

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

January 4, 2010 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2nd Floor

Commission Members: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, and Carole Perrault, *Members*; Sue-Ellen Myers and Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Staff: Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and made introductions. Ms. Goodwin designated both alternates to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC 2154: 1-15 Vail Ct./139 Bishop Allen Dr., by Mohammas S. Abu-zahra, Trustee. To hear project status report and consider request to renew the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish existing buildings and construct four new residential buildings.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the architecture of the buildings. She explained the past history of the case, which had most recently been reviewed by the Commission in 2006, at which time the Commission delegated review of construction drawings to the Architects Committee. The construction drawings had never been presented for review and the Commission's approval had now expired due to the amount of time that had elapsed with no action. A new hearing was required to approve the proposal.

Kevin Delaney introduced himself and said he was representing the owners. He asked the Commission to re-issue the certificate of appropriateness for the project. No changes had been made to the proposed plans. He displayed the existing and proposed site plans and photographs of the buildings.

Ms. Burks asked what date was on the proposed plans being displayed, which did not match the plans she had on file. She said the most recently approved plans were dated November 2005. She reported that the original certificate of appropriateness had been amended, and one of the changes was the arrangement of the driveway and landscaped areas on the site plan. She reported that a review of the minutes had indicated that the change to the site plan had been requested so that there would be a buffer between the existing commercial parking lot, a future development site, and the new buildings.

Mr. Said Abu-zahra, a co-owner, requested a continuance to allow the proponents to straighten out the drawings and make a new presentation.

Karen Engels, of 8 St. Paul Street, said the site plan was among the issues of concern for the neighbors. She asked for a copy of the drawings.

Charles Korn, of 6 Austin Park, commented that his biggest concern was that the buildings were not spaced far enough apart, which was inconsistent with the character of other buildings in the neighborhood. He objected to the proximity of the new buildings to the buildings on Austin Park, which was proposed to be closer than the existing conditions. He also expressed concern about the drop off in grade for the basement level garage entrance. He said it would be nice to fix up the existing buildings, though they hadn't been maintained for the last 15 years.

Mr. Delaney said the existing buildings were beyond salvage. He asked if at grade parking was preferred by the neighbors.

Mr. Korn noted there was at grade parking now. He said he would like to be included in a design discussion. Ms. Engels expressed her preference for at grade parking because she was concerned the garage entrance would be a danger to the children that play in the neighborhood.

Laura Bjorklund, of 9 St. Paul Street, objected to the reversal of the site plan. The decision should not be based on future plans at the commercial parking lot site.

Ms. Goodwin requested additional information for the continued hearing including existing and proposed site plans showing parking arrangements, shadow studies, schedule of materials, landscaping plan, and an explanation as to why the site plan had been flipped.

Marilee Meyer, of 10 Dana Street, said a rendering of the façade would be helpful.

Ms. Litchfield moved to continue the hearing to February 1st, at the request of the applicant.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3594: 285 Harvard St. #112, by Judy Murdock. To replace windows.

Ms. Burks showed slides but did not have a slide of the back of the building facing West Street, where the applicant's unit was located.

Judy Murdock, the owner, indicated on a site plan where the six windows were located. She described the proposed replacement, Renewal by Anderson, which was made of a composite material called Fibrex that is 40% wood and 60% polymer. Other units in the building had replaced their windows already. She said her intent was to match the existing appearance.

Mark Mordini, of Renewal by Anderson, displayed a sample window sash. The replacement would be a full replacement, not just the sash. The new frame was very narrow, so there would be zero glass loss (area of glazing). The Fibrex could be painted like wood, but the factory color was extruded into the material.

Ms. Murdock described the existing casement windows at the fire escape. They were falling apart and could not be locked.

Ms. Pauli asked if the exterior moldings would be replaced.

Mr. Mordini answered that they would be replaced only if necessary.

Ms. Goodwin asked the applicant if she had considered restoring the existing windows.

Ms. Murdock replied that she had considered it briefly, but didn't get any estimates. She noted that the frame was rotten around the windows.

Ms. Perrault noted that when properly maintained, wood could last well over 100 years.

Ms. Burks reported that she had recently written to the board of trustees for the building to make them aware of the district designation and the window guidelines, which prioritize repair over replacement.

Ms. Litchfield moved to approve the application, with the recommendation that the condominium association should develop guidelines for the building that would ensure consistency in the windows on the building.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3595: 99 Prospect St., by Christ the King Presbyterian Church. To construct access ramp and replace door at left side of church building.

Ms. Goodwin noted that there was no one present to represent the case or answer questions. She said she did have several questions for the applicants.

Ms. Burks suggested that the application be denied on the basis that there was not enough information and no one to provide answers to the commissions questions, but to invite the applicants to resubmit for next month.

Ms. Myers so moved.

Ms. Pauli seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

MC-3596: 12 Fainwood Cir., by Karen Price. To replace windows.

Ms. Burks showed slides of the property.

Mark Mordini, of Renewal by Anderson, said the owner was out of town but had asked him to represent her. All the windows on the third floor would be replaced with a grid to match the existing (2-over-1). He pointed out that the first floor unit had replaced the original windows with vinyl. He described the warranty on Renewal by Anderson windows, which was 20 years on the glass, 10 years on the frame and hardware, and 2 years on the installation. The warranty was transferable to a new owner. He said the existing windows had dry rot on the frame and had not been maintained properly. There was almost no paint on the windows.

Ms. Litchfield said it was unfortunate that the windows had been left to rot because a good quality storm window over a sound original window was a combination that really works.

Ms. Perrault asked if an all wood replacement window was an option. Mr. Mordini said that Anderson did manufacture an all wood replacement, but it would cost three times as much and would not meet the federal requirements for tax credits for energy improvements.

Ms. Pauli asked what type of balance was in the Renewal by Anderson window.

Mr. Mordini replied that it was a block and tackle balance with nylon cords and 300 pound strength.

Ms. Perrault asked if the exterior trim would be replaced.

Mr. Mordini said the rotted sills would be replaced and trim would be replaced only if it was rotted. The replacement moldings would match the existing profiles, but would be made of Fibrex like the windows.

Ms. Perrault expressed the Commission's preference for preservation of wood windows, but due to the specifics of this case moved to approve the application for replacement.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

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Ms. Myers noted that her name had been misspelled several times.

Ms. Perrault moved to approve the December minutes as corrected.

Ms. Pauli seconded, and the motion passed 4-0. Ms. Litchfield abstained from voting because she had not been present at the November minutes.

Ms. Litchfield moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Perrault seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 1/4/10

Said Abuzahra	29 Mackenzie Lane, Wakefield, MA 01880
Jehad Abuzahra	29 Mackenzie Lane, Wakefield, MA 01880
Charles Korn	6 Austin Pk
Nick Mildwoff	7 Austin Pk #2
Mark Mordini	104 Otis St, Northboro, MA 01532
Laura Bjorklund	9 St Paul St
Lawrence Shiers	139 Bishop Allen Dr
Kevin Delaney	214 Lakeview Ave
Karen Engels	8 St. Paul St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St #404
Larry Kolokney	4 Austin Pk
Judy Murdock	285 Harvard St #112
Michael Pnsak	8 Austin Pk #2