

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, November 7, 2022, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony, Hsiao, *Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, Katinka Hakuta Monika Pauli, *Members*

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

Meeting held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MCnov2022>. 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 863 3769 6329.

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

Case MC-6586: 8 Cleveland Street, by Kleber-Polito Family Trust. Reconfigure fenestration.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, presented slides of the property and gave a brief history.

Mr. Jonathan Miller, architect for the applicants, presented the proposal to renovate the house including moving and adding a window on the east elevation. The windows will retain the same style as the existing. Mr. Miller also mentioned additional alterations in the rear which are not visible from a public way.

Commission Questions - none

Public Questions and Comments - none

Commission Comments

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked if the window reconfiguration was for more light. Mr. Miller replied yes.

Commissioner Charles Redmon motioned to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Case MC-6594: 5 Ellsworth Avenue, by Samuel M. Hayes. Construct roof dormer, raise roof, and extend existing ell; alter fenestration, install window well.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and the history of the building.

Mr. Matt Hayes, the applicant, introduced himself and Peter Quinn, his architect. Mr. Quinn proceeded to present the proposed expansion of the building's ell and window alterations to located in the setback. The roof of the ell is being raised to match the roofline of the main house for more windows, and a dormer is proposed as well.

Ms. Katya Podsiadlo, landscape architect, presented the landscape design remarking they are proposing a light touch. Design elements include a sunken garden patio, buffer plantings for privacy, picket fence to match the neighbor's fence, and enclosure for trash receptacles. Materials include wood, chip seal paving that looks like pea stone for the driveway, and bluestone pavers set in groundcover. Ms. Podsiadlo stated that they met with abutters and adjusted the design in response to their concerns such as adding flowering shrubs instead of trees next to neighbors and moving the trash away from the property line.

Commission Questions

Mr. Redmon asked about the raised ridgeline. Mr. Hayes answered that they raised it to capture living space on the third floor.

Ms. Litchfield asked about the number of units. Mr. Hayes responded that it will be a single-family with an accessory unit. Ms. Litchfield asked if it will then be sold as a single-family home. Mr. Hayes said yes. Ms. Litchfield asked if there is access to the basement through the rear. Mr. Hayes confirmed that there is.

Ms. Crosbie asked about the window wells in the front. Mr. Hayes clarified it's one well that wraps around the corner.

Public Questions – none

Public Comments

Ms. Crosbie summarized four emails received in support of the proposal, from Alessandro Doria, 3 Ellsworth Avenue; Robbie Burnstine and Lou Rodriques, 7 Ellsworth Avenue; Bob Corning of 9 Ellsworth Avenue; and Aaron Paul at 11 Ellsworth Ave.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield referred to the proposed height of the ridgeline and asked how much of the attic is really needed considering the number of bedrooms. She explained that it starts to dominate, which is why dormers are required to be below the ridgeline. She said it's an aesthetic issue but even lowering it a little bit would make a difference and wondered if this was always the plan.

Mr. Hayes responded that the third-floor room height is 7 feet plus a little more, and that he did something similar at 11 Ellsworth Avenue where he added two large gables, and it came out nicely and he thinks the commission had liked it. He further explained that the issue is the head height, and a large family will need these bedrooms. Ms. Litchfield noted that being below the ridgeline does make a difference and it was probably discussed at that meeting. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at the street view of 11 Ellsworth Avenue and clarified that the two added gable ridgelines don't meet the main ridgeline.

Commissioner Monika Pauli noticed that the eave also looks higher and asked if the entire roof was raised. Mr. Quinn confirmed that it did and shared his screen to view the drawings. He explained that now there's a 2-foot knee wall to get more room.

Mr. Redmon asked if they didn't raise the ridgeline to match the main roof, would it make the bedrooms not livable. Mr. Hayes looked at the sections and measurements and answered that he thinks it would impact the bedrooms, the height would only be around 6'-8."

Mr. Hsiao stated he had no issues with the proposal, but the roof and cornice details do pose challenges, specifically how the main roof transitions to the new roof is problematic. The pattern gets broken up. Mr. Hayes responded that with older housing stock there's a need to adapt these structures to new living standards and that he would look at the transition details and work them out and find a happy medium between the main house and the ell.

