

## **Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission**

Mon., May 14, 2012 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Commission Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Robert Banker, Judith Dortz, William King, *members*; Deborah Masterson, *alternate*

Commission Members absent: Michael Robertson, Charles Smith, *alternates*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Chair Van Sickle called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM. Mr. Van Sickle introduced the Commissioners and staff present.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties **HCM-149: 86 Foster Street, by Meade Fasciano.**

Situated at the corner of Foster and Sparks streets, this cottage was built in 1861 with later additions including an attached garage and a 1-story ell dating to 1935. The current owner wishes to replace two 2<sup>nd</sup> floor windows on the rear elevation to improve the soundproofing in a bedroom at that location. While these windows are on the rear of the house, they are publicly visible from Sparks Street. The proposed replacement windows would be all-wood insulated Marvin windows with exterior SDLs and internal spacer bars, similar to those previously installed on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the rear elevation. The house currently retains most of its original wood windows, which are fitted with exterior storms.

Ms. Fasciano stated that noise from an air conditioning unit at an adjacent property is disruptive, as it runs 9-10 months out of the year to keep an attic space cool for the neighbor's bird, which can also be rather loud. Because of this, she hopes to install insulated window units so she can sleep better. Another Commissioner was familiar with the property and the noise created by the pet.

Mr. King suggested that perhaps the neighboring mechanicals need to be upgraded to better meet the noise ordinance if they are in violation. Ms. Fasciano clarified that the unit is a window unit, and not one of the larger exterior compressors.

Ms. Dortz asked if the owner planned to keep the storm windows, to which Ms. Fasciano stated that she would.

Questions and comments were accepted from the public.

Mr. Cliff Boehmer of Davis Square Architects in Somerville commented that the insulated units should be very effective in minimizing the sound transfer into the owner's bedroom.

Ms. Masterson made a motion to approve the application as submitted, with the condition that the muntin width and profile of the replacement windows match the existing wood windows as closely as possible. Mr. King seconded the motion, adding that staff could sign off on the muntin detail prior to approval. The motion passed 5-0.

**HCM-142 (cont'd): 983-986 Memorial Dr., by Longview Corp.** Building-wide window policy.

When the hearing for this case was continued, the applicants had been directed to revise the language of their document which would be distributed to all co-op shareholders to place more of an emphasis on preservation of the existing windows. At that time, it was also resolved that the Cambridge Historical Commission's *Guidelines for Preservation and Replacement of Historic Wood Windows in Cambridge* should be adopted into the co-op board's building maintenance documents.

Enforcement of repair work at the building currently lies primarily with the co-op board. Individual owners are required to pay an additional fee to have an architect review plans for any proposed changes to the building. The reason for the co-op board submitting this application was for the Half Crown-Marsh Conservation District Commission to weigh in on their documents and offer input and approval of the building's window guidelines to expedite permitting procedures for tenants in the future.

The project architects from Davis Square Architects in Somerville mentioned the recent history of maintenance and repairs to the exterior envelope of the building, which included repointing the rear elevation and installing new storm windows. Despite the continued maintenance, some tenants are currently experiencing serious water leaks in their units, which the architects believe is exacerbated by insufficient flashing details at certain window locations.

The changes to the application since the last review had to do with the language of the cover memo, which is attached to the architects' window survey plans and an addendum including the Cambridge Historical Commission's published window guidelines. The memo was edited to stress repair and restoration as the primary approach to any window work. The owners' concerns about improving the thermal performance of the windows were addressed with information about the effectiveness of high-quality storm windows. While the storm windows selected for the rear elevation were a dark brown, it was thought that an almond color storm window would be more appropriate for the Memorial Drive elevation.

The architects acknowledged that the materials used on replacement windows changes from year to year and that maintaining the Commission's existing process of requiring a public hearing to review replacement windows would help keep replacement from becoming a widespread issue.

Ms. Masterson said she was confused by some of the language in the memo, wondering if it was stating window replacement required approval by the Cambridge Historical Commission or the Half Crown-Marsh Conservation District Commission. It was felt that the language was still somewhat unclear in that document and needed further editing to reflect the Half Crown-Marsh NCDCs purview. Also, some of the descriptors that suggested an owner "may" undertake

preservation options are to be revised with stronger language to read that they “should” undertake preservation options.

Mr. Boehmer clarified that, by making these changes, it would not in actuality streamline the permitting process because anything other than full replacement-in-kind would require a public hearing.

Mr. King posed the question of whether it was possible to have an exact replacement without having an old-growth wood window reinstalled as a replacement unit. He also made a point to commend the co-op board for their proactive approach to historic preservation of the building. One of the challenges he had found in creating districts was enforcing the preservation of historic windows on larger, multi-family buildings. This recurring issue had led the Cambridge Historical Commission to create and adopt their published window guidelines mentioned as part of this case review. As the Chair of the Historical Commission, Mr. King said it is their role to advise owners and the other Neighborhood Conservation District Commissions on this sort of issue. Mr. King thought the co-op board’s actions sends a wonderful message to other property owners of large-scale historic buildings.

Mr. King suggested that perhaps the Half Crown-Marsh NCD Commission, if it had not already, officially adopt the citywide Commission’s published guidelines for window preservation. He also encouraged questions about individual window projects at the building to be posed to staff so that a determination could be made as to whether the work should be brought forward for a hearing. This was stated with special circumstances like hardship cases in mind.

Ms. Dortz asked that staff of the Half Crown-Marsh NCD receive copies or some form of notification of relevant changes that occur through the co-op board’s review, which meets once a month.

No questions or comments were received from the public.

Mr. King made a motion to approve the window policy as submitted by Longview Corporation with the understanding that the staff would review final editorial changes and that the co-op board’s monthly approvals be forwarded to staff of the Half Crown-Marsh Commission to determine which cases may need to be brought to a public hearing. Mr. Banker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

#### General Announcements

Staff reminded the Commission members about the upcoming 2012 Preservation Awards, to be held on Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at City Hall.

#### Minutes

Mr. King moved to approve the minutes of the April 2012 meeting. Ms. Masterson seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, May 14, 2012**

Meade Fasciano	86 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Anne Lowell	88 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Cliff Boehmer	Davis Sq. Architects, 240A Elm St., Somerville, MA 02144
Laura Wolthuis	Davis Square Architects, 240A Elm St., Somerville, MA 02144
Lucian Leape	984 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA 02138