

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

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

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Carole Perrault, *Members*; Siobhan McMahon, *Alternate*

Commission Members Absent: Charles Redmon, *Member*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Staff: Sarah Burks, Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. She described the Commission's procedures and made introductions.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3670: 80 Inman St., by Karl Klare. To replace siding and trim; install new windows, gutters, and roofing materials.

Staff member Eiliesh Tuffy presented slides showing the property and existing conditions at the 1872 Mansard residence. Ms. Tuffy summarized the exterior rehabilitation proposal.

Jeff Goodman, the contractor, explained that what began as an inspection of a bowed wall led to a much larger rehabilitation project. The scope includes re-sheathing the mansard roof, finishing with scalloped asphalt shingles, and putting in new wall insulation. Twenty (20) one-over-one vinyl replacement windows will be installed. Existing ornamental trim is to be repaired or duplicated, but PVC trim will be used elsewhere. Concerns over lead paint abatement and the associated costs prompted the contractor to discourage scraping and repainting the original wood clapboards in favor of new HardiPlank siding. The original scope was scaled back in order to trim 20% off the project budget. Mr. Goodman feels the house will look much like it did when it was built.

Chairman Nancy Goodwin asked staff whether this was a binding or non-binding review, to which staff responded it was non-binding.

Staff member Sarah Burks stated that lead paint removal is only required for households with children under the age of 6 years old. When scraping and repainting, current standards call for hanging plastic sheathing, mopping down the area prior to scraping, and informing neighbors of the work.

Ms. Carole Perrault asked about the condition of the clapboards. Mr. Goodman felt they were in fair condition, while staff observed minimal rot and splitting at a site visit. Ms. Goodwin advised that the exterior work should also reintroduce appropriate hood moldings over the window, similar to those found on neighboring Mansard-style houses.

Ms. Goodwin inquired about the method of insulation. Mr. Goodman indicated they intend to blow cellulose into the wall cavities.

Changes to the primary façade were discussed. Mr. Goodman mentioned that the windows on the front of the house are original, but the weights were previously taken out or replaced. These, along with other non-original windows, will be replaced. The front door will not be changed.

Goodman stated that he understood vinyl windows are not appropriate replacements in the opinion of the Commission.

Vice Chairman Tony Hsiao asked about work occurring on the bay, fencing and the driveway. Ms. Lestra Litchfield asked how much of the trim would be replaced. Mr. Goodman said they would keep what trim details they could; otherwise they will install PVC trim. No new fencing or driveway work is planned.

Mr. Goodman pointed out that every rafter tail at the eaves was rotted and was being replaced due to water damage. The roof was displaced 4-5" at the rear of the house and a post was missing in the roof framing along the ridge. Ms. Burks stated that, if work is currently underway, it is being executed without a permit and should be addressed at the City's ISD immediately.

Mr. Hsiao concluded by saying that the contractor seemed to be aware of what the Commission feels would be an appropriate course of action: restoring the original wood clapboards and windows. Also, the debate over HardiPlank has come up before and, while the Commission has ruled it to be appropriate in some instances, it has a different appearance than wood clapboards and lacks the raking shadows cast by thicker boards.

Hsiao pointed out that all of the details become critical to the success of a project, and encouraged looking closely at clues on the house to derive the most accurate information on recreating those details. Ms. Litchfield and Ms. Perrault also felt it would be beneficial to try to pick one aspect of the exterior – or the primary elevation of the house – to do true preservation work (clapboards, windows, etc.).

Ms. Goodwin added that regular asphalt shingles work better aesthetically the proposed scalloped asphalt shingles, meant to imitate slate.

Ms. Litchfield made the argument for installing storm windows to achieve energy efficiency, given the favorable condition of the existing wood windows. The Commission suggested maintaining a two-over-two glazing pattern, in keeping with the historic divisions.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Hsiao moved to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness on the basis of the proposed replacement materials, acknowledging that the Commission recommends the applicant restore historic materials, replace in-kind, or select clad wood replacement windows in a two-over-two glazing pattern, particularly on the visible elevations.

Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0, with Siobhan McMahon voting as an Alternate.

MC-3674: 244 Hampshire St., by the Cambridge Housing Authority. Replace select windows.

Ms. Tuffy showed slides and described the property, which is a single unit on the first floor of a larger group of row houses constructed in 1892. The unit is managed by the Cambridge Housing Authority, which is contracting out for lead paint abatement on the interior. Because the tenants of the affordable housing unit could include children, the agency is requesting approval to remove nine existing wood windows to install new vinyl windows. Three windows in the front bay would be most visible, while the windows at the rear of the unit are only minimally visible from a public park. The building presently has a variety of window types and materials, the only unifying feature being the storm windows on the building.

Representatives for the project were: Robin Greenberg and Sylvia Mihich with StudioG Architects as well as Nancy Tierney, Assistant Planner, Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA).

Ms. Tierney described the CHA's role as landlord for just this one unit in the building, and their goal of de-leading the property. She also stated that, because the windows were installed prior to 1970, the CHA must assume there is lead paint on them. The condition of the windows is poor, such that they may not withstand the de-leading process.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the paint colors would match the existing windows. The architects said the replacements will be white vinyl, and the existing storms would simply be replaced.

Ms. Litchfield asked how many units still had their original windows. Ms. Tuffy said it is difficult to tell from the sidewalk, since the storm windows obstruct a clear view of every window, but estimated about 30-40% are replacement vinyl or aluminum windows.

