

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Monday, May 5, 2014, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Commission Members absent: Lestra Litchfield and Charles Redmon, *Members*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Staff present: Sarah Burks, Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:08pm. A quorum was present for the four items on the agenda with Ms. Goodwin appointing Ms. Margaret McMahon to vote on all cases.

Ms. Goodwin reviewed the meeting procedures and agenda for the public.

MC-4452: 315 Harvard St, #4, by IMSTAR, Inc. Replace all wood windows with vinyl windows.

Ms. Goodwin requested Ms. Samantha Paull, staff, to present the first case, MC-4452, 315 Harvard Street, Unit #4. Ms. Paull gave a brief overview of the history of the structure, noting that the brick structure was constructed in 1909 as the "Stockholm" apartment building and shows influence by the Georgian Revival style. She reviewed slides of photographs she took of the structure, located at the corner of Hancock Street and Harvard Street. She said that the structure currently has one over one windows, a mixture of original and replacement windows are extant. The unit in question, unit 4, has its original wood windows many of which have exterior storm windows. Upon a site visit, staff witnessed the good condition of the windows.

Mr. Michael Sterikov, the applicant, was present. He mentioned that the original windows are very drafty and some are not functioning. He also stated that the existing windows do not maintain heat at all.

Ms. Goodwin asked if Mr. Sterikov was proposing to use the same windows as other existing replacements in the building.

Mr. Sterikov responded that the replacement product is white outside in a one over one pattern.

Ms. Paull stated that she received a letter approving the replacement of the windows but not the specific material from the Condo Board.

Ms. Margaret McMahon, Commissioner, asked if the applicant was proposing to replace the frames and the sashes entirely.

Mr. Nick Abaray, applicant, stated that they are proposing to retain the wood frame and install a replacement window unit inside that frame.

Ms. Julie Correa, neighbor at 389 Broadway, voiced her concern with the replacement product. She said that vinyl windows don't last that long. Continuing that the wood windows if rehabbed and a new, tighter storm added, would be better than vinyl. She asked the applicant why the storms weren't doing the job.

Mr. Abaray responded that the storms are old.

Ms. Correa also mentioned her concern with the environmental impact of using vinyl. She commented that it might be cheaper to preserve and restore the old wood windows. She lamented that she had installed vinyl windows on her house.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were any more comments from the public; with there being none, she returned the discussion to the Commission. She addressed the applicant, stating that the Commission is a very strong advocate of repairing historic wood windows. Continuing that she agrees with Ms. Correa that vinyl windows are not as long lasting as wood windows.

Mr. Tony Hsiao, Commissioner, concurred with Ms. Goodwin. He stated that in districts like this, another reason for the repair is to preserve historic fabric. It could also help you retain value for your unit, as with vinyl there are long term issues that will be costly down the road. Mr. Hsiao also explained the role of the non-binding review.

Mr. Sterikov responded that he would love to restore the windows but believed that they were beyond repair.

Ms. Sarah Burks said that staff performed an inspection during a site visit and had a very different opinion about the condition of the windows. She also mentioned that he was doing a very nice job of restoring the other wood elements on the interior of the unit.

Mr. Hsiao moved to deny the application on the basis that replacement vinyl windows are incongruous to the district and the building. He went on to state that he strongly recommends that the applicant reconsider restoring the original wood windows and adding new storms. Ms. McMahon seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

MC-4464: 3 Maple Ave, #2, by Robert & Alanna Mallon. Construct a dormer addition.

Ms. Goodwin asked Ms. Paull to present MC-4464, 3 Maple Avenue, Unit #2 to the Commission.

Ms. Paull opened with a brief history of the structure, constructed in 1924. She mentioned that the structure displays elements of the Craftsman Style. She showed slides that displayed the area of the proposed dormer addition from the street.

Mr. Robert Mallon, an owner, stated he has lived at this property for ten years. He mentioned that they have been slowly restoring the structure. Currently, the unit is a two bedroom unit that has the second floor and attic space. He has two children who have been sharing a room. The existing attic space has a bathroom but is currently not air conditioned and has a low ceiling, so it is hard to use. He proposed to add a dormer on each side of the hip roof to be able to create a new bedroom in the attic space and stay in the unit.

The architect, Mr. Erkin Ozay, explained that the third floor space is a hip roof with a 7' 1" height at center. The proposed hip dormers on each side would have eave and rafter details similar to the main part of the house. He also noted that the proposed addition was set back to minimize the impact as much as possible.

Mr. Hsiao asked what material they were proposing for the windows. Mr. Mallon responded that they proposed wood windows. Mr. Ozay added that they needed to meet egress requirements due to the bedroom and thus casement windows were chosen.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the dormers start at the ridge line instead of below in order to get the window height for proper egress.

