

MINUTES OF THE HALF CROWN-MARSH NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Approved at the _____ Meeting

November 18, 2019 - 6:00 PM at Lombardi Building, Basement Conference Room, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge

Commissioners present: James Van Sickle, Chair; Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Vice-Chair; Rory O'Connor.

Commissioners absent: Adrian Catalano, Maximillian Frank, Peter Schur, Jo Solet

Staff present: Eric Hill, Survey Director

Members of the Public: Terry Holzman, 247-249 Mt. Auburn St #1; William Dines; Charles Fineman.

Jim Van Sickle, Chair, called the hearing to order at 6:01pm. He explained that he would not explain the rules and procedures for the Commission, unless asked, as the applicant had been before them the month before. Mr. Van Sickle noted that there was a quorum.

HCM-472: 245 Mt. Auburn Street, by Aaron Kemp. Construct new fence at front yard. Continued from October hearing.

Eric Hill, staff, showed slides and gave a history of the property. He expanded noting past approvals and the determination of the Half Crown-Marsh Commission at the October 21, 2019 public hearing. It was explained that the applicant, Aaron Kemp, was approved for the deck and pergola at the rear yard and agreed to a continuance regarding the fence at the front yard. Mr. Hill maintained the recommendation of approval of the front yard fence in that the taller arbor was removed that they were supportive of the proposal due to the site location of the home on Memorial Drive, paired with the design and intent of the fence.

Mr. Van Sickle asked the applicants if they had anything to add to staff's presentation.

Jacqui Kemp, owner, explained that the side addition on the east side of the home was converted to a kitchen that gets the most use in the home. The intent of the fence was to increase privacy on this section of the home and side yard as Memorial Drive is a heavily trafficked road for vehicles and pedestrians. She also mentioned that they tried to be consistent with the 4'-0" height requirement at the corner, which would taper up to 6'-0" for privacy to the east.

Commissioner Rory O'Connor asked Mr. Van Sickle what the district guidelines state in terms of fences.

Mr. Van Sickle explained that fences 4'-0" or less are not regulated by the Commission, and anything above that requires review and approval. Mr. Van Sickle went on to explain that one of the main reasons for the district's establishing was the prevalence of tall fences which gave the feeling of a very "walled off" neighborhood. The intent now is to ask owners to replace taller fences with lower, which has been successful.

Terry Holzman, abutter at 249 Mt. Auburn Street, began by noting that she was grateful that volunteers give their time and attention to keep Cambridge as beautiful as it is. She described the house at 245 Mt. Auburn as being neglected for years and Aaron, the applicant, has done a great job at restoring it and bringing it back to what it should be.

Aaron Kemp, applicant, asked if the chair could read letters addressed to the Commission as he thought they had in the past.

Mr. Van Sickle agreed and read the four new letters received by staff for the hearing. The letters came from: Franziska Amacher at 239 Mt. Auburn St., Robert Hurlbut at 5 Sparks Street, Paul Malherbe at 1 Camden Place, and Dominic Yee at 1 Sparks Street. All letters were supportive of the application. Ms. Amacher suggested that the side yard fence which would run along her property taper down like what is seen on the front yard as to not “abruptly end” near her home.

Mr. Hill mentioned that he received comments by a Commissioner, Jo Solet, that day regarding the fence application. Although she was not in attendance to vote, she felt that the gate should align with the front door of the home. The applicant could request an additional garden gate, but felt that the short section of fence should align with the front entry to the home.

Mr. Van Sickle then asked the applicant if any neighbors would split the cost as it can be very expensive to construct long expanses of fence, especially in an Azek material.

Mr. Kemp stated that they would absorb all the cost of the fence.

Mr. Van Sickle then explained the Commission is understanding regarding higher fences for privacy and stated the objective in the district standards which mentions the intent to conserve views through yards while respecting residential privacy of individual properties.

Ms. Dillenseger stated that she is happy the applicant came before them with a compromise in design and even removed the taller arbor from the past iteration. She could remember what the home looked like before and commended Mr. Kemp on his work on the home thus far.

Mr. O’Connor explained that if the fence was solid, he could not have supported the application. Due to the openness and height change in the fence, he felt it would be an improvement to the neighborhood.

Ms. Dillenseger agreed and stated that what Mr. and Mrs. Kemp are doing is inspiring and should be commended, it is a success story for a home in the district.

Before the vote, Mr. Hill asked the Commission if they would like to stipulate the section of side yard fence or leave it up to the applicant and Ms. Amacher.

The Commission felt that it would not be overtly visible, and it would be their decision whether to pay for the additional transition section.

A motion to vote was called for and **Rory O’Connor made a motion to approve the proposal as presented. Commissioner Marie-Pierre Dillenseger seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 to approve the application.**

Minutes of October 21, 2019 hearing:

Ms. Dillenseger made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2019 pending minor edits submitted by Commissioner Solet. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes, 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Eric Hill
Survey Director, Cambridge Historical Commission