

## MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, June 5, 2023, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

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

Absent: Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*

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

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Meeting held via online zoom webinar <https://tinyurl.com/MCjune2023>. 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 839 3304 7618.

Commissioner Charles Redmon made introductions, explained the process for the hearing, and called the meeting to order at 6:05.

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**Case MC-6732: 1384 Cambridge Street, by City of Cambridge.** Replace doors, railing, remove stone bollards.

Ms. Allison Crosbie, preservation administrator, presented slides of the fire station, noting that it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR) and that it is subject to a binding review.

Ms. Aoife Viglianti, from the City of Cambridge Public Works Department (DPW), introduced herself and 2 other members of the DPW, Nick Stoutt and Saleema Adel. Ms. Viglianti explained that the project is part of a larger effort to repair and restore the building. Together with consultants they have been studying how the building was put together and are looking at areas in need of repair including cracking and deterioration. They are also addressing safety issues and code compliance. Ms. Viglianti shared her screen to show the needed repairs such as cracked corbels, loose lintels behind the steel (water has been getting in), cracking terracotta, and masonry repairs. She emphasized that these elements will be fully restored. She also stated that the existing mural is not part of the scope of work. Ms. Viglianti then presented proposed alterations, notably the removal of the wheel stops (also called out in the drawings as bollards) at each garage door opening which prevent the fire trucks from hitting the piers. Ms. Viglianti explained that the fire trucks back up into the building, and fire trucks today are getting bigger and therefore more challenging to park. The equipment gets damaged as well as the door trim. She proposed removing the wheel stops during this phase of the long-term project. She then described the proposed entry door replacements, explaining that the main entry door is broken and poses a security risk. She also stated that they will restore the transom above the door. Ms.

Viglianti then described the proposed replacement for the entry door on the other side, which is a double door and not code compliant. The proposed door is to be a single full size door with the same paneling detail as the existing door and also have a sidelight. She then went over the replacement of the door in the rear which leads to the electrical department.

Ms. Viglianti also stated that the slate roofs will be repaired and restored, and the door canopy will be replaced in kind. She then described the issue with pigeons congregating in the tower and they are proposing to install netting as a deterrent. She then explained that the existing flagpole over the entry door is too dangerous to reach so they are proposing to relocate it on the façade to make it easier to use.

#### Commission Questions

Commissioner Katinka Hakuta asked for clarification on critical repairs in the rear, specifically the removal of some material. Ms. Viglianti responded that's decorative but very deteriorated, that it's in such poor condition that they can't tell what it's for, and there used to be doors in that location that were filled in. They are not going to replace it, just remove the deteriorated portions and extend the roof trim down to keep the elements from further affecting it. Ms. Hakuta also asked for clarification on the slate roofs. Ms. Viglianti answered that both slate roofs, at the canopy and the tower, will be replaced in kind. Ms. Hakuta then asked about the proposed replacement of the door to the tower, specifically why the change in the style. Ms. Viglianti said that the double doors don't meet code.

Ms. Pauli asked if the doors are wood. Ms. Viglianti answered they are currently wood and will be replaced with hollow metal doors.

Mr. Redmon asked about the garage doors. Ms. Viglianti responded that they did study the potential replacement of those doors, but for this phase of the work they are not changing the doors.

#### Public Questions and Comments - none

#### Commission Comments

Ms. Crosbie asked Ms. Viglianti to expand on what she said earlier about the wheel stops and the fact that the fire trucks are getting bigger. Ms. Viglianti stated that all fire houses are having this issue with larger trucks; that at Lafayette Square fire station they have been damaged, and the main fire house is looking at lowering the floor.

Ms. Viglianti then remarked that the width of the current trucks is 96 inches. She said she saw them back the trucks in and out so she could see firsthand what the issues are. She pointed out that fire trucks are getting bigger, both taller and wider. And electric trucks are even longer. She explained how the trim, the doors, and the trucks themselves get damaged because of the clearance. It's hard to back in right down the middle, they're looking for any additional inches. Right now, the trucks can fit, but it's not easy and not getting any easier. This is an opportunity to deal with this.

