

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission ***Approved at the December 11, 2017 Meeting***

July 17, 2017 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*, Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*
Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, and Charles Smith, *Members*. Adrian Catalano, *Alternate*

Members absent: Peter Schur, Deborah Masterson

Staff present: Susan Maycock

Members of the Public: see attached list

Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. He introduced the commission members and outlined the meeting procedures. He stated that since the case is a new one and not a continuation, all five members, including those who were not at the June meeting, would vote on this case.

HCM-382: 60 Foster Street, by Marc and Madeleine Holzer. Rebuild entry steps in masonry and construct new covered entry.

Ms. Susan Maycock, staff, presented an overview of the property's history and the project. She pointed out that 60 and 62 Foster Street were built by Patrick O'Connor, a local carpenter, who also owned several adjacent lots on Foster Street. Both were originally two-family houses with double doors surmounted by bracketed hoods. When 60 Foster was converted to a single family house in 1991, a number of changes were made including the current fanlighted entrance.

The owner, Marc Holzer, gave an introduction to the project. He said that following the discussion at the June meeting, he and his wife had met with staff and worked with the architect to design a porch more in keeping with the neighboring buildings. The current proposal had a hip roof instead of a pediment, square posts instead of columns and was lower overall. Their goal was to make something compatible with the neighborhood and that met their safety needs.

The architect, Amy Semmes, introduced herself and said that she was based in Medford but had worked in Cambridge for many years. She said that Marc had given a good overview of the project and that they had studied different alternatives to "right size" the porch. Ms. Semmes compared the earlier submittal with its 10 inch columns and fully detailed pediment to the revised plan. She pointed out that the downsized porch had 8 inch square posts, lower height, and smaller scale overall, to make it a less prominent addition to the façade. She said that there had been some back and forth about a bracketed hood but that the owners preferred to keep the porch structure free standing since they had just completed a full interior renovation and did not want to open up the front wall as they would have to in order to support a cantilevered or bracketed hood.

Ms. Judith Dortz, commissioner, asked whether they were reusing the front door and Mr. Catalano responded that it was not old but dated from the 1990s renovation. Ms. Semmes said that there would be a new door and transoms and that she hoped that the new door assembly would just pop into the old opening.

Mr. Charles Smith, commissioner, said that he remembered seeing a photo of the bracketed hood over the door at 62 Foster at last month's presentation and that made him think about that for 60. Ms. Semmes explained that building a bracketed hood would require opening up the front wall of the house to insert beams for support.

Mr. Adrian Catalano, commissioner, asked if the bathroom was immediately over the door because he remembered being told something different last month. He had the impression that it was an open foyer and wanted some clarification. Mr. Holzer said that when you walk in there is an entry, but directly above it are 2 bathrooms. Ms. Semmes showed the plans of the second floor that showed the location of the bathrooms.

Mr. Van Sickle interjected that this was a new case and that seeing the second floor plans clarified the layout.

Mr. Van Sickle then read a letter dated July 12, 2017 from Reginald Roome II, a structural engineer with Roome & Guarrancino that stated how intrusive it would be to cantilever or bracket support the proposed entry roof structure.

Mr. Van Sickle asked the applicant why he thought the original project had been turned down. Mr. Holzer replied that he understood that the proposed peaked roof was too prominent and that the scale of the porch was too large.

Mr. Van Sickle read the Specific Objectives and Principles of the HCMNCD order to "conserve the historic architectural character of the Neighborhood, including the modest character that typifies the mid to late 19th century workers' and suburban housing of the Neighborhood, and the overall simplicity of its traditional wood-frame vernacular architecture."

Ms. Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, commissioner, added that the first discussion was also concerned with maintaining the views through properties in the district. Mr. Catalano stated that the commission also felt it needed more data to determine whether brackets and a hood were feasible. Ms. Maycock added that the discussion in June emphasized simplicity and the feeling that the proposed fully detailed high pediment was too grand for the house and the neighborhood.

Ms. Dortz asked how far out the porch would extend from the house. Ms. Semmes answered that the edge of the bluestone landing would be 3'4" from the face of the brick foundation, which would match the depth of the existing landing.

Mr. Van Sickle read three emails from Annie and Chad Bonney, Carol Fishman, and Catharine Rush, and one letter from Woody Tucker, all Foster Street residents and all in support of the project.

Ms. Dortz said that she had visited the house and was surprised to see how close it was to the street. This made her think that brackets and a hood would look better. Mr. Holzer responded that the entryway was

actually 20 ft from the sidewalk. He said that he surveyed the houses on Foster Street and found that of 21 houses only 2 have brackets and several have recessed entries.

Mr. Van Sickle said that the brackets on many houses were not original but that they were added at different times in the 19th century. Depending on when they were added, some brackets have a particularly Victorian look which may not reflect the original style of the house they are on. He said this was not a historic district. He went on to explain the difference between a historic district which might concern itself with the minutiae of design details and a neighborhood conservation district whose main goal is to conserve the general character of the neighborhood. He wanted to express his concern that the NCD follow the guidelines in the order and not become a design police. He added that the HCMNCD had approved a new bracketed hood for a side entry at 16 Brown Street in 2015 (Case #303), although he thought later people might be confused and think those brackets were historic and needed to be preserved.

Mr. Van Sickle said that he himself had gotten approval to build a full 5 ft deep entry porch on the side of his house at 15 Brown Street to protect him and his wife from icicles during the winter.

Ms. Dortz said that she had looked all around Foster Street and saw no porches with posts.

Ms. Dillenseger said that she felt that the applicants had listened to the commission and had made a significant effort to reduce the scale of the porch. Mr. Smith also thought that they had listened and responded to the commission's concerns.

Mr. Catalano moved that the commission grant approval to rebuild the steps and to build a covered porch according to the designs presented in the drawings dated July 5, 2017. Mr. Smith seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Minutes

The minutes from the meeting on June 19, 2017 were reviewed and corrections were made and approved.

Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Maycock
Survey Director

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

Marc Holzer	Owner	60 Foster St, Cambridge, 02138
Amy Semmes	Architect	120 Auburn St, Medford 02155
Ariel Kraakman	Urban studies student	Medford, MA 02155