

## MINUTES OF THE HALF CROWN-MARSH NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

**Approved at the 10/21/2019 Meeting**

July 08, 2019 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Commissioners present: Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Vice-Chair; Jo Solet, Peter Schur, *Members*; Rory O'Connor, *Alternate*.

Commissioners absent: Adrian Catalano, Maximillian Frank, James Van Sickle.

Staff present: Eric Hill, Survey Director

Members of the Public: Mary Louise Kent & George Kent, 2 Foster Place.

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Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, acting Chair, called the hearing to order at 6:01pm. She explained the rules and procedures for the Commission and noted that there was a quorum. Staff noted that there were no members of the public nor applicants present for the first item on the agenda, so he suggested that the Commission review the second item first. Ms. Dillenseger confirmed with those in attendance and agreed.

### **HCM-464: 19 Brown Street, by Randolph and Sue Wentworth. Construct entry vestibule off front door; add two windows on east-facing façade to match existing windows.**

Mr. Hill showed slides and gave a history of the property. He noted that the property, according to a 1940s photo, originally had a door on the Brown Street façade with a pent roof above. It was also noted that by the 1960s, the main entry was relocated to the south-facing elevation. Staff noted that they were supportive of the proposal; however, felt that the proposed entry treatment and door surround was a little too high-style and not typical of a traditional worker's cottage.

Ms. Dillenseger asked the applicants if they wanted to present anything or add to staff's comments.

Rand Wentworth, owner and applicant, mentioned that they have lived in the home for over three years and after renting, purchased the home in September. The desire for a mudroom is due to conditions in the colder months where salt, sand and dirt goes right into the home as there is no covered entry or vestibule off the front steps. They hoped to face the front door to the street to re-engage the home to the street with a door that faces the community. Additionally, they felt that at the Brown Street elevation, the two windows are not symmetrical, and it feels like something is missing. They noted that their neighbor across the street pointed this out to them. In response to staff's concerns on the design of the door treatment, Rand mentioned that the idea for sidelights and a transom would allow for more light and transparency into the proposed mudroom.

The architect, Bill Hubbard, added that the room serves as an entry and has no real formal function. The idea for mostly glass facing the street would serve to make the addition feel like a background and not call too much attention.

Sue Wentworth, owner, added that another reason for the mudroom addition was to not have to look at the neighbor's trash cans when they walk out their front door.

Ms. Dillenseger opened the hearing up to questions for staff or the applicants.

Commissioner Solet asked the architect what the squares at the corners of the entry treatment were. She also explained that the doorway appeared more Greek Revival and ornate than what would typically be seen on this type of home.

Mr. Hubbard explained that all the inner panels in the elevations at the doorway surround were proposed as simple clear glass, including the small square corner panels. He mentioned that his inspiration for this treatment was taken from similar homes he has worked on in Cambridge.

Commissioner Solet asked if any of those examples were in the Half Crown-Marsh neighborhood.

Mr. Hubbard did not think so.

Ms. Solet then asked how the proposed addition would impact the off-street parking situation at the home.

Mr. Wentworth explained that the parking space would be approximately 11'x19', which was within the allowable parking space dimensions for the City of Cambridge. He went on to note that due to Brown Street being a minimally travelled, one-way street, most residents park on the street unless it is a street cleaning day or for snow emergencies.

Ms. Dillenseger asked the applicant and architect if this design was the best way to get more light into the home. She asked if the proposed two windows on the side elevation of the new addition would provide enough natural light for the space.

The architect noted that since the homes are very close together and since large shrubs and trees are located on the south lot line, additional east-facing glass features would give more light to the space.

Mr. Schur asked what would be done to the windows which would be enclosed by the mudroom addition.

Mr. Hubbard explained that the two windows that would be enclosed are in good condition and would be used for the proposed new windows on the Brown Street elevation.

Ms. Dillenseger opened the hearing up to questions or comments from the public.

George Kent, an abutter at 2 Foster Place, showed his support for the proposed changes and added that he and his wife were approved for a mudroom addition at their home. He also mentioned that this type of feature is crucial for the climate of Cambridge. He supported the addition of the two windows to balance out the front façade.

Ms. Dillenseger read the letters of support from neighbors and noted that there were a total of nine letters of support and no letters against the proposal. She then opened the hearing up to comments from the Commission.

Ms. Solet stated that she was a little unnerved by the two corner lights over the sidelights. She said that it would make more sense to have fewer lights and to carry along the transom or raise the sidelights.

Ms. Dillenseger agreed with Commissioner Solet and felt that the doorway was taken up entirely by panes of glass and framing and it looked congested and not typical of a traditional worker's cottage.

Mr. O'Connor stated that he felt it is not the Commission's job to design the proposals at a hearing. He felt that the proposal is compatible with other homes in the district and the rendering may make it look more detailed than it would be when constructed. He added that the two new windows would be a welcome addition.

Ms. Dillenseger read from the district design standards that the Commission shall, "Allow for architectural diversity and individualized alterations, while respecting the traditional small scale of the housing stock". She explained that the proposal does this.

A motion to vote was called for and **Peter Schur made a motion to approve the proposal as presented. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0 to approve the application.**

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**HCM-463: 14 Brown Street, by Rona Kiley. Install 6'-0" fence and gate at side yard.**

Staff showed slides and gave a history of the property. He noted that the property most recently was home to Carol Johnson, a very prominent landscape architect in Cambridge. Staff explained that Johnson designed much of the landscaping at her home at 14 Brown Street, including the raised berms, sunken side yard garden, and designing of the pergola and yard furniture. Staff explained that the applicant and owner is away for the summer and he would try and answer questions to the best of his ability regarding the project.

Ms. Dillenseger asked staff why the applicant wants to construct a fence in the location.

Mr. Hill explained that in speaking to the applicant, their main concern was visibility of the neighbor's trash containers. The applicant wanted a gate to allow for accessibility to the rear/side yard and the design would allow for greater visibility above 4'-0" of fence.

Ms. Dillenseger mentioned that the adjacent property at 16 Brown Street was denied a fence of 6'-0" to preserve their view at the side yard and that the proposal at 14 Brown Street would obscure even more open space and significant open space at that.

Mr. O'Connor asked staff to explain where the fence is proposed according to the photos.

He showed images of the side yard and explained that the proposed fence would only screen the trash containers from the applicant's yard view, not from the public way.

Ms. Dillenseger asked if the neighbor's trash cans are being stored on the property line.

Staff noted that it was possible when comparing the images with the zoning map, but he could not speak definitively one way or the other.

A motion to vote was called for and **Peter Schur made a motion to deny the proposal as presented. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0 to deny the application because it**

**failed to “conserve the view through yards and between houses” and the Commission suggested that the applicant explore other options to screen the trash cans with a 4’-0” fence or vegetation.**

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**Minutes of May 13, 2019 hearing:**

**Mr. Schur made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 13, 2019 as presented. Commissioner Solet seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes, 4-0.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Eric Hill  
Survey Director, Cambridge Historical Commission