

## **Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission**

September 12, 2011 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

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

Commission Members Absent: Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*, Siobhan McMahon, *Alternate*

Staff: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

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Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. and introduced the Commissioners and staff present.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-3954: 6 Crawford St., #3, by Yu-Jeng Hsiao.** Replace windows in one unit.

The resident of the unit said it was her intention to replace the existing wood windows with new vinyl windows. The new windows would have a 6-over-1 glazing pattern with a brown exterior (painted).

The resident did not have a window sample to show at the meeting, but said she would bring one in for Commission staff to review as part of the permitting process.

Ms. Litchfield moved to reject the application as submitted and, since the case is non-binding, advised the resident to consult with staff on the most appropriate replacement window model and color.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Ms. Perrault pointed out that well-maintained wood windows have a greater lifespan than vinyl replacement windows.

**MC-3955: 28 Clinton St., by Douglas R. Martin.** Replace windows in the front building.

Ms. Perrault asked if the existing wood windows were operable, to which the owner explained the existing windows were wood replacements dating to the 1980s and had not held up well, despite having exterior storms to shield them from the weather. The proposed replacement windows would be 1-over-1 aluminum-clad wood windows by Marvin. The new windows were intended to match the other 1-over-1 windows in the rear unit.

Ms. Perrault asked if the owners had sought out estimates to repair the existing wood windows. Mr. Martin said they received several estimates, but that restoration would have been more expensive.

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Ms. Litchfield moved to deny the application as submitted, encouraging the applicant to reinstall new, all-wood windows. Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

### **MC-3956: 101 Trowbridge St., by Mary Ellen Colten.** Replace 1st floor windows.

The current proposal was to replace some of the last original wood windows in the building, located on the first floor. The rest of the windows in the building have previously been replaced with new units of a substitute material. The goal of the homeowner is to create a uniform appearance for the entire building.

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to deny the application as submitted, encouraging the owner to restore the original wood windows or, if replacing, to replicate the historic 2-over-2 glazing pattern. Ms. Perrault seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

### **MC-3957: 39A Lee St., by I. Fishman LLC.** Replace all windows.

The property under review is a 3-story, brick Colonial Revival-style apartment building designed by architect William Nelson Jacobs and constructed in 1938. The only other Cambridge building credited to Jacobs is a streamlined Moderne gas station at 76 Prospect Street. The windows are primarily 6-over-6 double-hung wood windows. There are no protective storm windows currently on the building.

The representative for the current owners, Ms. Beth Fishman, said they manage several large apartment buildings in Cambridge. As an example, she brought pictures of their property on Gray Street (not in a protected district), where original windows have already been replaced with Harvey vinyl replacement windows with double glazing. Storms were not desirable because the feeling was that the tenants would neither want to or know how to operate storm windows. The exterior wood trim would be panned over with aluminum.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the owners had been regularly maintaining and repairing the existing windows, to which the owner said they had been making repairs for 25 years.

Mr. Redmon asked if the new windows would be 6-over-6 to match the original glazing pattern. The owner said they wanted to install 1-over-1 windows without any muntins.

Ms. Fishman said she did not see the architectural value of this building and thought it was ugly, very flat and plain and looks "prison-like". This work was felt to be an upgrade. She also said that the current windows do not have screens, which the tenants want.

Mr. Redmon suggested power-washing the stone parapet, which is part of the restrained detail of an apartment building from this period.

Ms. Tuffy added that the historic paint consultant on staff said an almond or taupe color for the window frames would be more appropriate than the proposed bright white.

Ms. Litchfield added that maintaining the historic glazing pattern is most appropriate for this building, but that perhaps a 6-over-1 window could be considered by the owner.

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Comments were accepted from the public.

Ms. Margaret McMahon of 14 Highland Avenue hoped something would be done with the doorway, since she felt it looked bad.

Ms. Frankie Lieberman of 24 Ellsworth Avenue said that any time divided-light windows are taken out the building dies. She understands that maintenance can be a nightmare but that there isn't much else interesting about this building otherwise. She also did not understand why it would be so difficult for tenants to operate storm windows. If the wood windows do not operate, it's only because the sash cords need to be replaced, which is no big deal.

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street said she agreed with maintaining the historic muntin pattern, saying that 1-over-1 windows would be incongruous in this type of building.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to reject the application as proposed and made the following recommendations:

- to at least consider a 6-over-1 replacement window
- to work with city staff to find a less glaring window color than white
- to use staff as a resource for information on proper cleaning methods for the parapet

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

**MC-3958: 7 Leonard Ave., by Traci Logan and Katherine Abbot.** Replace windows at front porch.

The location of the proposed work is at the front porch, which is an enclosed porch with 6-over-6 double-hung wood windows on both the side walls and surrounding the front door. The front door is fully glazed and is framed by sidelights and a transom window, all of which have divided lights.