Commissioner Katinka Hakuta referred to the adjacent dormers on the elevations and asked if they're accurate in how they meet the roof. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at a bird's eye view of the surrounding rooflines, and the shed dormers next door are just below the roof ridgeline. Mr. Hsiao showed how most cases show that secondary roof elements are subservient to the main roof and stated that the Commission always advocates for the main roof to remain dominant.

Ms. Litchfield started to make a motion to disapprove the application as submitted and recommended that the ridgeline of the addition be lowered just a little bit and that the applicant return to the Commission with the lowered ridgeline and trim details. Mr. Redmon interjected (he tried to comment but didn't realize he was muted) and said that perhaps a shed dormer on both sides would give ample headroom. Mr. Hayes said it might but felt that the lesser of two evils would be the higher ridgeline as opposed to the 2 dormers, but he can look at lowering the ridge even 6 inches if it can work spatially inside. He also intends to do all the mill work like he has done on other properties and restore the building and make it attractive. Ms. Litchfield responded it would help the design, especially the millwork, to lower that ridgeline, as Mr. Hsiao had pointed out that once you're building, how things line up will get tricky, especially where they turn the corner. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at the existing street view to see the cornices and how the transition at the corner will get more complex with what Mr. Hayes is proposing. Mr. Hsiao also looked at Mr. Hayes' project at 17 Ellsworth Avenue where it is a more modern design, but the addition is still subservient to the main structure. Mr. Hsiao further explained that once you try to solve this issue it might introduce some awkwardness, and that it would best to consider the Commission's comments and discuss with the Mr. Quinn. Mr. Hayes assured the Commission that if there's a way to lower the ridgeline, he will do it, but also believes he can finesse the details to make it work.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to accept the application with the following recommendations:

- Lower the addition at least 6 inches below the roof line of the front portion of the structure.
- Explore how to create a smooth transition at corner of the addition and primary front portion of the structure.
- Consider a shed dormer, complying the City's dormer guidelines, to gain additional living space.

Ms. Hakuta seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Case MC-6503 (Continued): 11-13 Goodman Road, by Dana Hill House LLC. Demolish existing building and construct new single-family house.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and history of the building.

Mr. Hayes stated that he worked with his team of architects and landscape architects to address the comments from the Commission at the previous meeting over the summer, including making the front mass more prominent, lowering the bump out, and extending the left gable of main structure further, creating a 3d model of structure for the Commission, and changed the column positions on the front porch to match the rest of the street. He then introduced his architect, Peter Quinn.

Mr. Quinn presented a 3d model of the proposal, showing the front porch pushed back 7 feet deep, closer to the original dimensions, and he moved the columns and added capitals to them on the front as well, and adjusted the steps. The bump out was lowered, and the windows were minimally adjusted. The main roof line was changed and extended further to the rear, creating an opening for a roof deck, and said this bump out serves as a secondary addition to the main roof. Mr. Quinn also mentioned that they struggled with setback issues which impacted the shape of the roof. He also showed plans indicating light wells around the building, and sunken patios with light wells, and stairs. Planters on the roof were also eliminated.

Mr. Hayes noted that from the street elongating the roof and stepping down the bump out does address the Commission's concern.

Commission Questions

Ms. Hakuta referred to the roof over the second story porch of the existing house and asked the applicant if he considered putting the roof over the porch to reinforce the prominence of the front house. Mr. Hayes answered that the roof would add shade to the new windows and take away light. Ms. Hakuta asked about the outdoor spaces, observing that there is a large amount of outdoor space, and that she has seen in the neighborhood a lot of spaces like this, but you never see people using them. Mr. Hayes said he would use these types of secondary and tertiary hang out spaces. And he explained that he tends to design spaces like he would use them. Ms. Hakuta asked if he had a sense from his previous work how people use these spaces, are buyers looking for these? Mr. Hayes referred to the new buildings on Cambridge Street across from the hospital where he has seen people using the decks often.

Ms. Litchfield stated that she does use all her outdoor spaces. She then asked how big the sunken garden areas are, and will they become moisture and leaf traps, noting that it's hard to gage their scale from the drawings. Mr. Hayes responded that there's natural topography that they're working with. Ms. Litchfield commented that it's nice access to the basement. She also asked about the long rectangular one by the bump out. Mr. Hayes explained it has windows as well. Mr. Quinn showed an elevation and commented that since the City of Cambridge no longer includes basement space as part of the FAR, there has been a lot of projects that incorporate these kinds of spaces.

