

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, June 3, 2019, 6:00 PM, 2nd Fl. Meeting Room, City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*, Monika Pauli, Charles Redmon, *Members*; Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Commission Members absent: Lestra Litchfield

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Eric Hill, Survey Director

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Vice Chair Tony Hsiao called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. Mr. Hsiao made introductions and described the hearing proceedings. Member Charles Redmon arrived 10 minutes later.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case MC-5697: 15 Lee Street, Unit 7, by Curtis and Elizabeth Hall. Install new window/opening.

Ms. Crosbie presented the history of the property, noting that it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and therefore the review is binding.

The applicant, Curtis Hall, explained his unit is at the back of the house, a part of an addition constructed later. He is looking to provide light and air into the bathroom that currently has no window.

Mr. Hsiao asked how will the window look on the exterior, noting that the other windows are much more elaborate. Mr. Hall answered he had wanted something simple but is willing to work on the design.

Ms. Pauli asked if the window is a vinyl slider. Mr. Hall answered yes, that it will be for privacy, being located in the shower.

Mr. Hsiao explained that there is not enough information in the application. He stated that a more detailed drawing is necessary.

Mr. Redmon reiterated Mr. Hsiao's concerns, stating that the applicant needs to work with a professional to figure out the best design that respects the character of the building.

Mr. Hsiao went on to explain that a horizontal window, as show in the application, is out of character with the façade.

Ms. Pauli stated that in principle the Commission could envision a window, but more information is needed on the design details.

The applicant asked if he matched the existing windows, would that work. Mr. Hsiao replied that they still need to see a drawing with details worked out.

Ms. Eleanor Duckworth of 16 Lee Street expressed an interest in seeing more detail.

Mr. Boris asked what is the legal process for review. Mr. Hsiao explained the process and that the review is binding.

Mr. Redmon suggested that it would be beneficial to have an elevation, possibly copy the lintel/hood style and create only half a window. Mr. Hsiao suggested that verticality would be beneficial.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to disapprove the application as presented and recommend the applicant return with a new application including more detailed architectural drawings. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-5698: 381 Broadway, by Joseph J. Ianelli. Install vinyl siding on 3 sides of building.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, noting alterations including changes to the third floor and interior remodeling for additional units. Ms. Crosbie also stated that the review is nonbinding.

Mr. Ianelli, the applicant, stated that he would like to maintain the front wood façade, but install vinyl siding on the other three sides. He also noted that the third floor is already completely covered in vinyl siding. Mr. Ianelli also mentioned that he intends to replace the front porch. Ms. Crosbie stated that this work was not included in the application.

Ms. Pauli explained that the Commission discourages the use of vinyl siding and that wood siding is preferable because it is the original, historic material.

Ms. McMahon noted that the house is beautiful and asked if the vinyl siding is a question of cost.

Ms. Pauli suggested that the cornice and trim not be covered and the siding be replaced in kind.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to disapprove the application as presented, and recommend that the applicant use wood. Mr. Hsiao seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-5682: 285 Harvard Street, Unit 301, by Viktor Kac. Replace original windows with vinyl windows.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, a four-story brick structure constructed in 1929, noting that there are currently a mix of original and non-original windows, and that the review is non-binding.

The applicant, Ms. Elena Kac, questioned whether the right windows were being presented. After looking at images of the building, Ms. Kac was satisfied that the windows in the presentation were correct. Ms. Kac also explained that the windows were in disrepair and not working properly and submitted photographs of the windows from the interior.

Mr. Redmon asked if the proposed windows will match the other replaced windows on the building. Ms. Kac replied yes.

Mr. Boris asked what are the proposed windows. Mr. Hsiao explained that the proposed windows were included in the application.

Mr. Redmon explained that the Commission normally prefers that original windows are refurbished to maintain the historic character of the building.

Mr. Hsiao noted that the building already has a significant number of replacement windows. Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application as presented. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-5653: 75-77 Inman Street, by 77 Inman Street LLC c/o Robert Purdy. Construct new single-family detached dwelling in rear, renovate exterior of existing building.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, noting that review of the proposed new construction is binding.