The proposal is to retain the door, sidelights, and transom but to replace the 6 double-hung windows with vinyl replacement windows. The new windows would be black on the exterior to match the rest of the house with grille-between-glass simulated muntins.

No representatives for the property were present at the meeting.

Ms. Goodwin said she did not understand why the owners were replacing the double-hung windows on this porch which is meant to be a basic shelter between the outside and the indoor living space. Mr. Redmon agreed, stating that they should just clean and paint the existing windows.

Ms. Litchfield moved to reject the application as submitted, because vinyl windows are incongruous with the historic fabric of the district. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which was passed 6-0.

**MC-3922 (continued): 14 Dana St., by Dana St. Development, LLC.** Demolish rear carriage house and construct new rear structure. Repair and rehab front building.

Commissioners Pauli and Perrault, who are both abutters to 14 Dana St., recused themselves from deliberations and joined the general public.

This was a continuation of the case presented in August. The project team, in response to comments

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received from Commission members and abutting neighbors, presented a revised set of plans for review. Some of the concerns addressed in the new design included

- reducing the height of the rear structure
- simplifying the fenestration pattern, particularly on the rear elevations
- removing the rear window bay facing 10 Dana Street
- changing the roofline of the “new carriage house” at the rear

Mr. Redmon, in reference to the 3rd floor deck set into the rear slope of the Mansard roof, suggested carrying the heavy line of the roof across as a solid rail to maintain the edge line of the roof.

Fencing was briefly discussed, and the Commission voiced their preference for a “good neighbor”-style fence that is of an open design for at least the top 1-foot of the overall height.

Three mechanical units are planned for the exterior of the property. Two are to be placed at the center of the rear elevation, and one is to be placed just east of the garage door on the north elevation.

Comments were accepted from the public.

Mr. Peter Wender of 10 Dana Street said that his neighboring residence is on the first floor and that he was concerned about reductions in light and ventilation.

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street thanked the project team for removing the projecting window bay facing 10 Dana. She also asked if the paint colors in the rendering were accurate.

The architect, Peter Quinn, said they would be consulting with the Cambridge Historical Commission staff on final paint colors.

Ms. Carole Perrault of 9 Dana Street asked about the architectural model that was requested by the Commission at the last meeting. The architect said they did not have the budget to produce a 3-D model, but had provided a 2-D, computer generated model which was shown on Sheet A0.1: Massing Study View. When asked if the Commission was satisfied with the massing study provided, they said that they would have preferred the 3-D model they asked for but the sophisticated computer model was sufficient enough for their deliberation.

Artemis March of 10 Dana Street asked if there would be any rear patios or balconies and expressed concerns about smoke and noise pollution. The architect said the rear patios were at grade level and they would be screened to minimize adverse impact on neighbors.

Ms. Frankie Lieberman said she had missed the 1st hearing but felt the new addition was too big and too dense. She also mentioned that the Commission had the ability under the ordinance to reduce the size of the project by 1/3rd and that she felt the execution of that power would be appropriate for this project. The architect said that the current proposal equaled the F.A.R. of the existing buildings.

Ms. Margaret McMahan of 14 Highland Avenue said that the same F.A.R. was not good enough. She has a problem with excessive infill which she thought should be addressed.

Staff inquired about the front building’s exterior cladding, which the developer said would be retained as cedar shingles since the existing ones appeared to be in salvageable condition. Ms. Litchfield said it

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would be wonderful to bring back the front building to its original clapboard siding. The team said their budget did not include that work and their financing was already secured for the project without new clapboards factored into the scope of work.

Ms. Meyer of 10 Dana noted that the middle windows over the garage on Sheet A2.1 look out of proportion and too large. The architect said that was the main source of light for a Master Bedroom, but that they could reduce them in size.

In the shadow studies, the pink areas on the drawings showed areas of increased shadow under the current proposal. Mr. Peter Wender of 10 Dana St. said that as a result, his unit would lose all light. The architect countered that it would only be in shadow first thing in the morning, to which Mr. Wender said he did not consider 9am so early.

The Commission closed public comment to deliberate.

Ms. Litchfield said she supported the idea of a heavier railing on the back balcony.

Mr. Redmon moved to accept the revised plans as submitted with the following conditions:

- create a solid rail at the 3rd floor rear porch
- consider clapboards as an exterior siding option for the front building
- work with Commission staff and the Architects Committee on restoration details as needed

Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

**MC-3952: 1531 Cambridge St., by Mark Roderick.** Window alterations; remove chimney and ramp; rebuild rear steps; repair or replace shingles as necessary; repair entry stairs and rails.

Work in the proposed scope has already been completed in some areas prior to the Commission's review or approval. Ms. Myers asked what the policy was in such a case, to which staff answered that the Commission could direct the property owner to undo any unapproved work and return it to its previous appearance.

