

## MINUTES

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

Mon., July 16, 2012 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

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

Commission Members absent: Robert Banker, Judith Dortz, *members*; Deborah Masterson, *alternate*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

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

#### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**HCM-160: 9 Kenway St., by Thomas and Gabriela Traynor.** Strip exterior shingles and wall sheathing and install new shingles to match original.

The single family house under review was designed by architect Joseph Guiney and constructed in 1931. The current owners purchased the house in 2011 and appeared before the Commission last year to address persistent water issues from missing gutters and improper groundwater controls on site, which were resolved as a result of that review process.

The current proposal is to address the owners' concerns about mold in the walls by stripping all of the exterior shingles and underlying sheathing to replace these elements with new sheathing and shingles to match the original exterior appearance. As part of the work, the walls would also be insulated and the historic trim would be retained for reinstallation. The scope of work, if done incrementally, could be completed in a way that would not endanger the integrity of the structure or trigger a demolition permit.

The contractor was given permission by staff to open up a section of the wall at the rear of the building (north elevation) to do some initial inspection of the wall's condition with regard to mold. The north elevation is the one that was lacking sufficient gutters for an undetermined amount of time and is also the side of the building that receives the least amount of sun to dry out any moisture. Because of these conditions, it was thought that this area would have the most drastic mold conditions if there were any present in the walls of the house. Photos submitted with the application materials showed mold in that location and in a corner of the building where a gutter downspout was located.

Two reports were submitted by professionals who inspected the property for mold remediation solutions. Information in the two reports was contradictory in certain sections, with one report stating that full sheathing replacement may not be necessary and that the historic tar paper vapor

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barrier would still be an effective material to use under new shingles, as opposed to a Tyvek type house wrap.

The attorney for the owners, Jonathan Roth, made several comments regarding the application. Mr. Roth stated that the owners have three young children, one of whom is terribly sensitive to mold. He said that no one was intending to change the exterior appearance of the house. The house was felt to have inferior insulation and there was evidence in the framing of prior beetle and termite damage in addition to the mold concerns. This project would not extend the footprint of the building. All the owners were trying to do was to make the house safe for their family. The point was raised that mold spores can become airborne and migrate anywhere, including neighbors' homes. Mr. Roth also referred to information contained in the application materials which noted that previous owners had operated a humidifier in the basement that ran on a continual basis. The applicants feel that the humidifier was the primary source of the mold problem. The proposed course of action was felt to be the only way to eradicate the mold from the structure.

The contractor, Joseph Rynne, seconded the attorney's comments that the project would not increase the footprint of the building and that mold spores could travel to other surrounding structures. He said that by removing the sheathing they would also remove the mold. With regard to using tar paper as a vapor barrier, he said that if Inspectional Services said it met the building code he could use that material. The insulation proposed was a closed-cell spray foam icynene.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if all of the sheathing was intended to be removed, or only the mold-affected sheathing. Mr. Rynne said he was planning to install all new 5/8" plywood sheathing. Ms. Tuffy asked what the thickness of the existing sheathing was, to which the contractor replied it is 1" sheathing. By removing it in sections, once elevation at a time he would ensure that the house would not rack or tilt. Mr. King wanted a guarantee that at no time we would have a see-through house, since there have been incidents of accidental demolition in the past. Mr. Rynne said that he had no intention to strip the whole house down to the frame at once.

Mr. Smith asked how long that process would take. Mr. Rynne said he anticipated a 3-4 week schedule.

When the Commission asked about the mold findings, the applicants said that an air test was conducted in every room and mold was definitely found in the area of the rear dormer on the top floor of the house, where a bathroom is located.

Much discussion occurred over the intended schedule of work and the timeframe during which the neighbors may be inconvenienced by the noise associated with construction. After a thorough outline of the various steps of the process, 3-4 weeks remained the intended projection for completion of the project. Mr. Rynne also mentioned that there would be no dumpster on site because he takes away any debris on a daily basis. Any pieces that are moldy will be sprayed down with water to prevent airborne spores and disposed of the same day. Mold that must be treated in place will be eradicated through a 3:1 water to bleach solution.

Mr. King asked if there was any need to remove the windows, but it was confirmed that they would remain in place.

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It was recommended that the trim pieces, if showing any signs of mold, could be treated with a simple bleach solution. Trim pieces need to be reserved on site in a safe location where they would not be disposed of with other construction debris, since they are to be retained and reinstalled alongside the new shingles.

Mr. King asked for verification that the proposal did not include removing any studs. Mr. Rynne said that would not be necessary unless he encountered severe rot. Otherwise mold on the frame could be treated with the bleach solution.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the mold remediation company would be monitoring the work. Mr. King seconded that he would feel more comfortable if the mold consultant could be available to monitor the work. Mr. Van Sickle said the mold remediation consultant should spell out their procedure for the case records.

Questions and comments were accepted from the public.

Barbara Ackermann of 41 Gibson St. said she is glad the owners plan to change out any moldy elements of the structure and was grateful for the questions raised by the Commission. Speaking for herself and on behalf of another abutter, Elizabeth Van Ranst of 120 Foster St., they were concerned about the potential noise from the work. She also asked if the Commission felt the answer about keeping mold from becoming airborne had been satisfactory.

Mr. Rynne said they are only allowed to work from 7:30am to 4:00pm during the week. Mr. Van Sickle said that, with regard to containing any mold spores, he felt it was necessary for the testing lab and/or mold remediation specialist to write down the proper procedure for removal.

Maggie Johnson of 41 Gibson Street wanted to know if the new insulation was fiberglass and if there was any concern of that product also becoming airborne, to which the contractor clarified that it was a contained foam spray and not a fiberglass product. She also asked what recourse the neighbors would have if work was not being carried out as outlined. Staff said that both the city inspector and Historical staff would monitor the work but that the neighbors could always call the city if they had any concerns. Ms. Johnson's third question was if the schedule could potentially be extended since they would not know the full condition of the building until they started removing the exterior siding. Mr. Rynne said that was accounted for in the current schedule.

Public comment included two written statements from the owners of 120 Foster Street and 114 Foster/9 Doane. Both letters questioned whether the scope of work was over ambitious and if another opinion might be sought out to see if more modest repairs could be made to the property. Staff informed the applicants that, while they had produced two mold reports, the standard recommendation was to secure three bids as a basis for comparison. Since there was conflicting information in the two reports, it was suggested that a third consultation might help to clarify their scope.

Mr. King made a motion to approve the application with the condition that, if more extensive replacement of framing elements appeared to be needed as the work progresses, that staff be

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alerted immediately to determine with the assistance of the Commission Chair and Inspectional Services staff if the case required further review by the Commission as a whole. He added that retention of the original trim be a requirement of the approval. Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

### Policy Item

**Consider adoption of the Cambridge Historical Commission’s “Guidelines for Preservation and Replacement of Historic Wood Windows in Cambridge” for the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District.**

Mr. King moved to adopt the above stated document as administrative guidelines for cases in the district. Mr. Robertson seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

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Mr. King asked to strike the sentence on Page 3, Paragraph 1  
Mr. King made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2012 meeting as amended. Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Robertson. The motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

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### Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, July 16, 2012

Sheila M. King	25 Hurlbut St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Barbara Ackermann	41 Gibson St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Maggie Johnson	c/o 41 Gibson St., Cambridge, MA 02138