

## **Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission** ***Approved at the January 23, 2017 Meeting***

December 19, 2016 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; William King, Deborah Masterson, and Peter Schur, *Members*; Adrian Catalano, *Alternate*

Members absent: Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, and Charles Smith, *Members*

Staff present: Samantha Paull Elliott

Members of the Public: see attached list

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Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM and gave an overview of the agenda. Mr. Van Sickle discussed meeting procedures. He noted that as three members were present, Ms. Judith Dortz and Mr. Adrian Catalano would be voting.

### **HCM-360: 40 Gibson Street, by Jim and Julie O'Brien. Remove chimney, alter windows, alter door openings, and construct small bulkhead/shed addition.**

Ms. Samantha Elliott, staff, gave an overview of the property, showed slides of current photos.

Maggie Booz, the architect for the application, introduced herself and the owners, Jim and Julie O'Brien. Ms. Booz noted that they were proposing to renovation the interior and exterior of the structure. She said they were proposing to renovate the kitchen, two bathrooms and construct a small bulkhead/shed addition - noting that they had no plans to construct a large addition in the future. Ms. Booz continued, discussing the kitchen renovation which included removing hopper windows that had been added 15 years ago to the kitchen. She said the proposal was to replace those hoppers and other two-over-two windows on the house with single pane six-over-six windows with storms to make all the windows consistent. She added that they were proposing to replace the single window on the first floor front elevation with a pair of windows to mimic other similar structures on Gibson Street. Ms. Booz said that they were proposing to remove the chimney which is a utility chimney so they could increase the usability of the living space. She shared that the proposal also included adding windows on the stairs to bring in more light and installing a salvaged half-light panel door at the front entry.

Mr. Adrian Catalano, Commissioner, asked if the shutters were being preserved or reused. Ms. Booz replied that as shutters weren't common on double windows that they were not proposing to reinstall the shutters. Ms. O'Brien added that there were shutters in the basement for the third floor window that she hoped to reinstall. Ms. Dortz asked if the similar structures along the street had shutters. Ms. Elliott replied that some did and some did not - she noted that the shutters would not have necessarily been common as the similar structures had window pairs. While shutters have been created to accordion fold to one side for grouped windows, it was more common with bay windows in her experience, she added.

Ms. Masterson asked if they had reached out to abutters about the location and impact of the proposed air conditioning condensers. Ms. Booz said that they had not reached out to the owners of the apartment building that the condensers would be abutting, but noted that a driveway separated the condensers from the abutters. Ms. Booz added that they were considering using a mini-split system for the third floor. Mr. King asked if the condensers were located behind a fence. Ms. Booz replied yes, the current six (6) foot fence would remain. Ms. Elliott noted that repair of the fence could be done on a staff level but changes in height or location would require review by the Commission if the new fence exceeded four (4) feet in height.

Mr. Van Sickle asked how many similar houses with the double window on the front elevation were located in the immediate area. Ms. Booz said there were about four (4) houses that were similar - she noted that they were more ornate than the subject property but of a similar style. Mr. Van Sickle asked if the similar houses also had the side window on the stairwell that the applicant was proposing. Mr. Jim O'Brien, an owner, replied yes, at least one had a similar stair window. Ms. Elliott elaborated that the similar houses along Gibson Street had double windows on the first and second floor and that the houses were far more ornate than the subject property.

Mr. Van Sickle asked why there was a mixture of six-over-six and two-over-two windows. Ms. Elliott said the windows may have been replaced at some time in the past as it would have been uncommon to have them mixed when the house was originally constructed. Ms. Booz clarified that they were hoping to have all the same windows in the same room. She noted that they were proposing to have them custom built and storms to be installed to blend with the historic windows.

Mr. Van Sickle asked for questions from the public.

Mr. Reza Mahdavi, neighbor at 140 Foster Street, said he did not object to the chimney removal and asked to see the plans. After reviewing the plans he had no additional questions or comments. Ms. Sonia Turek, neighbor at 148 Foster Street, also looked at the plans. After reviewing the plans she said she had no additional comments or questions.

Ms. Dortz asked if it was feasible to preserve the chimney above the roofline. Mr. Catalano expressed concern with that, noting that he had done it on a property previously and it was a bigger leak and structural issue than had been anticipated. Mr. Van Sickle also expressed concern over the construction of a faux chimney, noting that this was a utility chimney versus a prominent chimney that was significant to the character. Mr. King said that while he was a proponent of chimneys he felt that this chimney was very utilitarian and minimally visible and would not be sorry to see it go.

Mr. King asked if they were using a direct vent heating system. Ms. Booz replied yes and that it would be located on the driveway side of the house.

Ms. Masterson made a motion to accept the application as submitted. Mr. King offered an amendment that the proposed changes were not incongruous to the building or neighborhood. Ms. Masterson accepted the amendment. Dr. Schur seconded the amended motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

### **New business**

The Commission reviewed a memo prepared by staff discussing potential permanent meeting locations. The Commission expressed a desire to not make the temporary location, the basement meeting room in

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the Lombardi Building, permanent. Staff offered to continue to research potential locations and report back at the next hearing.

Mr. King made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Schur seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Elliott  
Preservation Administrator

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

Sonia Turek	Abutter	148 Foster Street
Maggie Booz	Architect	625 Mt. Auburn Street
Julie O'Brien	Owner	40 Gibson Street
Reza Mahdavi	Neighbor	140 Foster Street
Tim O'Brien	Owner	40 Gibson Street

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