

## MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, February 1, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*,

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sara Burks, Preservation Planner

Absent: Margaret McMahon, Alternate

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/y3y2hn9d>.

Due to statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response to COVID-19, this meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was 886 3540 9714.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao called the meeting to order at 6:05 and introduced the format of the meeting and confirmed the presence of representatives for each case.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case MC-6100: 50 Amory Street, by Daniel Buonaiuto.** Replace 8 wood windows with vinyl clad windows.

Ms. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, introduced the property and showed slides of the Bracketed Italianate house constructed in 1886.

### Commission Questions

Commission member Charles Redmon asked if the applicant had considered repairing the windows. The owner's representative, Holly Donaldson, replied that the windows were too deteriorated and that to repair them was three times the cost of replacement.

Commission Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked for more information on the proposed replacements, specifically will the windows be simulated divided lites? Ms. Donaldson answered that she didn't know.

Commission member Monika Pauli asked what kind of windows are on the second level. Ms. Donaldson replied that they are replacements.

### Public Questions

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the applicant had spoken with the upstairs neighbor to coordinate getting the same style window. Ms. Donaldson answered that she had been unable to get a hold of the neighbor. Ms. Meyer asked about materials and if the muntins are incorporated into the glass or applied.

### Public Comments

Ms. Meyer expressed her concern about the replacement and hopes that the muntins are substantial enough.

### Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield reiterated her concern about the lights and muntin configuration, noting the Commission prefers simulated divided lites which means that it looks like the panes of glass are separated lites. She was also concerned that the application did not provide information on this.

Mr. Hsiao looked online at the manufacturer's website and directed the applicant and commissioners to look at the third option, Harvey classic window SDL.

Ms. Litchfield noted that quality of the windows makes a difference and affects resale value if that is a concern.

Ms. Pauli asked about the color. Ms. Donaldson replied white.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to approve the application as submitted on the condition that the owner uses windows with simulated divided lites. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Hsiao asked the applicants for 8 Ellery Street if they agree to change their place in the schedule so that they are last, and they agreed.

**Case MC-6102: 14 Bigelow Street, by Reed Shea and Avia Navickas.** Construct two new entrances, window well, alter existing front porch/entry, expand building in rear.

Ms. Crosbie presented the history of the property, listed on the Bigelow Street National Register District.

The owners, Reed Shea and Avia Navickas, shared their screen and presented their proposal, and noted examples of other properties that have inspired their project, including 31 Maple Avenue, 40 Trowbridge St., and 16 Bigelow Street.

### Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked to confirm separate rental units. Mr. Shea replied yes. Mr. Hsiao asked about the windows. Mr. Shea answered that he is restoring them. Mr. Hsiao asked about the front porch, noting that the drawings make it look cantilevered. Mr. Shea replied that it is not cantilevered, but the stair to the basement level is underneath. Mr. Hsiao noted that 16 Bigelow side entrance to the lower level is more industrial looking, does Mr. Shea intend it to look like that. Mr. Shea answered no, that he intends the design to keep a cohesive theme using the same details as the rest of the house.

### Public Questions

Ms. Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked for clarification of the architectural details, will they be modern or duplicate the existing house details, the drawings are confusing. Mr. Shea replied that he is incorporating the house architectural details, the drawings are more conceptual. Ms. Meyer noted that modern can look like a nursing home. She then asked about the proposed

window configurations. Mr. Shea clarified the elevations. Ms. Meyer asked if the house has three units. Mr. Shea replied yes, it's a three-family house.

Mr. Eliot Slater of 10 Bigelow Street stated that he had looked at the drawings and at 31 Maple Avenue and can see why they would like to copy that design, their work so far has been very high quality.

Ms. Meyer stated that she was concerned about the windows, a death by a thousand cuts.

Ms. Crosbie asked for confirmation that the chimneys are to remain. Mr. She replied yes.

#### Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield asked for clarification, that the wraparound porch will not be modern and not cantilevered over the basement. Mr. Shea said that was correct.