A rear entrance on the side elevation had previously been enclosed, but retained the trim on the exterior of the building. Since it no longer related to an entrance and would now be kitchen space behind, the Commission recommended getting rid of the trim and replacement windows in favor of installing 2 new diamond-pane windows to match the window grouping just forward of this location. Vertical casement windows, when installed flush against one another, could be trimmed out around the outer edges to create a more square composition.

The existing wood windows are to be retained and restored. New windows will be aluminum-clad wood windows with exterior muntins.

Mr. Redmon said that while the Commission accepted the work that was already conducted, it was regretful that the owner had proceeded ahead of their review. He moved to accept the application as submitted with the condition that the owner design the new casement windows as the Commission had discussed. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

**MC-3953: 35 Roberts Rd., by Lou Ferraro.** Construct addition; replace windows; exterior rehab and

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alterations to existing house.

Campbell Ellsworth, the project architect, agreed with staff assessment that the original style of the historic house depending very heavily on symmetry. The design choice to change the single-door entry to a double-door entry was to give each of the tenants their own dedicated entrance and avoid a shared vestibule. The reconfigured porch would move the exterior columns approximately 2 feet out from their current location. The current concrete stoop would be replaced with a more traditional wood landing and staircase with side rails.

- The existing clapboards were proposed to be completely replaced with HardiPlank fiber-cement siding.
- Window hoods, sills and cornice brackets are to be retained or replicated to match.
- The windows are proposed to be replaced with aluminum-clad wood windows in a 2-over-2 glazing pattern to match the existing windows.
- The corner boards are proposed to be replaced with either wood or Azek.
- The sills of two windows were proposed to be raised
- The 3rd floor windows needed to be adapted to make them suitable as an egress, but would have an overall muntin pattern to best match the other 2-over-2s in the house

When discussing the replacement of the historic clapboards with a substitute material, the Commission was highly opposed to that aspect of the project.

The single front door was also pointed out as an elegant feature of the historic house. The architect said a shared vestibule ate up F.A.R. on the interior. Ms. Perrault reminded the applicants that the Commission was not concerned with interior layout but rather with preserving the historic fabric on the building's exterior. Staff pointed out that the driveway at the rear meant the tenants would more than likely favor using the rear entrances.

Ms. Litchfield asked if the review in this case was non-binding, to which staff confirmed that the square footage of the new addition did not exceed the threshold for a binding review by the Commission.

The Commission took issue with the alteration of the front porch, the use of HardiPlank and the loss of the simple symmetry of the original fenestration. The builder said their other option for siding was vinyl. Staff and the Commission pointed out that a first consideration should be retention of the existing clapboards, which appeared to be in good condition and lend to the character of the district. Ms. Goodwin also pointed out that HardiPlank would not line up with the historic trim pieces. The recommendation of the Commission was to retain the existing clapboards and trim and merely infill with new clapboards where needed.

Mr. Redmon also said that everything should be done to retain the original window sizes and sill heights. The use of interior window wells or blank panels around kitchen counters could accomplish this.

Questions and comments were accepted from the public.

Mr. Bill Zamparelli of 7 Emmons Place said that his main concern was over parking on Emmons Place and keeping it to a minimum. He did not have a problem with the double door front entrance, since he had done the same thing with his own house 10 years ago. When Mr. Zamparelli asked if the 3rd floor egress windows would need fire escapes, the architect answered that they would not. The architect said

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they would be providing 2 parking spaces (1 for each building unit) in the rear driveway.

Mr. Scott Walker of 2 Emmons Place said he lives in a basement-level condo adjacent to the rear of this property and wondered if there would be any impact to the foliage at the rear of the lot. The owner said the existing trees along that property line would remain.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to reject the application as presented with the following comments:

- to retain the full-height windows
- that HardiPlank devalues the historic property
- the loss of symmetry in the N & S elevations' fenestration was unfortunate, and
- to remove the skylights from the street-facing slope of the roof.

Ms. Myers seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

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### Members of the Public Who Signed Attendance Sheet 9/12/11

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|--------------------|--|
| Mark Donohue       | 14 Otis Street, Wakefield, MA 01880          |
| Ben Rogan          | 14 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Paul True          | 196 Fayerweather Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 |
| Yu-Jeng Hsiao      | 6 Crawford Street, #3, Cambridge, MA 02139   |
| Peter Wender       | 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Mary Ellen Colten  | 101 Trowbridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02138   |
| Scott Walker       | 2A Emmons Place, Cambridge, MA 02138         |
| Louis Ferraro      | 35 Roberts Rd., Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Marilee Meyer      | 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Artemis March      | 10 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Bill Zamparelli    | 7 Emmons Place, Cambridge, MA 02138          |
| Campbell Ellsworth | 267 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA 02139      |
| Beth Fishman       | P.O.Box 232, Lincoln, MA 01773               |
| Mark Roderick      | 1531 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02139   |