Ms. Perrault asked if they were all one-over-one glazing. Ms. Tuffy said they were, and staff member Sarah Burks added that may have been the original pattern based on the 1890s date of construction.

There were no questions from the public.

Ms. McMahan moved to approve the proposal as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Ms. McMahan voting as an Alternate.

MC-3675: 43 Roberts Rd., by Elke and Thomas O'Donnell. Exterior alterations including window and door replacement, chimney and fire escape removal, and front stair remodeling.

Ms. Tuffy presented slides, described the scope of work on each elevation of the 1870s residence, and stated that this was a non-binding review. The proposal includes window replacement throughout, including the removal of five existing original windows that were retained during a previous 1995 rehabilitation. Changes to the rear elevation are only public from a private way.

The architect, Craig Whitaker, explained that the work to the front entryway consisted of widening a passage under the stairs by 7-8" to create more room, and that the existing stairs down to the basement would not be altered. The pipe railing is to be replaced with a metal railing with vertical balusters for increased safety. Metal was selected because the stairs are concrete, making it harder to attach wood handrails, and because they could use smaller dimensions in metal.

Details on the right side of the house were discussed.

Ms. Perrault asked why the small art glass window would be removed. The owner stated that it looks onto a non-original stair that they plan to remove, which would leave the window in an awkward place. The architect said there was a later addition in 1905, and felt the window may have been added at that time, since the interior molding is roughly cut around the window. Ms. Burks asked whether the window could be retained and merely blocked in on the interior. The architect raised concerns about condensation in the wall cavity.

The window sill on the third floor dormer is proposed to be raised approximately 1' from its present height. This dormer is minimally visible from the public way. Ms. Burks recommended using a fixed pane replacement window to eliminate a visible meeting rail.

Air condensing units and trash storage along the right side of the house were discussed, particularly whether four condensing units would violate the city noise ordinance. The architect selected the quietest model and a noise baffle for the a/c units. The trash will most likely be moved to the rear of the house.

Ms. Perrault, in reference to the proposed chimney removal, said that she normally likes to see chimneys retained but that the existing chimney did not appear to be in its original condition. The owner explained that there would be no need for it with the new interior layout.

Ms. Burks inquired about exterior vents. The architect said they would be positioned towards the rear of the house on the driveway side.

Mr. Hsaio complimented the applicant on a thorough presentation and found the proposed changes to be fine. He did ask the owner to consider the removal of the art glass window very closely, as its eccentricity adds character to the house. Hsaio understood the reason to propose removal of the window, but asked that it be thought out a bit more. There was no objection to retaining a metal handrail. Staff's suggestion to avoid a sash window in the third floor dormer was supported.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Hsaio moved to approve the proposal, with the above mentioned suggestions. Ms. Perrault seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0, with Ms. McMahon voting as an Alternate.

MC-3676: 25 (rear) Highland Ave., by Marianne Pierce. Replace existing siding on front wall.

Ms. Tuffy showed slides and described the property, which was constructed in 1984. Two sides of the building were previously re-clad with fiber cement siding, but those changes were not reviewed by the Commission because they occurred on non-visible elevations. The current application is to re-clad the front elevation – which is visible from the public way – with HardiPlank.

The owner, who is also a trustee of the condo association, mentioned that the building had extensive water damage about 10 years ago, due to improper flashing. At that time, they replaced all of the sheathing and insulation on the rear and side elevations.

Ms. Goodwin noted that the garage is incorporated into the structure at grade, and that the HardiPlank would be one story up, above eye level.

There were no questions from the public.

Ms. McMahon moved to approve the proposal as submitted, stating that the use of HardiPlank was more appropriate in this case due to the building's age, distance from the street, and the height at which the siding will be installed. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Ms. McMahon voting as an Alternate.

Determination of Procedure: Alteration to Designated Property

MC-3687: 285 Harvard St., Unit 306, by Christine Zimmler. Replace window.

Ms. Tuffy showed slides and explained that the proposed window replacement, while located at the back of the building, is visible from West Street which runs along the length of the rear elevation. The window to be replaced is located in a light well in the center of the elevation. There are currently many different types and styles of replacement windows on the West Street elevation.

The contractor, John Bianco, said the window is located in the bathroom shower and is rotted from exposure to water. The replacement would be a vinyl window.

Ms. Goodwin noted that there could still be a problem with rot if a vinyl window is installed, but that it might be less visible.

There were no questions from the public.

Ms. Litchfield moved to approve the proposal as submitted, due to the limited visibility of the window. Mr. Hsaio seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 with Ms. McMahon voting as an Alternate.

Minutes

Ms. Perrault sent several corrections to the minutes regarding 23 St. Mary Rd. via email to Ms. Tuffy prior to the meeting.

Ms. Litchfield moved to approve the June 16 minutes, as corrected.

Ms. Perrault seconded the motion.

Ms. Goodwin designated alternate Ms. McMahon to vote, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Hsaio moved to adjourn.

Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 5-0 with Ms. McMahon voting as alternate.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 7/6/10

Karl Klare	80 Inman St., Cambridge, MA 02139
Jeff Goodman	80 Inman St., Cambridge, MA 02139
Robin Greenberg	179 Boylston St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
Sylvia Mihich	179 Boylston St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
John Bianco	30 Wilson Ave., Watertown, MA 02472