

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, September 4, 2018, 6:00 PM, 2nd Floor Meeting Room, City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, Monika Pauli, *Members*; Charles Redmon and Margaret McMahon, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: none

Staff present: Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M.

Alterations to Designated Properties:

MC-5509: 14 Centre Street, by Cambridge Centre LLC c/o Alpha Management Corp. Replace old windows throughout the building with vinyl replacement windows.

Sarah Burks, staff, showed slides of the property and described the history and architecture of the building. She explained that the window replacement had begun over the summer without approval of the Mid Cambridge Commission and without a building permit.

Nalin Mistry, an architectural engineer, stated that the existing windows were old and leaky. Vinyl windows had been selected for low maintenance and to preserve the look and color of the existing, except that they would be vinyl instead of wood. In answer to questions from the Commission, he said that all the windows would be replaced and that they would have muntin grids to match the pattern of the originals. He said the muntins would snap in on the interior and exterior, but upon examination of the product information, he concluded that the grid would be between the glass. The existing 1-over-1 vinyl windows would be replaced so that all windows would be consistent in design. The new windows would come with a warranty.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were questions of fact from the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the owner owned other properties, if this was the typical window replacement product, and if they knew 14 Centre Street was located in a neighborhood conservation district. Mr. Mistry answered that the ownership LLC did own other properties in the Boston area and had used this window before. He said he did not know the property was in a district because some windows were already vinyl replacements and the realtors never mentioned it. There being no other questions from the public the chair asked if there was public comment. Ms. Meyer said the between-the-glass muntin grid had no character. Mr. Mistry said it might be possible to get an exterior grid and he could talk to the manufacturer. Ms. Meyer suggested using the historic windows on the front of the building and the vinyl windows elsewhere as a compromise. She said she saw a trend of developers buying mid-rise apartment buildings without doing due diligence. This kind of alteration was like death by a thousand cuts and she was very disappointed by it.

Steven DiMarco of 291 Broadway said he supported the goal of retaining historic character but also repented the fact that the applicant was renting to Cambridge citizens. He said he was concerned about the safety of window A/C units.

Ms. Goodwin explained that the Commission usually recommends restoring historic wood windows and installing good storm windows rather than replacing windows.

Ms. Litchfield said that when replacement windows were to be used, they should be at least simulated divided lights (interior and exterior applied muntins with interior spacer bar). She said she hoped that the Commission's comments could help to advise the applicants about other products that were available that could do a much better job of simulating the original windows. Ideally, the historic wood sash would be restored and protected with a storm window. Replacement windows have a limited life span, typically 20-25 years.

Ms. Pauli suggested that the applicants investigate if it would be possible to add exterior muntin grids and to consult with staff about that possibility before proceeding.

Ms. Litchfield moved to reject the application for a certificate of appropriateness as submitted and to recommend talking to staff about options for the muntins. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

MC-5510: 320 Broadway, by 320 Broadway Realty Trust. Construct new service bay addition to existing auto repair garage.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the history of the corner site, the gas station and what alterations had been made to the property over time.

James Rafferty, attorney for the proponent, introduced himself and his clients. He said they were seeking a non-binding certificate of appropriateness for the construction of an addition of a repair bay on the right (west) side of the garage building. The reason for the addition was for more room needed for the state inspection program. He noted that this was a neighborhood business offering a necessary service. There were only two gas stations in Mid Cambridge. He said that Nick Elias was the owner of the business and his father owned the real estate. He said Mr. Elias had reached out to both of his abutters. Mr. Rafferty explained that the property was located in a Business A1 zoning district where the use was allowed and permitted. The site was also in an area of special planning concern (the Prospect Street Overlay District) so the requested addition would require a special permit. He said that Mr. Elias intended to alter the signs on the property and make them more organized and toned down than the existing signs.

Ms. Goodwin asked about the material proposed for the façade of the addition. Sammy Kassis, the project engineer, answered that the aluminum panels used on the front of the existing building would be continued across the front of the addition and the side of the addition would be cinder blocks. The last two garage bays would project forward of the rest of the building and the garage doors on those bays would be new.

Ms. Pauli asked if the canopy sign would be altered. Mr. Rafferty said they would have to think about that before making a decision.

Ms. Goodwin asked for public questions of fact.

Ms. Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the sign would be centered over the left three bays. Mr. Elias replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Goodwin asked for public comments.

David Grotrian of 24 Fisk Place said he had been a customer of the station for twenty years. He said Nick Elias was easy to get to know and the station got automotive repairs done quickly. He said he was grateful to have the business nearby his home.

Steven DeMarco noted that the closure of other auto shops in the neighborhood had made it harder to get cars worked on. Metric Systems and Hondar House had both closed. The proposed addition was a natural extension of a historic use for the site.

Ms. Meyer said small local businesses are very important to the city. This business saved her life by finding and repairing a bad gas tank. She said Nick was a respectful, outgoing, caring, and helpful individual. His priority was the local community and he serviced the vehicles of the school department. Access to a service like this business offers is very important to the community.

Ms. Goodwin read a letter in support of the application sent by Councilor Tim Toomey.

Mr. Hsiao commented on the design proposal. He said he had no objection to the additional bay. He said the sign band needed to be designed carefully because the two projecting bays would complicate the design. He suggested that the signs on the canopy also be studied as well as the color, typeface, placement, etc. A three-dimensional view would help you visualize the design. He indicated that what worked well about the existing sign was the bright color and graphic punch. It could be modernized without completely changing the design. Mr. Elias said he wanted to do a full study of the canopy and sign in the spring and had seen other signs he liked.

Mr. Redmon suggested that the owner hire a good graphic designer to design the signs. He asked if the fence between 320 and 326 Broadway would be altered. Mr. Elias said he would speak again to the owner of 326 Broadway about the fence.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the application as submitted, with the added suggestions about sign design that would be part of the record of the meeting. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

Ms. Litchfield said the minutes of August 6, 2018 looked fine. Mr. Redmon agreed. H moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Redmon moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Pauli seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0 and the hearing adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public Present on September 4, 2018
(who signed the attendance list)**

Sharon DeMarco	291 Broadway, Apt 1
Steven DeMarco	291 Broadway, Apt 1
Steven (illegible)	(illegible), Apt 2 02139
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Samia Nassif	185 Briar Ln, Westwood, MA 02090
Nahid (Nick) Elias	320 Broadway
Nalin Mistry	25 BlueJay Rd, Lynnfield, MA 01940

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge and/or Massachusetts unless otherwise noted.