

MINUTES OF THE HALF CROWN-MARSH NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION
Approved at the 08/19/2024 Meeting

March 11, 2024. Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar- 6:00 P.M.

Commissioners present: Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Chair; Aaron Kemp, Vice-Chair; Ruby Booz, Donna Marcantonio, Jo Solet, Jim Van Sickle.

Commissioners Absent: Peter Schur

Staff present: Eric Hill

Due to statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response to COVID-19, this meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum of commissioners and the applicant present, Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M. She explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures then introduced the commissioners and staff.

1) Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-632: 29 Ash Street: Alter fenestration on north side elevation.

Eric Hill, staff, shared slides and explained the history of the house, which was an 1840s Greek Revival style house, and nearly a twin to its neighbor at 31 Ash Street. Eric Hill added that at its June 2023 public meeting, the Commission had approved the addition of a dormer on the main roof, a projecting wall dormer at the rear ell and the removal of the two chimneys. Those items had been tied up in BZA review until the applicant was notified on the Stretch Code requirements for major renovations. The owner is now requesting to enclose some windows on the side, alter the previously approved windows in the dormer, and the addition of a new double-hung window, all on the north side elevation.

Catherine Hayden, the owner of 29 Ash Street explained that the intent for her project was largely to adhere to the required HERS rating as part of the new Specialized Energy Stretch Code of 2022.

Eric Hill explained that the code requires builders, for both new construction and major renovations, to meet high-performance standards, prepare buildings for all-electric heating and cooling, and make parking ready for electric vehicle chargers. The code is reviewed as a rating where specific features are added or subtracted to the final score. The newly adopted Stretch Code was enacted in Cambridge on July 1, 2023.

Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Chair, opened the meeting to questions of fact by commissioners.

Aaron Kemp, Vice-Chair, asked Catherine Hayden if she considered enclosing the windows from the inside, leaving the windows and trim detailing at the exterior.

Catherine Hayden responded that she did consider it, but the rating for that enclosure would not be the same as complete siding at the exterior.

Aaron Kemp followed up stating he thought that enclosing the interior should be the same as walling off the exterior with clapboards.

Ruby Booz asked Ms. Hayden if she would use the existing shutters on the house to enclose the openings of the windows.

Catherine stated that it was the intent to use the existing shutters as they fit the openings. They would be slightly cut down if needed.

Jim Van Sickle asked what types of rooms were behind the windows to be enclosed. He prefaced his question stating that the interior programming is not part of the jurisdiction of the Commission, but it may trigger zoning and building code issues if enclosing bedrooms.

Catherine explained that behind the windows, to be enclosed, there are hallways and closets.

Jo Solet did not have a question but explained that there is historical and more recent precedence for enclosing windows with shutters. Examples can be found at the corner of Craigie and Brattle streets and her own home on Berkeley Street.

Donna Marcantonio asked if there are any issues with closing shutters and affixing them to the house. She also asked if the new window trim would match others on the house.

Catherine Hayden explained that there would be siding underneath the shutters and they would be nailed to that siding to remain closed. The new window trim would exactly match the others.

Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Chair, asked what type of siding the shutters would be covering.

Catherine Hayden noted that she was unsure if it would be clapboard or a smooth siding, but it would allow the existing trim to remain.

Jim Van Sickle asked if the windows proposed at the dormer would be double-hung, casement, or unoperable. He also asked if they were to be 3-over-3 or 6-over-6 sash as it was unclear from her plans and description.

Catherine stated that she was unsure if they would be operable, but she would like at least one to be functional for air circulation. She was open to either 3-over-3 or 6-over-6 but preferred the latter option. She could make them all operable if needed as well.

Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Chair, opened the meeting to questions of fact and comments by members of the public. No members of the public were in attendance. Marie-Pierre then opened the meeting to comments and deliberation by the Commission.

Jo Solet stated that she preferred to see a drawing of the final proposal for the dormer windows. She asked Eric Hill what the options were for the commission.

Eric Hill explained that the commission could vote a number of different ways: 1) to approve of a specific window design and if it deviates from that approval, it would come back before the Commission; 2) to approve the proposal and allow staff to approve specific window details; 3) to continue the case to a subsequent hearing pending a final proposal is determined.

Aaron Kemp noted that the proposal is for changes to a side elevation. He explained that he would prefer a five-window dormer as previously approved and open shutters with interior walls filled in for the enclosed windows, but other designs were not a dealbreaker for him.

Ruby Booz stated that she felt good about the proposal for the lower section. She understood how the window dormers would look and preferred the dormer item to be reviewed by staff for final approval.

Jo Solet agreed with Ruby, stating that she was okay with allowing staff to review final plans for the dormer.

Jim Van Sickle stated that as this is all to take place on the north, side elevation, it is insignificant enough as it is not directly facing a public way. The new window is appropriate. As there are issues for the owner to meet HERS rating requirements, he felt it was best to allow the owner to work with staff on finalizing the dormer details to adhere to those requirements while being architecturally appropriate. Staff would review the number and type of windows. If there would be a significant change in the design, it could come back to the Commission.

Marie-Pierre Dillenseger concurred with what had already been said by fellow commissioners. She saw the value in matching the dormer next door at 31 Ash Street.

Jim Van Sickle made a motion to approve the case. Approval was granted on the following condition and comments:

- **That the bottom portion including the new window and enclosing of two windows are approved as submitted.**
- **That the dormer is to be approved with exact configuration and verified by staff.**

Ruby Booz seconded the motion.

Marie-Pierre Dillenseger began a voice vote with a vote of 5-0 in favor of the motion. Approved.

Approval of minutes for February 12, 2024 public meeting.

Jo Solet made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 12, 2024 meeting. Aaron Kemp seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes, 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Eric Hill, Survey Director, Cambridge Historical Commission