Mr. Hsiao asked the applicant about the existing house. The applicant, Mr. Purdy, explained that the house would be re-clad with synthetic siding and pvc trim. Mr. Hsiao asked about the windows. Mr. Purdy answered that three of the windows would remain unchanged.

Ms. Crosbie noted that two window wells were proposed for the front façade. Mr. Purdy replied they could be moved to the side of the building.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the applicant is seeking zoning relief. Mr. Purdy replied no. Mr. Hsiao asked about the parking and landscaping. Mr. Purdy responded that the parking layout should work for 2 cars, he is using brick paving, and he is creating a garden space on either side of the property.

Ms. Pauli expressed skepticism over the turning radius in the parking area.

The architect, Steve Hiserodt, arrived and continued the presentation.

Mr. Hsiao noted that the application states that the existing house is being restored, but there are several proposed alterations, he asked if any windows will be restored. Mr. Hiserodt replied that the existing windows are small, and he would like to increase their size to the existing rough opening.

Mr. Redmon asked if there were clapboards underneath the existing siding. Mr. Hiserodt answered that he was not sure, and he can replicate what is underneath the siding.

Mr. Hiserodt explained his design for the new house as having a different character from the existing house so as not to compete with it. He presented floor plans of the proposed new house. At the existing house, he proposes to remove part of the roof, creating a pergola as an outdoor amenity. He is also proposing shutters for the existing house because he thinks the façade is rather stark.

Mr. Redmon asked the applicant to describe the new building. Mr. Hiserodt replied that it is an open modern plan, the house opens up more toward the rear of the site, there is 18 feet between the houses.

Mr. Hsiao noted that there is no elevation showing both houses, it's not clear how they relate to each other. He also asked why not use materials that link the building to the neighborhood. Mr. Redmon asked what are the exterior materials of the new house. Mr. Hiserodt answered channel gap siding – ship lap.

Mr. Hsiao stated that there are gaps in the presentation. Mr. Redmon mentioned that the presentation does not show the relationship between the two buildings.

Mr. Santino Ferrante of 76 Inman asked the applicant if he can build as of right and does he have a 32-foot buffer, and who did the zoning analysis. Mr. Hiserodt answered he did the analysis.

Mr. Preston Cohen of 79 Inman asked how cars will get out of the proposed parking on the site. Mr. Hiserodt replied it will be a little difficult. Mr. Cohen asked why the proposed windows are looking into his backyard as if the yard belonged to the applicant. Mr. Hiserodt replied that the windows do look over the applicant's property but that he would take another look at the layout. Mr. Cohen expressed concern over the proposed infill, that the space in the back currently creates an open green space, relieving what happens on the street side. Mr. Cohen asked if they have considered that the infill compromises the privacy of the neighbors. Mr. Purdy replied that there are a lot of infill projects. Mr. Cohen noted that this morphology could establish a precedent and lead to even more infills in the future.

Mr. Paul Bergman of Inman Square noted the mature maple tree on the property and that it won't survive any basement excavation.

Mr. Peter Musliner of 42 Antrim Street asked about the history of the site.

A resident of 36 Antrim Street asked if the applicant had considered the impact of a new structure on the tree canopy. In addition, the resident commented that the applicant is proposing to design a new building that doesn't compete with the existing house, but it seems counter intuitive. Mr. Hiserodt replied that he did not want the new house to look like a historic house.

Another resident asked if the applicant was willing to postpone the project, 10, 20 years?

Comments

Deborah Allen of 83 Inman Street stated that she opposes any proposed project because Cambridge should retain open space, and the proposal has a negative impact on her quality of life. She explained that the proposed infill would affect the existing maple tree on the property which provides shade and privacy for the surrounding neighbors. The tree's circumference is about 105 inches and it is most likely over 150 years old and can live up to 300 years. It has a shallow root system so any excavation will destroy this root system and destabilize the tree, even the weight can suffocate the tree by compressing the soil and preventing oxygen to get to the roots. The tree is a precious asset to be preserved.

Ms. Carley Taylor of 36 Antrim Street stated that the tree is magnificent, and its health is the top priority. Its demise would negatively impact the quality of life of the residents.

Ms. Judy Sonberg of 48 Antrim Street presented recent photos of the tree to show how big of a presence it has in the neighborhood.

