

## **Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission** ***Approved at the May 15, 2017 Meeting***

October 24, 2016 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, William King, Deborah Masterson, and Charles Smith, *Members*; Adrian Catalano, *Alternate*

Members absent: Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; and Peter Schur, *Member*

Staff present: Samantha Paull Elliott

Members of the Public: see attached list

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Mr. William King, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:15pm and gave an overview of the agenda. Mr. King discussed meeting procedures. He noted all Commissioners present would be voting.

### **HCM-353: 43 Gibson Street, by Theodore and Genevieve Wagenknecht. Replace gutters.**

*Ms. Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Commissioner, recused herself as an abutter and joined the audience.*

Ms. Samantha Elliott, staff, gave an overview of the property, showed slides photos before their renovation project started and current photos.

*Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, arrived at 6:18pm. Mr. King maintained the Chair position through the item.*

Mr. Ted Wagenknecht, an owner, introduced himself and reviewed the proposal. He said that he renovated the house in 2011-2012 and constructed an addition at that time. He noted that the wood gutters were repaired and there were aluminum gutters added to the addition. He said that the repaired wood gutters were not holding up and that they were looking at replacing the remaining wood gutters with aluminum to match the aluminum gutters on the addition.

Mr. King asked why staff did not approve aluminum gutters. Ms. Elliott clarified that staff approved repairs in-kind, either replicating the profile, or using a historic material – none of which this proposal included.

Ms. Deborah Masterson, Commissioner, asked why it was approved for the addition. Ms. Elliott clarified that it was approved by the Commission, not on a staff level. Ms. Masterson asked how the gutters were restored. Mr. Wagenknecht replied that the gutters were repaired, oiled, and a portion were copper lined, but that the repairs did not hold up. Mr. Catalano added that wood gutters generally held little water and can easily get backed up with leaves or debris.

Mr. Van Sickle asked what size the proposed gutters were. Mr. Wagenknecht replied that they would match the existing gutters. Mr. Van Sickle asked if they were five (5) inch gutters. Mr. Wagenknecht replied yes, he thought they were five (5) inch gutters.

Mr. King asked for questions; there were none. He asked for comments from the public.

Ms. Anne Duggan, an owner at 41 Gibson Street, expressed concern with the application. She noted that the Commission was charged with preserving the historic character, including materials of the District. She questioned what would prevent others from returning to request aluminum rather than wood or copper if this application was approved. She noted that from a neighborhood perspective it set a precedent and should be applied equally if it were approved.

Mr. King asked for other comments from the public; there were none.

Mr. Catalano expressed agreement with Ms. Duggan's concerns for setting a precedent in the neighborhood. Mr. King agreed.

Ms. Elliott noted that the issue extended beyond the non-historic material. She noted that the aluminum gutters were also K-style, which was a different profile than the historic gutters. Mr. King asked if they had other materials suggested. Ms. Elliott said that staff routinely approved wood, copper-lined wood, copper, and composite that more closely relate to historic profiles or historic materials. She drew a picture to show the difference between some historic profiles and K-style. Ms. Masterson added that it appeared that aluminum only existed because it was agreed upon that the applicant was to restore the existing historic wood gutters and add the aluminum only to the addition. Ms. Masterson commented that it appeared that they were not properly restored as it had only been four (4) years since the project. She expressed concern over the profile not matching the historic profile.

Mr. Wagenknecht said he did not feel copper was appropriate for his house. Ms. Masterson replied that copper existed throughout the district, on a variety of architectural styles. She noted that the only reason aluminum existed was that it was approved by the Commission.

Mr. Van Sickle added that he replaced his gutters with copper when the wood rotted out and that it was a different look for the house. He added that Half Crown-Marsh was not a historic district but rather a neighborhood conservation district and was concerned that the Commission was setting the bar high.

Mr. Charles Smith, Commissioner, asked what the composite gutters were made of. Ms. Elliott replied that in the Commission's office there was a fiberglass product sample.

Mr. Van Sickle made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Catalano seconded the motion.

Mr. King expressed concern over it setting a precedent in the area. He noted that it seemed that maintaining the historic profile was more important than the material. Ms. Masterson echoed Mr. King's concerns and expressed concern over conflicting the previous condition to repair the wood gutters.

Mr. Van Sickle noted that most copper gutters have the same profile as the aluminum gutters and felt that the profile was not a substantial change to the character of the structure.