Ms. Goodwin noted that there were no additional comments or questions from the public.

Ms. McMahon stated that this is a wonderful house, noting that the fenestration is different from what we normally see. She said it seemed that the proposal was as minimal as it could be but she was still concerned about the change to the view from the front of the house.

Mr. Hsiao said that this was a well thought out solution given the constraints. He went on to say that the hip is the appropriate dormer shape and understood why one could not push below the ridge height. He mentioned to the homeowner that it was obvious that he took pride in the house.

Mr. Mallon stated that they wanted to live in it for a long time.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. McMahon seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

MC-4465: 199 Prospect St, by Jessica Brewer. Full building renovation.

Ms. Goodwin announced the next application on the agenda was MC-4465, 199 Prospect Street and asked Ms. Paull to present.

Ms. Paull presented a brief history of the structure, noting that it was partially razed in 1983 after a fire and rebuilt in 1984. The original was a single-family structure which later became the Cambridge Relief Hospital. She stated that the structure currently has vinyl windows, wood clapboards, and some historical elements such as the fieldstone foundation wall.

Ms. Paull mentioned that there did not appear to be any discernible elements of the original historic structure remaining, other than the foundation and front steps.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were drawings for the proposed work. Ms. Paull stated no.

Mr. Mike Driscoll, contractor for the project, stated that he was hired by the condo association to address a new building envelope and excessive deterioration throughout the structure. He noted flat roof repair, work on the mansard roof, stated that there was a lot of deterioration and they will need to strip all the siding and trim and are proposing to install new vinyl siding and trim as well as new

construction windows. He mentioned that there is damage above and below the existing windows that will be repaired prior to new windows being installed. He also said that they were repointing the foundation, replacing two exterior doors, and that they were proposing to also construct new shed roofs over the rear entrances as the stairs also require replacement.

Ms. Goodwin asked if it was completely rebuilt in 1984. Mr. Driscoll responded that he believed the right rear portion was completely new. Ms. Kathleen Reilly, a unit owner, asked if the structure was historic or not.

Ms. Burks stated that it is located within the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District. She went on to say that every project is reviewed in the same manner, regardless of the age of the structure.

Ms. Goodwin asked what materials the existing windows are. Mr. Driscoll responded that they are a composite material.

Ms. Paull stated that the hospital had a fire in the 1940s and the previous structure had a mansard roof, but it did not look like the existing roof.

Ms. Victoria Hunter, a tenant along with her mother Ms. Shirley Hunter, stated that they had lived there for 27 years and the porch was about to come apart. She continued that the roof over the side door is about to drop down. She said her unit is taken care of by the Cambridge Housing Authority. She asked what was going to happen to the windows in her unit. Mr. Driscoll responded that the windows will be replaced and will be properly flashed so they don't leak. He stated that they would be addressing all of the problems she had mentioned, including a new rubber roof on the flat roofs. Ms. Hunter then asked when the work would be done. Mr. Driscoll stated that they have been waiting to hear from the Commission on the vinyl siding so they had not moved forward with any work and did not have a proposed time line.

Ms. Goodwin informed the applicant that the review is non-binding, however the Commission prefers to see wood clapboards in the district. As this is a non-binding review, however, she noted that the use of wood cannot be forced here. Mr. Driscoll stated that he understood and that they were proposing to use a top of the line vinyl product.

Ms. Burks explained that the structure has evidence of roof and water issues, possibly due to the atypical, poorly designed roof of 1984. She added that the gutters were located in the wrong place and water washed down the walls of the building.

Mr. Hsiao told the applicant that the Commission has nothing to make a decision on as the applicant did not bring in nor provide samples as part of the application packet. He went on to strongly recommend repair or retaining traditional materials including wood clapboards. He continued that wood has a longer lifespan and agreed with Ms. Burks about the roof. It appeared that there was a larger issue and that the mansard roof should be redesigned to a more traditional shape, including redesigning the gutter system and eliminating the overhang. He said those moves would improve the water problems and maintenance issues. He closed by stating that the Commission does not favor the use of vinyl windows, however noting that the review was non-binding.

Mr. Driscoll stated that they were proposing a 4 ½" smooth double clap vinyl and apologized to the Commission for not bringing samples with him. He stated that the 4 ½" is what he last discussed with the board but that the board had not made a final decision. He noted that there is vinyl in the area.

Mr. Hsiao responded that yes there may be but that does not mean it is an appropriate material.

Ms. Goodwin stated that a lot of other properties in Cambridge are taking off vinyl at this time and you're proposing to put it on.

Mr. Driscoll stated that they have had numerous problems with cement board so they do not recommend or utilize it. He continued that with cementitious plank ruled out, it leaves vinyl and wood and with vinyl there is less maintenance.

