windows on the house and that it is not an architectural gem.

Mr. George Metzger of 88 Antrim Street concurred with Mr. van Praagh's comments, noting that vinyl is an unfortunate choice, and although the house might be a shoebox, it still has character, and this will be lost with the use of vinyl. He also noted that he had re-sided his own house. He also referred to the NCD ordinance charge to "preserve idiosyncrasies" not just specific historic styles.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield reiterated the comments from neighbors and stated that these vinyl shingles just don't do the job. She also stated that the applicant will be surprised at how chunky the building will look. She recommended looking at repairing and noted that she re-shingled her house in phases, 2 sides at a time. Ms. Litchfield also noted the resale value of the house will not be the same as wood shingled house, there is a big difference.

Mr. Redmon concurred, commenting that the house is an elegant box and is visually pleasing.

Ms. McMahon agreed with Mr. Redmon and noted that vinyl reflected light differently, one more reason it won't look right.

Mr. Ito-Adler stated that he has been researching this a long time and understands the Commission's concerns regarding windows, trim, etc. but he looked at the pros and cons and feels this is the best solution.

Ms. Litchfield responded that she hopes he takes the comments tonight as part of his research and seriously reconsider.

Mr. Redmon motioned to reject the proposal, Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

Case MC-6248: 106 Antrim Street, by Allen Bunker. Replace side deck.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, the review is non binding.

Mr. Kyle Finley, who lives at the parsonage at 106 Antrim, explained that the existing deck is 25 years old and they the church is celebrating its 125th anniversary, and would like a space large enough to host gatherings.

Commission Questions

Ms. McMahon asked how far is the deck extending currently. Mr. Finley answered 7 feet.

Ms. Litchfield asked if there will be a change in height. Mr. Finley replied no. Ms. Litchfield asked about materials. Mr. Finley answered synthetic. Ms. Litchfield asked about what is in front of the deck. Mr. Finley replied there is a trellis and that they will be using azek decking and azek trim to be painted.

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked if there is a stairs in the back. Mr. Finley answered yes. Ms. Meyer asked about the storage space and doors. Mr. Finley explained that the doors will be timber frame and the space will store bikes.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer stated that the drawings were inadequate.

Mr. Metzger expressed his support for the project and sees this as a significant investment in the property.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon agreed that the drawings don't have enough information. Mr. Andrew Hovey from Platform Design showed additional views from the sidewalk. Mr. Redmon suggested cable for the railing. Mr. Finley responded that they will be using a balustrade.

Mr. Redmon noted that the deck will need a more substantial grip and recommended a natural wood finish, the azek can be very slippery and doesn't absorb water. Ms. Litchfield agreed with Mr. Redmon regarding the slippery quality of the material and encouraged reconsideration if this was going to be a gathering place.

Ms. McMahon commented on painting the doors of the storage space.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal and recommended that staff review the final details for railing. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed, 3-0.

Case MC-6247: 376 Broadway, by Victor Shing. Install fiber cement siding and pvc trim.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, noting that there is an identical building next door.

Mr. Fabio DaSilva explained the proposed Hardie shingle, 5 ½" exposure, for the gable, Hardieplank for the clapboards, and vertical batten board for the second floor.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked if the owner was thinking of a specific historic style? Mr. Victor Shing, the owner, answered he thought the proposal fits in with the neighborhood.

Mr. Redmon asked to confirm that there will be three different types of siding. Mr. Shing replied yes.

Ms. Sarah Burks, preservation planner, asked about the surface of the hardieplank, that the Commission prefers a smooth surface instead of a faux wood finish. Mr. Shing replied that it will be a smooth surface.

Public Question

Ms. Debbie Knight asked why are three different exterior sidings not appropriate.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield stated that the house is actually more of an arts and crafts bungalow and that it's not the different materials that is the issue – the building is clad in shingles and has a twin with which it's in conversation with. Stylistically, it would be preferable to maintain the shingle siding or keep the shingles in the gable and clapboard on the rest. She noted batten board is not appropriate for this style, that keeping the mirror image of its twin is important.

Ms. Litchfield noted that the Commission does not typically approve of synthetic materials such as Hardie plank, and encouraged the applicant to consider using cedar shingles, but if that's not possible, to consider Hardie shingles.

Mr. Redmon agreed with Ms. Litchfield, that the house exterior should not be complex, and that it's appropriate to retain the character of the house by using all shingles or consider shingles in the gable and clapboard elsewhere.

Ms. Litchfield added that the house is elegant and lovely and worth maintaining.

Ms. McMahon concurred and noted that it's part of the streetscape and encouraged not trying to do too many things that would make the building incongruous.

Ms. Litchfield noted how the lattice is still extant and the fact that these two houses have survived intact is special and should be preserved. She also reiterated the use of shingles to maintain its understated character. Mr. Shing commented that there are more interesting houses next door.

Mr. Redmon motioned to reject the proposal and recommended reconsidering the use of Hardie plank materials, minimize the types of siding, and seek advice from CHC staff. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

Case MC-6253: 44 Kirkland Street, by Jayant Shah and Emma Duchane. Reconfigure fenestration, relocate/add doors, construct deck and balcony, remove chimney.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property. The review is non binding.

The architect, Paxton Sheldahl, presented drawings, noting the proposed alterations to door location and fenestration, rear balcony and deck. Most of the alterations are on the side and rear facades, except for the main entrance where the goal is to create a more gracious entryway. Mr. Sheldahl asked for input on the type of windows to be installed, whether they should be historic or contemporary casement with color to match.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield responded to the question regarding the new windows, noting that they overlook the new deck. She commented on the door to the sleeping porch, that it did not look right to her considering the shingle style of the house. Ms. Litchfield also asked about the chimney, stating that it is rather substantial. Mr. Sheldahl replied that the chimney is in the kitchen and does not function, and that getting rid of it will improve the room layout. It's currently venting the oil furnace, but the furnace is being replaced.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield commented that the proposal is a thoughtful design, and that the windows and door are the main concerns.

Mr. Redmon noted the third-floor dormer window on balcony is 8/2 and should be replicated.

Ms. Litchfield stated that the kitchen windows make the first floor look less substantial but with the deck it equals out.

Ms. Litchfield and Mr. Redmon recommended dividing the lites on the porch door.

Ms. McMahon commented that it's a beautiful house and does not have an issue with the proposal.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal, Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

Minutes for the August 2, 2021 hearing Committee meeting was approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on August 30, 2021

Panelists:

Robin Truhan	Robin@greatskysolar.com
David Bridge	David@greatskysolar.com
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Attendees:

Hallie Speight	33 Antrim Street
Debbie Knight	380 Broadway
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
George Metzger	88 Antrim Street