Ms. Crosbie asked about the potential damage to the piers if the wheel stops are no longer there, suggesting that without them there might be a false sense of security when parking the trucks. Ms. Viglianti said it's the trim on the door that gets the brunt of the damage. She was

told that the wheel stops are not helping them stay in the right position to park. The trim is actually protecting the piers.

Mr. Redmon commented that it's a shame since the wheel stops appear to have a very good function keeping the trucks away from the piers. Ms. Viglianti said the trucks today are so different from what they used to be, and they would like to get bigger doors.

Ms. Crosbie asked if the current trucks will be used for a while. Ms. Viglianti they are looking at electric vehicles, and they are always changing equipment around, trucks are moved to different stations. Ordering new trucks requires a lot of care in making sure they fit different locations.

Ms. Hakuta reiterated Ms. Crosbie's question regarding the wheel stops, how would removing the wheel stops help, not hinder, parking the trucks without damaging anything. She also said if that's what the Fire Department has determined to be needed, she won't object.

Ms. Crosbie remarked that this must be a recurring issue since there are a lot of old structures. Ms. Viglianti stated that it is a common issue and at Lafayette Square they are dealing with the limitations of the height in that building as well as the width of the doors.

Mr. Redmon stated that the proposal is great, that he's glad this kind of care is being taken to continue to use the building.

Ms. Crosbie asked if they could put off removing the bollards, since there is a bigger renovation project down the road, could this be studied some more? Ms. Viglianti responded that the reason to do it now is because of the materials and time required to order the products, it makes sense to include this in this package. The bigger project could happen in ten years, so it doesn't help the department now. She said they can explore what it takes to do the work, to make sure it looks good. Mr. Redmon asked how the stone will be removed. Ms. Viglianti answered that it would be sawn off and refinished. Ms. Sarah Burks, CHC preservation planner, also asked about the process, noting that it can be damaging and that sawing it off is more destructive than removing the whole stone and storing it for future restoration. She said it would be good to make sure there's no resulting damage to the terracotta, and she suggested providing additional training for the drivers.

Ms. Hakuta remarked that she is less concerned about the actual removal of the wheel stops as opposed to the potential impact on the building once they are gone.

Ms. Pauli asked if there is a way to guide the wheels of the trucks into the building. Mr. Redmon suggested having something on the floor. Ms. Viglianti replied that they already use white lines to do this. Mr. Redmon suggested a curb that wheels would come into contact with and guide the truck. Ms. Viglianti pointed out how challenging the whole area is for parking, including the amount of traffic and the tight location.

Ms. Hakuta motioned to approve the proposal as submitted with the recommendation to see if the entire wheel stop stones can be salvaged instead of being cut off. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

At this point, 7:00 pm, Commission Chair Tony Hsiao joined the meeting.

**Case MC-6726: 7 St. Paul Street, by Van Zhang.** Install solar panels on roof.

Ms. Crosbie presented a brief history of the building, constructed in 1899 as part of a subdivision.

Mr. Jason Goodwin, from Sunrun, presented drawings of the proposed layout of the black solar panels on the roof, comprising 25 panels in total, including 15 on the southeast side and 10 on the northeast side. He explained that the layout is affected by the location of existing vents. He also described the panels as flush-mounted and that the inverter will be in the rear. He explained that the disconnect will be next to the meter which is required. Mr. Goodwin also stated that the conduit will be run through the attic.

#### Commission Questions

Mr. Redmon asked if the panels on the southeast side can be moved to align with panels on the other side. Mr. Goodwin responded that it is possible, and that he can investigate it, and he explained that the proposed layout might be the most optimal – the houses are close together and there has to be an unobstructed pathway for the fire department.

#### Public Questions and Comments - none

#### Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon commented that it would be nice if the panels on either side were aligned. Mr. Goodwin shared his screen to look at the plan and noted the location of vents that impact the layout but said he will still take another look.