Ms. Maria Sauzier of 42 Antrim Street explained she moved here in 1980 and has seen the tree grow, it's a special tree. And she does not like the proposed design.

Ms. Allen stated that when the roots get cut, the impact might not be immediately apparent, but will be seen over time.

A resident of 36 Antrim Street stated that the design is too large and intrusive, it maximizes benefit to the developer and reduces open space. The applicant responded that he thought it would be beneficial to separate the house and not add to the existing, but all options are on the table.

Mr. Ferrante stated that the site plan as presented shows a tree in the wrong location.

Mr. Cohen stated that the roots are where the proposed house is located. Mr. Cohen stated that it is not only the tree that is important, but the paradigm of adding houses behind other houses will ultimately lead to all yards having houses. It will destroy the entire character of the neighborhood as well as have a major negative environmental impact. He also said an attached house would be better.

Mr. Purdy replied that he is happy to work with neighbors, he has no intention of killing any trees.

Ms. Agnes Criss of 76 Antrim Street stated that this proposal sets an important precedent and she doesn't want to see absentee landlords.

Mr. John Pitkin of 18 Fayette Street stated that this project reminds him of 9 Clinton Street where a separate house was proposed for the backyard, but an attached house was built instead, this could be the case for this site.

Ms. Mary Jane Rupert of 36 Antrim Street strongly objected to the proposal, stating that the top deck looks right into her yard.

Mr. George Oleson of Andover MA and member of Olson Family Trust at 73 Inman Street stated that his great grandfather built the house at 77 Inman and that he is the fifth generation to live in Cambridge, he is not here as a proponent or opponent. Mr. Oleson stated that that fire lane is shorter than what was provided. He had purchased a portion of the land from 75-77 Inman St to fulfill a setback requirement and the current assessors map does not reflect this. He also stated that zoning determines how close a parking space can be to a window. He also requested that the project have three parking spaces. Mr. Oleson explained that there used to be a pond where 79 Inman is located, and that his grandfather would make his sisters go into the pond to attract bloodsuckers which they would then sell to the pharmacy. He urged the applicant to see if the pond had originally extended into his property as well.

Mr. Hsiao then read five letters into the record, submitted by neighbors opposed to the reduced open space as well as the potential negative impact to the health of the existing maple tree on the property which is a major natural feature of the site affecting many residents.

Mr. Hsiao expressed his desire to defer review until the applicant can provide an accurate site survey, a 3-dimensional view of the proposed project, a model, a consultation with an arborist, elevations showing both the existing house and proposed, and prepare additional options that take into consideration the concerns expressed at today's meeting. Mr. Hsiao also stated that the applicant must engage with the neighborhood.

Mr. Hsiao also reiterated that zoning determines what the applicant can do by right, that the Commission only reviews the appropriateness of the design and density, but cannot determine zoning.

Mr. Redmon motioned to continue the case until the applicant returns with additional information as outlined by Mr. Hsiao. Ms. Pauli seconded, and motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Hiserodt asked for additional guidance. Mr. Redmon answered that he should provide any options he has already looked at and additional ones responding to public comments. Mr. Hsiao noted that this is a complicated and sensitive project and urged the applicant to reach out to the neighbors.

Minutes

The Minutes for April 1, 2019 were approved, 4-0.

Mr. Hsiao adjourned the meeting at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison A. Crosbie
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public Present on June 3, 2019
(who signed the attendance list)**

Deborah Allen	83 Inman Street
George Despostes	36 Antrim Street
Vincent Valant	28 Antrim Street
Mary Jane Rupert	36 Antrim Street
Curtis Hall	15 Lee Street, Unit 7
Judy Sonberg	48 Antrim Street
Joseph Ianelli	80 Park Street
Carly Taylor	36 Antrim Street
Nathan Nunn	36 Antrim Street
George F. Oleson	2 Joseph St., Andover, MA
Maria Sauzier	42 Antrim Street
Peter Musliner	42 Antrim Street
Steven Kosovac	79 Inman Street
Preston Cohen	79 Inman Street
Elena Kac	Brookline, MA
Benjamin ?	77 Pleasant Street
Eleanor Duckworth	16 Lee Street
Rebecca ?	75 Inman Street
John Pitkin	18 Fayette Street

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