

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

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

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Carole Perrault, Charles Redmon, *Members*; Monica Pauli, *Alternate*

Commission Members Absent: Lestra Litchfield, *Member*; Siobhan McMahon, Sue-Ellen Myers, *Alternates*

Staff: 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-3702: 49A Dana St., by Chun Yuan Huang and Yi Hua Wang. Construct new entryway vestibule.

Staff member Eiliesh Tuffy presented slides showing the property, which is a large addition constructed in the 1990s that was designed as a separate 2-story residence. Ms. Tuffy summarized the proposal to build an enclosed vestibule at the entrance facing Broadway and showed photographs of other vestibules from the surrounding area.

The property owners described a few amendments to the plans that occurred after the packets were mailed out to the Commission members.

Ms. Goodwin asked whether the vestibule had solid wood panels at the bottom. The owners confirmed that it did. When asked why the front wall of the vestibule did not continue straight across on one plane, the owners' representative explained that the top step was recessed to provide some shelter from the elements.

Mr. Redmon asked if, as part of the proposed relocation of the ornamental door hood, they had considered the dimensions with respect to the rear entrance. Ms. Goodwin inquired whether the hood relocation was meant to protect the homeowners from the weather. The owners said they thought the hood would fit at the rear entrance and that it was meant for weather protection. Mr. Hsiao asked how wide the current overhang was, but the owners were not sure.

There were no questions from the public.

During the Commission's discussion, Mr. Hsiao noted that creating an enclosed entryway would call for a shift in detail and proportion. Hsiao felt that the width was perhaps too wide, and that the design should be narrowed to stay inboard of the porch width. The design as proposed would create an awkward relation with the window bay and roofline. If made smaller, the vestibule could also be easier to construct. The proposed columns/pilasters seemed very elaborate and in contrast with the other details of the house, which were very simple. Hsiao urged the owners to look to the rest of the structure to provide clues on how to blend the vestibule in better.

Ms. Perrault said that the columns make the vestibule more vertical, and asked about the top deck. Ms. Pauli also questioned if the owners needed that top rail at all.

Mr. Redmon emphasized keeping the vestibule wall away from the window bay. The owner said that, if narrowed, they would not have room in the vestibule beyond what was needed for the door swing, leaving them no room to put their shoes. Mr. Redmon stated that this was only a vestibule, meant as a space for umbrellas and not much

more. He seconded the idea of pulling in the outer wall as well to hold the corner, placing it six to eight inches inside the corner board.

Ms. Goodwin stated that they did not need the rail at the top of the vestibule. The owners stated that they had safety concerns, given that there is a window above the doorway that could be used by small children to get out on the proposed vestibule roof. Ms. Perrault asked if they intended to paint the railing, to which the owners responded that it would be painted to match the trim on the lower porch.

Mr. Hsiao commented that the vestibule windows were very tall and requested the owners put in horizontal muntins. Mr. Redmon cited the slide of the Italianate porch with the red door as a good example of this.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the vestibule with the following recommendations on adjusting the proportions:

1. Narrow the design, aligning on the inside edge of the corner board and creating an equal proportion on the other side.
2. Add horizontal muntin details to the windows on all sides of the vestibule and consider adding a transom above the door.
3. Simplify the corner details, using flat stock mouldings.
4. Regarding the relocation of the door hood, consider its placement in relation to the existing clapboards and foundation wall, installing it without the brackets if necessary.

Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

In closing, Mr. Redmon urged the applicants to think about the proportions and Mr. Hsiao restated that a straight front wall would simplify construction.

MC-3703: 35 Bigelow St., #5, by Margaret Hobbs. Rebuild roof deck.

Ms. Tuffy showed slides and described the property, which is located within the Bigelow Street National Register District, making this a binding review. Permit research shows that there were three decks built during the 1980s, but there is no photo documentation of what the top floor deck looked like prior to its removal several years ago.

The contractor said he had discussed staff's concerns about minimizing the public visibility of the deck rails by pulling the deck away from the right edge of the roof. The owner was amenable to building a smaller deck than initially proposed in drawings submitted to the Commission. The Commission asked if the deck rail would be painted, to which the contractor affirmed that it would be painted cream to match the house trim.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to accept the proposed roof deck as modified in size based on the comments of staff and the Commission. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

MC-3704: 41 Magnolia Ave., by Kjersti and Jason Rosen. Complete interior and exterior remodel.

Ms. Tuffy presented slides and described the scope of work to rehabilitate the three-story fire-damaged building. Despite the extensive work being undertaken, the project does not reach the 33% demolition figure, making this a non-binding review. The proposal includes vinyl window installation throughout, new fiber cement siding and plastic trim. Two original window openings at the rear of the left elevation are proposed to be altered. Changes to the rear elevation are not visible from the public way.