Ms. Pauli remarked that the disconnect switch looks bigger than the meter. Mr. Goodwin responded that it must be located a maximum of 10 feet from the meter for emergencies.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the application with the recommendation that the panels are shifted on the southeast side to align with the other side. Ms. Hakuta seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

**Case MC-6690 (continued): 142 Amory Street, by 142 Amory Street LLC.** Construct 2-family house.

Ms. Crosbie introduced the proposed new construction of a two-family residence and explained that this is a continued hearing from the previous month. The applicant was asked to return with a revised design that was a simplified and more cohesive scheme.

Architect Kelly Boucher presented the project and explained that the previous design was modernish, and the feedback was that it was too busy, not cohesive, too many planes going on, which was in part a result of all the zoning issues involved. They took another look and removed as many pieces as possible while still maintaining a building that is as of right. The design concept is now a traditional building with clapboards, corner boards, a water table, windows with divided lights, a dormer smaller than the previous one and sits back further from the front, and the dormer on the other side was eliminated. The other types of siding were eliminated, and there are less planes. This time around it has a more residential feel that fits better into the

neighborhood and it looks like it could have been there for the past 50 years. The windows have been reorganized to maintain a rhythm and a scale that works.

Mr. Hsiao asked to confirm that the building meets all the regulations. Ms. Boucher confirmed and reminded the Commission of the previous design and showed her screen. She also showed other iterations that were considered.

### Commission Questions

Ms. Pauli asked if they considered a roof over the entrance to protect people as they entered. Ms. Boucher answered that they did consider extending the bay, but it looked too modern. She pointed out that the entrance in the back has a roof and small porch. And she said they could look at putting a roof over it but they were trying to keep everything streamlined.

Mr. Redmon concurred with Ms. Pauli. Ms. Boucher said they are happy to investigate it and are happy to meet with staff to refine it if the Commission gives approval at this meeting.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the stairs in front. Ms. Boucher replied that it will be a traditional set of stairs with posts, noting that the Revit model does not show the details. Mr. Hsiao also pointed out the front corner offset, and Ms. Boucher explained it is a quirk in the modeling program.

Mr. Hsiao also asked about the bay window. Ms. Boucher answered that the bay is floating because the zoning won't allow a foundation there. Mr. Hsiao asked about the fencing. Mr. Bill Senne, the owner, replied that the drawing shows a 4-foot fence, but he was also considering a 6-foot fence for privacy possibly tapering toward the front. Mr. Hsiao asked what type of fence was being considered. Mr. Senne answered it wasn't finalized but that he prefers some decoration on the top. Mr. Hsiao said some scale and decoration on a fence that high is preferable. Mr. Hsiao asked about the siding. Ms. Boucher answered that it will be clapboard, most likely Hardie board. Mr. Hsiao asked about windows. Ms. Boucher stated they will be casement with simulated divided lights, and the ones on the first floor will have a transom. Mr. Hsiao asked about the roof. Ms. Boucher said it will be asphalt shingles.

Ms. Pauli asked if the foundation is concrete. Ms. Boucher said yes.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the landscaping and if there is any existing landscaping. Ms. Boucher said the property has been cleared completely. She stated that part of the site is in the BA zone which has special open space regulations and requires more vegetation and less hard spaces. On the Hampshire side of the site they are required to provide a landscaping package.

Mr. Hsiao asked about parking. Ms. Boucher said they are not required to provide parking which makes the project more feasible, and its location is transit friendly.

Mr. Hsiao asked about outdoor mechanical equipment. Ms. Boucher answered that it will probably have two air conditioner compressors. She explained that she hadn't looked at where they will go at this point and happy to take suggestions. She noted that she didn't want them in the front but tucked in the back away from windows. Mr. Redmon suggested placing them behind the porch stairs. Ms. Boucher agreed.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the fence would go in the front. Ms. Boucher said she wasn't sure, right now it was left out for graphic reasons. Mr. Senne said they were looking to fence in the front where the landscaping is but is open to other suggestions. Mr. Hsiao shared his screen to look at the

neighborhood context and looked at the different frontages on the street. Mr. Hsiao said he understands the need for privacy next to the parking lot and abutters.