Public Questions – none

Public Comments

Mr. Stephan Dubouloz, owner of 42 Dana Street, commented on the roof deck and asked about the façade on the rear of the roof deck, is it necessary? Mr. Hayes answered that Mr. Quinn did another similar design that came out looking very nice on Vincent Street. Mr. Dubouloz asked about the window. Mr. Quinn noted that the wall is important to hold the roof ridgeline. Mr. Dubouloz asked if Mr. Hayes could do a regular deck? Mr. Hayes said from the front they need to keep that gable and explained that the Commission wants the front building to be more dominant. Mr. Hayes stated that it also helps with privacy with the wall, and it won't look as funky as you think it will. Mr. Dubouloz asked about planters. Mr. Hayes replied that the planters were eliminated but he could still do that, although the previous deck was larger. Mr. Dubouloz referred to the backyard steps remarking that he thinks they look too narrow. Mr. Hayes said it's 3'-8", and that if it gets wider it will take away from the patio/dining area.

Ms. Crosbie summarized a letter received from Anthony Stamatelos of Watertown who opposed the demolition of the property.

Commission Comments

Ms. Pauli stated it's a great improvement and liked the form and asked if there could be a band in the front elevation that could tie in with the bump out. Ms. Pauli also suggested considering the color scheme, that the white color sticks out a lot and that it could be more subtle and blend in better.

Ms. Litchfield commented that she's impressed with how the Commission's comments were incorporated and thinks it's a great project.

Mr. Hsiao concurred that the design is a big improvement, but also questioned the roof deck in the back, that it looks fussy and piecey. Mr. Hsiao recalled that 15 Vincent Street worked well, that it kept the volume intact and it looked more like a roof extension. This design looks overwrought with too much going on. From the street it's largely hidden but there are a lot of moves going on. Mr. Hsiao suggested that perhaps a simpler railing would work better. Mr. Hayes said the wall adds more privacy but could go with a hand railing. Mr. Hsiao said there will still be privacy because it's set back sufficiently and advised that in this instance simplification would work and save money as well. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at Vincent Street. Mr. Hayes said he would be happy to take the wall out and reintroduce a planter with a tree. Ms. Litchfield interjected that she liked that idea. Mr. Hsiao referred to the shared view and how it shows how the front wall details hold the streetscape, but here on Goodman Street there's a lot more going and it's much fussier. Mr. Hsiao advised that in this instance it would be better to simplify and add the greenery. Mr. Hayes said it's only fussy if you're a bird flying over it but will be happy to do the handrail and plantings. Ms. Litchfield asked for clarification of the changes made from the last version. Mr. Hsiao responded that right now it looks like too many parts, that it's a lot of effort for little gain, that it's not one thing or the other. Ms. Litchfield disagreed, saying that the roof extension does help the massing, and asked to look at the 3d model. Mr. Hsiao said from eye level you will not perceive it. Mr. Redmon agreed with Mr. Hsiao. Ms. Pauli said she liked the overlap. Ms. Litchfield noted the photo of the original

building and saw what Mr. Hsiao was saying. Mr. Hsiao noted also that stepping down the bump-out helps.

Ms. Hakuta reiterated that the front façade still looks like it's missing something and referred to 8 Goodman Street across the street, where it echoes what was there.

Mr. Hsiao said the front is an improvement in composition.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to accept the application as submitted with the following conditions:

1. Omit the extension of the roofline onto the flat roof surface and revert to original scheme regarding planters and/or other green roof design.
2. Explore adding details to the front façade that evoke the previous structure, such as extending the returns under the eaves or adding a roof to second floor porch.
3. Consider a darker color on the flat-roof portion of the structure with the assistance of CHC staff.

Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

The October 3rd minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on November 7, 2022**Panelists:**

Jonathan Miller, architect	Frank Shirley Architects
Michael Kleber, applicant	8 Cleveland Street
Jessica Polito, applicant	8 Cleveland Street
Matt Hayes	17 Ellsworth Avenue
Peter Quinn, architect	Peter Quinn Architects
Katya Podsiadlo, landscape architect	Verdant Landscape Architects

Attendees:

Stephan Dubouloz	50 Hancock Street/42 Dana Street
Alessandro Doria	3 Ellsworth Avenue
Emanuel Markis	10 Rogers Street
Robert Lucchetti	5 Cleveland Street
Jody Sharpe	3 Ellsworth Avenue
Michael Powers	3 Ellsworth Avenue