Ms. McMahan stated that she is against using vinyl products in the district. She strongly urged that he also look into addressing problems with the roof form.

Mr. Hsiao stated that this is the one time that the entire envelope is being looked at. It is the one chance they have to do it correctly and once the vinyl is installed, it is unlikely they will go back to wood. He urged the applicant to look carefully at the project. Mr. Driscoll stated that he would have more details for review when he files a permit.

Mr. Hsiao moved to reject the application as submitted on the basis that it was incongruous with the district and with the recommendation to consider wood clapboard and the overall roof design to be more in keeping with the historic design. The motion was seconded by Ms. McMahan and carried unanimously.

MC-4466: 39 Amory St, by Yun-Xian Ho & Samuel Ling. Construct rear addition.

Mr. Goodwin announced that the next item on the agenda was MC-4466, 39 Amory Street and requested that Ms. Paull present the application. Ms. Paull stated that the single family structure was constructed in 1869 and shows influence by the Second Empire style. While showing the Commission slides from Amory Street and Amory Place, she continued that the applicant is proposing to construct an addition for stairs that measured approximately 120 sqft which will be minimally visible from Amory Street.

The architect, Mr. Bhupesh Patel, architect's designer, Mr. Jason Roan, and the owner, Ms. Yun-Xian Ho, were present. Mr. Patel showed the Commission elevations for the proposal and noted that the existing staircase is tight and steep. He continued that the family has a small child and another on the way and wanted to finish the basement space to utilize as additional living space. The new stair would extend from the kitchen down to the basement. The existing ell is only approximately 14 feet wide and thus is too narrow for a stair. He continued that adding a second floor staircase would be very difficult with the small mansard so the proposal only added a stair to the basement, although ISD wanted a new stair to the second floor. Mr. Patel continued that the plan includes two new windows which will be Pella wood windows with a one over one pattern to match others on the structure. He also noted that they are proposing to keep the cantilevered canopy over the rear door and maintain its decorative brackets. He also pointed out that the proposed addition is pulled back slightly from the corner to maintain the original structure's corner.

Ms. Goodwin asked what the current use of the basement was. Mr. Patel responded that it is currently only partially finished as a music room and they are proposing to finish the entire basement, which will include adding drainage.

Ms. Goodwin asked if they needed the solar tubes given all the windows on the house as she was concerned with leaking. Mr. Patel stated it would allow the stairs to be naturally lit and to also get some light back into the basement. He stated that they are specialty skylights designed not to leak with an eight (8) inch high flashing strip that is chemically bonded and that they come with a lifetime warranty not to leak. He stated that a solar tube brings is 3x more lumens than a traditional side window.

Ms. Goodwin observed that the fascia appeared to be very thin on the elevations. Mr. Patel responded that he wanted to keep the addition away from the existing mansard roof.

Mr. Hsiao stated that it was a lovely home, a special small home in the area. He agreed that a one story addition is appropriate as he was concerned a two story addition would radically change the character of the structure as it would require an alteration to the roof. He also stated that it was good that Mr. Patel kept the addition below the eave and that it was sensitive to the original structure. He stated that the window placement was good and that he did not have an issue with the use of the solar tube as they provided more light from the top. He concurred that the applicant was proposing a quality window product and that he did not have any objections to the proposal, noting that the use of a concrete foundation was ok as it was tucked back and small in size.

Ms. McMahon stated that it is not obtrusive at all and its proposed location was appropriate. She also commented that she loved the house and had no objections to the proposal.

Ms. McMahon moved to accept the application as submitted. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the March 31, 2014 minutes as submitted. Ms. McMahon seconded the motion. It carried unanimously.

Mr. Hsiao then moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 pm. Ms. McMahon seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

Judith Goldberg	241 Glezen Ln, Wayland, Massachusetts
Mikhail Starikov	70 Dorcar Road, Newton, Massachusetts
Jason Roan	5 JFK Street, Unit #404
Victoria Hunter	199 Prospect Street, Apt #8
Shirley Hunter	199 Prospect Street, Apt #8
Adrian Pirvu	199 Prospect Street, Apt A
Michael R. Driscoll	One Washington Street, Dover, NH
Robert Mallon	3 Maple Avenue, #3
Erkin Ozay	2 Chauncy Street, Unit #6
Danielle Macenat	(none provided)
Julie Correia	389 Broadway
Bhupesh Patel	3 Bowdoin Street
Nick Abaray	(none provided)
Kathleen Reilly	200 Sherman Street, Unit #2
Peter Fosdick	183 Prospect Street
Yun-Xian Ho	39 Amory Street

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.