

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

October 6, 2014 - 6:00 PM at Carriage House at the Longfellow House, 105 Brattle Street, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Peter Schur, *alternates*

Members absent: Deborah Masterson, William King, *members*; Charles Smith, *alternate*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: see attached list

Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and gave an overview of the agenda. Mr. Van Sickle discussed procedures and the agenda for the meeting.

HCM-258: 52-54 Foster Street, by Ann and Charles Bonney. Window alterations and chimney removal.

Ms. Samantha Paull, staff member, discussed the overview of the application. She noted that this application addresses items that were not approved under the application reviewed last month.

Dr. Schur asked for clarification on what was located behind the windows proposed for enclosure.

Ms. Anne Bonney, an owner, responded that behind first floor is the range and the hood and upstairs that it is a bedroom. She pointed out that the bathroom window was what we discussed last meeting. She added that the windows on this application were set farther back from the street than the bathroom windows discussed last time, and thus had less visibility due to the tight setbacks. The window alterations are only for 52 Foster Street, the attached second unit, 54 Foster Street, would not have any alterations to the existing window configuration.

Dr. Schur asked if there were two or three windows that were proposed to be enclosed.

Ms. Bonney responded that it was a pair on first floor and one window on the second floor.

Mr. Van Sickle commented that he noticed that she took the suggestion of the Commission to fill with siding and leave original trim/frame, preserving the rhythm of openings and historic character of the structure.

Ms. Bonney replied yes.

Ms. Dortz asked if the rental would have access to rear, as it appeared that the access was closed off.

Ms. Bonney replied no, the renters in unit 54 would not, only the owners unit would have use and the rental will have emergency egress only through a rear hall.

Mr. Van Sickle asked Commissioners if they felt like the chimneys should have been kept, noting that historically there were two chimneys in front.

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Ms. Bonney stated that there was a pair of chimneys toward the main peak, one of which is removed, and the two chimneys in the rear, which were also already removed.

Dr. Schur asked what was happening to the stacks.

Ms. Bonney replied that they were not being used for fireplaces, only to vent the heat and hot water systems. She continued that they added new systems which did not require the chimneys to vent. She noted that the only fireplace is with the one we kept in unit 52.

Dr. Schur inquired as to how the systems were to be vented.

Ms. Bonney replied though a direct vent system.

Ms. Dortz added that many houses have chimneys and she would have liked to have seen the two chimneys as it gave sense of two units.

Ms. Bonney replied that the chimneys were taken down not because they didn't like the look but the square footage in the units were small. They impacted the space and flow of the rooms quite a bit. The rear two chimneys came down in the middle of the wall cutting into spaces. The front chimney was in the middle of a wall in the middle of the bedroom.

Ms. Dortz asked if they had considered keeping the tops but remove below roof.

Mr. Van Sickle added that Mr. King makes comment that they are typically important to streetscape and overall character. He continued that the Commission often reviewed proposals like this, as the historic boilers would have these small chimneys up in the middle, but they block the open plan concept these days. He added that there have been cases where owners were asked to rebuild above the roof. Mr. Van Sickle said that the question in his mind was whether this chimney was of significant importance. Being an architect, he added that he was sympathetic to a homeowner's need to modernize these houses. He concluded that if this were a chimney that were exposed on the outside of the house and went all the way up he would feel that it was a significant feature of the structure, but as this was interior he did not feel strongly about the chimneys. He stated he was glad at least one chimney remained, something left over from old days, alluding to the history of the structure.

Ms. Dillenseger expressed her concern about validating a violation.

Ms. Paull explained the Commission had the right to require her to rebuild if deemed necessary and had required violations to be reversed in the past.

Mr. Van Sickle added that the Commission could require the owner to rebuild above the roof if desired, but he was concerned with adding something that wasn't function that was purely aesthetic.

Ms. Dortz thought it was important to focus on the one remaining chimney. She asked how hard would it be to reconstruct the chimney.

Mr. Van Sickle questioned whether the chimney was significant enough to reconstruct, adding that he did not feel it was. Dr. Schur concurred. Ms. Dillenseger agreed.

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Ms. Bonney apologized for removing the chimneys without approval, she believed that everything had been addressed after her contractor met with staff to discuss the project prior to commencement.

Dr. Schur made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

Minutes

Dr. Schur made a motion to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dillenseger. The motion was approved 4-0.

Other Business

Ms. Paull gave the Commission an update on pending cases that they reviewed at the last hearing, 15 Willard Street and 1 Fuller Place.

Dr. Schur made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Dortz seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0 at 6:32 pm.

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**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

Keith Beardsley
Patrick Sharkey
Eric B. Harrington

74 Clarendon St, Ste A, Boston, MA 02116
74 Clarendon St, Ste A, Boston, MA 02116
17 Willard Street