

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., November 19, 2012 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

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

Commission Members absent: Jim Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *member*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

Commission member Bill King, acting as Chair for public hearing, called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. Mr. King introduced the Commissioners and staff present.

Public Hearing:

Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District 5-year Review

Consider staff report and make recommendations for the Dec. 6, 2012 Cambridge Historical Commission meeting and subsequent City Council review on the status of the district, five years after consolidation.

Mr. King explained that the purpose of the public hearing was in fulfillment of a requirement set forth in the Half Crown-Marsh NCD District Order to produce a report summarizing the activities of the Commission for the City Council's review 5 years after the Consolidation Effective Date of Dec. 1, 2007. The report was required as a means of assessing the effectiveness of consolidating the Marsh and Half-Crown districts under one unified Commission for administrative purposes. This is also an opportunity to field questions and comments from the public and determine whether any recommended changes should be explored.

Mr. King summarized that the impetus for consolidating the two districts was based on several concerns, including the small geographic area from which resident Commission members had to be appointed.

Staff presented a summary of the key findings of the report, including the total number of permits reviewed from throughout the district, percentages of cases reviewed at the staff level vs. through a public hearing process, approval and denial statistics, and recommendations.

A series of images illustrating some of the more extensive projects that occurred in the last five years were shown for the Commission and public's benefit.

Mr. King stated that he had not been aware that the Commission members only see ¼ of the total cases that come through the city's Historical Commission office for processing, and that the vast majority of permits are projects that can be approved by the staff.

Questions were accepted from the public.

Carol Fishman of 59 Foster Street asked if the city staff had reached out to any of the area real estate offices with information about the local district designations. Ms. Tuffy answered that her colleague had recently prepared a standard information packet summarizing the location of designated properties and the guidelines for review that owners should be aware of when

contemplating a purchase. The Commission members who work in the real estate industry clarified for everyone's information that agents are bound to disclose anything they learn about a property to potential buyers, which would include historic designation.

Ed Serues of 100 Foster Street noted that some of the fences near his house were in excess of the 4-foot height limitation, with some that seem as high as 8-10' tall. It was explained that the edge of the district boundary west of Sparks Street does not include any of the properties on the north side of Foster Street – where those fences are located – only the south side of Foster.

The city's Inspectional Services Department does not require a building permit for to install a fence unless it is over 6' tall. It was acknowledged that this creates some confusion for property owners who don't realized the Conservation District guidelines supersede that policy, and that any fence over 4' requires review within the Half Crown-Marsh NCD.

Ms. Masterson raised the question of whether the Commission should ask for another review 5 years from now. The rest of the members felt that, with all cases subject to binding review now under the consolidated district, they could not anticipate that any sweeping changes to the district order would be needed.

Mr. King did suggest that, at the next opportunity when the Commission meets to review cases, they should consider if the Board of Zoning Appeal's *Design Guidelines for Roof Dormers* should be adopted into their official documents.

It was explained that the report would be edited to include the comments received from the members of the public, which were to increase communication with both the real estate community and district residents about the mandatory review guidelines for exterior alterations.

Ms. Masterson made a motion to approve the 5-year report as drafted. Mr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. Robertson made a motion to discuss the *Design Guidelines for Roof Dormers* at the next Commission meeting and consider them for adoption by the Half Crown-Marsh NCD Commission. Ms. Masterson seconded the motion, which was approved 5-0.

Minutes

Mr. King submitted his edits in writing for the July and August 2012 meeting minutes. Mr. Robertson said his name should be added to the list of Commission Members present in the August meeting minutes since he is quoted as having comments in the minutes.

Mr. Smith moved to approve the minutes of the July and August 2012 meetings as amended. Ms. Masterson seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, November 19, 2012

Aaron Kemp	245 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Liz Rassweiler	22 Sparks St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Kaitlyn Payne	471 Massachusetts Ave., #6-1, Boston, MA 02118
Kathy Witgert	9 Sibley Court, Cambridge, MA 02138
Ed Serues	100 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Carol Fishman	59 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138