

## Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

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

Commission Members Present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Charles Redmon, *Members*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Commission Members Absent: Carole Perrault, *Member*; Siobhan McMahon, *Alternates*

Staff: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

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With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

### Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-3768: 1431 Cambridge Street, by 1431 Cambridge Street Condo Trust.** Replace wood trim with PVC trim on select windows (front building); replace clapboards with composite siding (rear building).

Ms. Tuffy showed photographs of the existing conditions of both the front and rear buildings on the lot. The windows on the front building have flat stock wood trim and wood sills that have split in several locations. The rear building, which has clapboard siding, is minimally visible from Cambridge Street. That portion of the rear building that is visible from a vantage point on Beacon Street is over the town line in the City of Somerville.

Ms. Goodwin asked why the property owners had chosen PVC for the new window trim. The contractor, Mike Dudley, said the Azek trim is a higher quality composite material. Ms. Monika Pauli asked whether they had considered replacing with new wood trim, particularly since the cost would be fairly comparable. Mr. Dudley said the owners did not want to deal with rot in the future and that he personally could guarantee wood would be more expensive. Ms. Lestra Litchfield pointed out that even composite materials require maintenance and asked how the product would weather over the course of 20 years.

Mr. Dudley noted that the formula for these materials have changed and improved over time. Ms. Goodwin said the Commission has previously approved Azek on some historic houses in the conservation district because it tends to be very solid and can be cut and detailed in a similar fashion as wood. Mr. Tony Hsiao said projects like this raise questions about the use of substitute materials, particularly as the quality of mass-produced wood products degrade. He also thought it would be very hard to tell the difference with a flat-stock trim style such as this. Ms. Goodwin agreed that composite trim material is a very different issue than, for example, vinyl windows.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Sue-Ellen Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

**MC-3779: 44-46 Highland Ave., by Martina Tanga.** Replace wood shingles on the front building's gable ends with composite shingles.

Ms. Tuffy showed photographs of the existing wood shingles on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the property. Ms. Litchfield asked whether the owners had considered replacing with cedar shingles to match the original, rather than a composite material. Ms. Tanga said that the condominium owners were told that the upkeep would be less on composite

shingles and that they would not require painting. She indicated that the intent was to select a color that matched the existing shingles in color.

Ms. Goodwin asked if individual shingles could be replaced with the proposed fiber cement replacement unit. The contractor, Mr. Dudley, said it was possible. Each unit is individually installed using a nail gun. Ms. Litchfield asked if there was a way to match the existing sawtooth edge of the bottom row of shingles, but Mr. Dudley said they do not currently sell that shape in fiber cement shingles and the straight-edge units are difficult to cut to that level of detail.

Ms. Pauli asked if the new units would be noticeably thicker than the wood shingles, especially since they are not tapered on one end. Mr. Dudley said that they do overlap one another, but Mr. Hsiao commented that the installation would not be as elegant because of the lack of that tapering detail.

Ms. Myers thought the fiber cement shingles would look too heavy, and that the proposed material sounded as though it would be non-conforming with the goals of the district. Ms. Litchfield agreed. Ms. Hsiao was concerned about the change in profile where the HardiShingles meet with the trim as well as the lack of natural imperfections that are indicative of real wood shingles. Ms. Goodwin shared the concern about how the trim would be detailed.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

The staff and Commissioners added that, since the impetus for the shingle replacement stemmed from the need to replace flashing over the window bay, that full replacement of the existing shingles – which appear to be in good condition – is an unnecessary course of action.

Ms. Litchfield moved to deny the application as submitted, with the recommendation that the owners consider spot replacing with new cedar shingles. Ms. Pauli seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

**MC-3780: 1717 Cambridge St., by Brian Carey and Erin Graves.** Replace select windows; building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Photographs of the existing window condition were presented to the Commission prior to discussion.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the exterior of the new windows would be black, and the owner said they would be. Mr. Carey also noted that they had de-lead, rebuilt and restored 14 of the wood windows in 2005. The remaining windows which were proposed for replacement in this application are at or below grade level, and very deteriorated. Ms. Goodwin agreed that the condition of the existing windows looked pretty bad. Mr. Carey felt that, even if restored, the existing basement windows don't provide much insulation.\

Mr. Hsiao clarified that the owners were proposing to replace with Pella Architect series by the driveway and a composite material window at the locations behind the existing rear fence. Ms. Graves confirmed those product selections. Ms. Pauli asked if the surrounding frames would be replaced, to which the owners said they would not be replaced. Ms. Goodwin asked if they had ever attempted to remove the exterior storm windows, but they had not for fear that they would fall apart due to their failing condition.

Ms. Goodwin talked about the low visibility of the window locations, even those that were typically shielded by parked cars in the driveway. Mr. Hsiao agreed, saying that if they had to be replaced, the proposed window units were a high end option that could better withstand the grade level weathering conditions.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

**MC-3781: 12 Bigelow St., by Christopher Stone.** Infill existing window and create new window openings; building is in the Bigelow Street National Register District.

Staff explained that the current proposal to alter the window sill heights, but retain the original window dimensions as blind windows on the exterior was based on a prior approval of this design treatment at the property several years ago.

Mr. Don Foote, the contractor, said he could maintain the existing trim and incorporate it into the redesign of the higher, clerestory-style band of windows. Mr. Hsiao noted that, dimensionally, the trim has a thicker top edge which should be maintained as part of the new detailing.

Mr. Foote said the previously approved blank windows were filled in with diagonal boards, but that he would prefer to run horizontal clapboards between the trim. The Commission member agreed that the horizontal boards would be more appropriate in this location.

There were no questions from the public.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

#### Minutes

Ms. Meyer moved to approve the November 8, 2010 minutes, as amended.

Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/6/10

Mike Dudley	200 Butterfield Drive, Suite I, Ashland, MA 01721
Laura Mattal	1431 Cambridge St., #3, Cambridge, MA 02139
Fern Groebe	1431 Cambridge St., #4, Cambridge, MA 02139
Brian Carey	1717 Cambridge St., Cambridge, MA 02138
Erin Graves	1717 Cambridge St., Cambridge, MA 02138