Ms. Goodwin asked about the condition of the existing clapboards. Patrick Haydon, the contractor, said the condition varied. Mr. Haydon outlined the owners' intentions to install HardiPlank on the side elevations and rear of the building, while using cedar clapboards on the front elevation. He mentioned that he had discovered rot inside the walls and the window frames, which caused concerns about future maintenance. Ms. Pauli asked if any of the trim or the cornice would be replaced. Mr. Haydon said the trim would be replaced with Azek, but only minor dentil repair was required on the cornice. Mr. Redmon asked if the fascia would be removed, since the drawings submitted indicate a much thinner piece at that location. Mr. Haydon said that they planned to remove all siding materials and trim, but that the cornice, fascia, front doors and front porch would remain.

Mr. Hsiao asked if just a few windows would be altered. The owner said yes, and Ms. Goodwin noted that they are primarily on the rear elevation. Ms. Perrault asked about the windows in the other matching buildings [adjacent to #41 and by the same architect]. Mr. Jason Rosen, the owner, mentioned the variety of siding materials and replacement windows on the street, including HardiPlank on neighboring buildings. He felt that they had come up with a good compromise proposing cedar clapboards for the front and HardiPlank on the sides and rear.

Ms. Marilee Meyer, of 10 Dana Street, commented on the current HardiPlank trend, saying that it does not look authentic or good. She asked if by using both materials, the exterior would wear differently and look two-tone. She felt this would be incongruous with the district. Mr. Rosen said the previous owners would only paint one side of the house each year, so there was always uneven wear even on the original wood clapboards. Ms. Meyer stated that she felt HardiPlank was the next generation of vinyl siding in her opinion. Mr. Rosen said their other option would be to install HardiPlank all around. He mentioned that #41 Magnolia was one of the few neighboring properties with surviving dentil details, and that they wanted to save them.

Mr. Andy McIlvaine, of 35 Magnolia Ave., spoke in favor of the proposed changes. Mr. McIlvaine said he was excited about the project, that he had spoken to the property owners and he does not think it will make a negative change to the house.

Ms. Goodwin said they have approved HardiPlank in the past, much to the Commission's disdain. She agreed that it does not look the same as wood. Ms. Perrault said she felt very strongly against the use of HardiPlank, and that it is so regular you can spot it from a distance. She also said it enhances the value of the house using wood clapboards versus HardiPlank, and that the owners should think about the overall value.

Ms. Pauli said she would have to agree with Ms. Perrault. When real wood deteriorates, it looks better than artificial modern materials deteriorating. Ms. Perrault added that the large size of the house also has a greater impact; that the larger houses with HardiPlank look more obvious.

Mr. Hsiao acknowledged that the discussion raises a legitimate question. The Commission has seen many HardiPlank proposals, and they understand the owners' constraints regarding budget and maintenance, but the economic argument is not under the Commission's purview. Mr. Hsiao agrees with Mr. McIlvaine about the positive element of bringing the house back after the fire.

Ms. Perrault clarified that the role of the Commission was to review aesthetics. She also said it was a good point to mention this structure survived a catastrophe, but cautioned that the HardiPlank could cause moisture problems.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Redmon moved to reject the proposal because of concerns on behalf of the Commission regarding the use of non-original material on the exterior. Ms. Perrault seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

MC-3706: 285 Harvard St., #411, by Richard Cadrin. Replace windows.

In the absence of the property owner or an owner's representative, the Commission moved to continue the hearing for this case until the September 7 meeting.

Other Business

Ms. Perrault mentioned that a fence had been added to a property on Prospect Street.

It was also mentioned that trees had been cut down at a property on Dana Street, near the Friendly Place.

Ms. Marilee Meyer, of 10 Dana St., said she had heard that the owner of the Dana Street property spoke with the City Arborist and it was determined that the roots were interfering with the city pipes.

Ms. Meyer also inquired about the former Castle School property on Harvard St. She asked what had happened to the ornamental terra cotta tiles that were once set into the masonry chimney, and requested that staff look into their current location and future reinstallation at the property. Ms. Tuffy asked that Ms. Meyer include her contact information on the sign-in sheet so she could follow up with her.

Minutes

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the July 6th minutes.

Ms. Perrault seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 8/2/10

Jason Rosen	39 Magnolia Ave., #1, Cambridge, MA 02138
Chun Yuan Huang	49A Dana St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Yi Hua Wang	49A Dana St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Andrew McIlvaine	35 Magnolia Ave., #1, Cambridge, MA 02138
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St., #404, Cambridge, MA 02138