Mr. Wagenknecht said that the gutters had gaping holes and needed to be replaced. He said they worked great for about four years but that was no longer the case.

Mr. Van Sickle added that as this was a hip roof versus a gable roof, there was a larger span of gutter which would be more expensive. Ms. Masterson rebutted that price was not to be taken into consideration as Mrs. Elliott said. Mrs. Elliott clarified that the goals and objectives did not explicitly list price as criteria.

Mr. King suggested the amendment that it be found not incongruous to the objectives of the district or its immediate surroundings. He added that it was consistent with the goals that the Commission was conserving the modest character that typifies the workers housing and allowed for architectural diversity and individualized alterations while respecting the small scale of the area.

Mr. Van Sickle and Mr. Catalano accepted the amendment.

Mr. King called for the vote. The motion was approved 4-1 with Ms. Masterson voting against.

*Mr. Van Sickle resumed the position of Chair. Ms. Dillenseger rejoined the Commission.*

**HCM-354: 52-54 Foster Street, by Anne & Charles Bonney. Replace entry rail and stairs.**

*Ms. Masterson recused herself as an abutter and joined the audience.*

Ms. Elliott gave an overview of the property, showed slides, and reviewed the scope of the project. Mr. Van Sickle asked if staff has historic photos.

Ms. Elliott replied no. Mr. Van Sickle asked if the center baluster and rail was a recent addition. Ms. Anne Bonney, an owner, replied that she did not remember rails in the survey photo. She added that the center rails were not up to code so they added a small rail.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the Commission had any questions. Mr. King asked what type of rail was proposed. Ms. Bonney replied a molded cast iron railing without any balusters and a pole at the end. Mr. Van Sickle asked what kind of granite. Ms. Bonney replied they were proposing solid pieces of smooth, grey granite, similar to 62 Foster St.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for public questions – there none. He asked for public comments – there were none. He closed the public hearing.

Mr. King made a motion to approve the application as proposed. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

*Ms. Masterson rejoined the Commission.*

**HCM-355: 245 Mt. Auburn Street, by Aaron Kemp. Alter basement windows and install new doors.**

*Mr. Van Sickle noted that Mr. Catalano would be voting on the application.* Ms. Elliott gave an overview of the property, showed slides, and reviewed the scope of the project.

Mr. Aaron Kemp, an owner, noted that the house original had full height double-hung sash in the basement but the grade surrounding the house had been raised by four (4) feet over time, which required the windows to be reduced in size and the entry to be removed. He noted that one of the double hung windows remained in the basement, which he was using as a clue to the size.

Mr. King asked if the basement was habitable space. Mr. Kemp replied yes. Mr. Catalano asked if there was new access to the basement being installed from outside, and if it was qualifying as egress. Mr. Kemp replied yes it was a new door and that he was providing two means of egress, a window and door.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if they had water issues in the basement. Mr. Kemp replied no, that it was dry and they were proposing to add a French drain. Ms. Masterson asked if he had reached out to his abutters. Mr. Kemp replied yes and no one objected.

Mr. Smith asked if he was removing any landscaping for the alterations. Mr. Kemp replied no that the bushes were farther in front of the structure.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none. He asked for comments from the public. There were none.

Mr. King and Mr. Smith commended Mr. Kemp on his renovation so far. Mr. Kemp noted the house was also leaning nine (9) inches when he purchased it.

Mr. Catalano made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

#### **New Business**

Ms. Masterson expressed that it was hard to get to the new location in the basement of the Lombardi Building. Mr. Van Sickle asked if there was a branch library the Commission could use or if the music school was available. Ms. Masterson suggested looking at churches as well. Ms. Elliott replied that the music school did not have space within the hours of our meeting.

Mr. Smith asked if the Longfellow Carriage House could be used. Ms. Elliott replied that there was concern about the ADA accessibility as well as the NPS had replied that they were not open to being a permanent meeting location but rather were only comfortable with being a backup.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the Cronkite Center was available. Ms. Elliott replied that she could reach out but the Commission had been concerned with using a space that is regulated. Ms. Masterson asked for a budget. Ms. Elliott replied that it was not an option.

Ms. Masterson made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Elliott  
Preservation Administrator

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

Anne Duggan	Owner	41 Gibson Street
David Ranieri	Owner	41 Gibson Street
Aaron Kemp	Owner	245 Mount Auburn Street
Ted Wagenknecht	Owner	43 Gibson Street
Anne Bonney	Owner	52 Foster Street

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.