Ms. Hakuta asked about the color of the house in the graphics. Ms. Boucher said they picked something a little more neutral this time and would like to stay in the yellow family, but the final color has not been decided.

Mr. Redmon asked about one of the windows. Ms. Boucher said it should be at the same height, it's a glitch of the computer program.

#### Public Questions and Comments

Martin Vieira of 154 Amory Street mentioned the air conditioner compressors should be set as far back from his property as possible. Another concern is the fence which is fine but at the street corner a 6-foot-high fence will create a tunnel on his side of the fence. He also expressed concern about the windows on the second floor that look into the bathrooms of his tenants. He noted that the new house is closer to his building. Ms. Boucher replied that the window on upper level is a bathroom, and the small window is also a bathroom window. She also mentioned that there are also bedroom windows on the upper level. Mr. Vieira also said that the new building will be larger and closer to his building, and he stated that parking is a big problem and will just get harder with additional cars from the new residence.

#### Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao thanked the applicant for returning with a revised design which is more coherent, and said the two units feel more like a whole by calming all the elements and it feels more residential in scale. He noted that the simplification of the palette helped the design and it's now more sympathetic to the houses in the neighborhood. Mr. Hsiao addressed the landscape and noted that the plan is not showing the adjacent properties, and that the streetscape view helps frame the discussion. He stated the landscape could be more developed, and plantings can address some of the concerns raised by the neighbors. Regarding the car issue, Mr. Hsiao asked if there was a specific reason that they are not providing parking. Ms. Boucher said they had to meet a lot of requirements, and adding parking is a big hurdle and it would sacrifice something else in the design. She also pointed out that there are no curb cuts. Mr. Hsiao remarked that there are limitations to urban living. Mr. Hsiao said that there are important considerations to the landscape and addressing the streetscape is warranted.

Ms. Pauli agreed with Mr. Hsiao, that landscaping can soften the design and provide a buffer for the neighbors and add privacy. Ms. Boucher responded that the Revit modeling doesn't really convey the landscape design well and that Mr. Senne always does a great job with landscaping. Ms. Pauli observed that there are shorter fences on the front of houses on this street. Ms. Boucher agreed, noting that the scale of the fences in the neighborhood is low. Mr. Senne added that he wants to articulate the fence where appropriate and taper it down toward the front. He also stated that the landscaping is very valuable to the homeowners, more so than parking. Mr. Senne said he receives queries regarding bike storage. And he said they can locate the bike storage and compressors where it makes the most sense for everybody. He also indicated that he has spoken with the owner of the adjacent parking lot who is willing to rent out spaces to the homeowners, so they shouldn't be contributing to the parking problem.

Ms. Hakuta stated that she appreciates the design and the response to the Commission's feedback and likes the color of the house and thanked them for their work.

Mr. Redmon referred to Ms. Pauli's comment regarding the shade/shelter for the front entrance and look at possibly lowering the height of the bay window and add a porch to the front door that matches the one in the back. Ms. Boucher replied that they are happy to study this but also pointed out that lowering the bay changes the multi-plane analysis. She agreed that a cover over the door makes sense.

Mr. Hsiao noted that several properties in the area have covered front entrances with a side bay, which can offer clues as to what can work here.

Ms. Hakuta motioned to approve the application as proposed with the recommendation to look at adding a covered entryway to the front entrance and revise the landscaping and fencing treatment. Mr. Redmon suggested finalizing the landscape and fencing plans for staff review. Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0.

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The May 4, 2023 minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public Present on June 5, 2023**

Panelists:

Kelly Boucher, architect  
Bill Senne, owner 142 Amory St.  
Jason Goodwin  
Aoife Viglianti  
Nick Stoutt  
Saleema Adel

Somerville, MA  
Somerville, MA  
Sunrun  
City of Cambridge DPW  
City of Cambridge DPW  
City of Cambridge DPW

Attendees:

Martin Vieira  
Maria Pires

154 Amory Street  
135 Amory Street