

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., August 8, 2011 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Commission Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, William King, Grenelle Scott, *members*; Michael Robertson, Charles Smith, *alternates*

Commission Members absent: Robert Banker, Deborah Masterson, *member*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

Chair Van Sickle called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. Van Sickle introduced the Commissioners and staff present.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-115: 18 Gibson Street, by Gerard Michael and Pamela Kogut. Front door replacement.

The property referenced in the application is an 1891 frame cottage that was recently restored. The front door of the house was not replaced at that time, and the homeowners requested permission to install a period appropriate door. This is one of several houses on Gibson and Kenway streets designed by architects Edwin & William Blaikie, many of which still retain their original, half-glazed wooden front doors.

The property owner said the current door is metal but they were hoping to select a wood door that would complement those already installed on the garage. Ms. Dortz asked if the door would be painted, to which the owner said she would paint it slate blue.

No questions were received from the public.

Mr. King moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Robertson seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

HCM-116: 5 Sparks Street, by Ann and Robert Hurlbut. Install canopy over front entrance.

An application was submitted for a wood canopy over the front entrance of the existing 1870 Mansard house. The project requires a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals because covered porches are calculated in the overall FAR square footage. The property owners said they were seeking cover from inclement weather by proposing the small roof overhang. The bracket on the Sparks Street side would be wood with a painted finish.

Mr. King suggested that the edge and trim details of the new roof match the rest of the trim elements on the building.

No questions were received from the public.

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Mr. Robertson moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. King seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

HCM-117: 31 Ash Street, by Anne & David Gergen. Replace front steps and porch decking.

Commissioners Dortz and Smith, who are both abutters to the property, recused themselves from deliberations. The proposed decking material for this front porch and staircase renovation is a wood composite material, Azek, rather than a solid wood species.

Mr. Robertson asked if the entire deck would be Azek, to which the contractor specified all flat horizontal surfaces would be clad with the composite material. The remainder of the staircase would be wood and the existing wood handrails were to be reinstalled. The Azek decking has a faux wood grain finish and it would not be painted after installation.

Richard Crowley, owner of 152 Mt. Auburn Street, spoke in favor of the proposal.

Mr. King moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Robertson seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.

Use of composite decking material on subsequent Half Crown-Marsh renovation projects

Mr. King made a motion to authorize the staff to review and approve the use of wood composite material in horizontal flooring applications, provided the building does not have historic designation on the National Register of Historic Places. Ms. Dortz seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

HCM-118: 152 Mt. Auburn Street, by Richard Crowley. Lower front doorway to meet ADA accessibility guidelines.

Staff presented images of the 1-story commercial building, which dates to 1915. Previous approval was granted to remove a raised wood step to make way for a poured concrete ramp in compliance with current ADA codes. Photographs of the building showed that door had already been lowered prior to the Commission meeting, and without the necessary approval.

Mr. Richard Crowley, the property owner, said he had informed his contractor not to complete the work and was surprised to find he had proceeded without authorization. Mr. Crowley stated that he prefers the look of the old storefront rather than some other storefronts in the area that he considers “over-restored”. He said his initial plan was to sell the store at #152 and retain ownership of the house at #154 Mt. Auburn St. but that he ended up doing the opposite.

Mr. King raised the point that, since the work was undertaken to meet current ADA requirements, perhaps the application should be reviewed as a Certificate of Hardship. Staff stated that would be an appropriate form of review for this case.

The gap at the top of the door is to be filled in with a solid wood panel, as a glass transom would reveal the dropped ceiling currently in place on the interior.

Ms. Dortz asked about the gaps at the bottom of the storefront, and whether the store would be painted to match the house at #154. Staff mentioned that the house at #154 was being

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repainted in colors other than what is currently on the building, but that the owners had come to an agreement to paint the two buildings in complementary colors.

No questions were received from the public.

Mr. King moved to grant a Certificate of Hardship since the lowering of the door and related woodwork repairs are necessary components of bringing the property into ADA compliance. Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

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Mr. King moved to approve the minutes from the June meeting. Mr. Van Sickle seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Mr. Robertson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. King seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

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Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, August 8, 2011

Pamela Kogut	18 Gibson, Cambridge, MA 02138
Bob Hurlbut	5 Sparks Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Nancy Hurlbut	5 Sparks Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Colleen	31 Ash Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Richard Crowley	152 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138