Mr. Redmon stated that the drawings do not provide enough information to fully understand the design. Mr. Shea asked what was missing. Mr. Redmon answered the front stair and how they coordinate with the rest of the building, and the rear of the house.

Mr. Hsiao stated that the drawings are not really sufficient to understand the design. The elevations need more information, and floor plans help to understand the moves made on the exterior. 31 Maple Ave has lots of details that need to be studied. You also need to study how to create a basement level entrance. In spirit, the proposal resonates, and you have good examples. You will need to update the drawings to better reflect the proposal.

Ms. Litchfield asked about what happens if the siding can't be restored and stated that the side entry has to be more thought out. Mr. Shea asked what's not clear, Ms. Litchfield replied the columns, that she needs a detailed drawing of the stairs and how the porch is going to be supported.

Ms. Pauli agreed, reiterating that the applicant needs to work out the details to anticipate code issues, railing, etc.

Mr. Hsiao suggested that CHC staff can provide examples of similar projects.

Mr. Shea asked for clarification of concerns. Mr. Redmon replied the modification of the porch and stairs.

Mr. Hsiao said they need a site plan to understand zoning, setback issues, and stated that floor plans are not required but helpful to understand the elevation changes.

Mr. Redmon concurred, noting that a site plan and landscape plan are needed to understand the impact on the features on the site.

Mr. Redmon moved to accept the general direction of the design and continue the hearing to allow further development of the design. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passes, 4-0.

Ms. Crosbie asked Mr. Shea if he agrees to continue the hearing. Mr. Shea replied yes.

**Case MC-6080 CONTINUED: 8 Ellery Street, by Bob Purdy.** Construct 1-family residence in rear of lot, restore most of existing structure.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides and history of the Greek Revival home associated with writer/journalist/activist Margaret Fuller and poet David Ferry.

Kelly Boucher, architect, shared her screen with slides and described the proposed project, noting that the intention is to preserve the original structure and construct a freestanding 2-unit dwelling in the rear, and remove an existing shed in the back. She noted that the property is in the C-1 zoning district and that the lot is very long with large setbacks. She also explained that there are currently two parking spaces in front and they are proposing to put all the parking in an underground garage in the rear, adding a driveway and removing a fence that currently runs along that side, eliminating all cars in the front. The 35-foot high new structure will incorporate Greek Revival details to relate to the architectural vocabulary of the existing house. The proposed building is symmetrical and split down the middle. The land slopes up from Ellery Street toward the back by up to 6 feet, so digging is not necessary.

#### Commission Questions

Mr. Redmon noted that the proposal seems off balance, the new building looks more important than the existing, what other massing studies have you done? Ms. Boucher replied that they looked at adding onto the existing building, but it then becomes non-conforming, the proposed building is taller in the back, the slope makes it higher. Ms. Boucher also explained that they want to avoid having to go to the BZA. She stated that zoning allows up to 6 units and they only have three, noting that they didn't max out to a full build-out, and that they did look at making one multi-unit building. Mr. Redmon noted that the existing house has an informal feel to the way it evolved that is missing in the addition. Mr. Hsiao interjected to save comments for later.

Mr. Hsiao asked the distance separating the house. Ms. Boucher answered 11 ½ feet.

Ms. Litchfield asked the distance from the bottom step of the new structure to the back of the existing house. Ms. Boucher responded 10 feet, which is required. Ms. Litchfield asked about materials. Ms. Boucher replied same as the existing building, cedar siding, cornerboards same depth as existing. Mr. Bob Purdy, the owner, also stated they are going to use a synthetic slate for the roof.

Mr. Hsiao asked about a site plan that shows the driveway, planting, etc. Ms. Boucher described proposed fencing, keeping the wrought iron fence, and will work with adjacent neighbors. Mr. Hsiao asked how many cars, Ms. Boucher answered three, no surface parking.

Ms. Pauli asked how much taller is the back of the proposed building relative to the front house. Ms. Boucher replied 4 or 5 feet higher than the front. Ms. Pauli asked if she considered sinking the garage, sloping it down, to lower the building a couple of feet. Ms. Boucher answered they want to avoid water drainage issues, and snow removal would be more problematic.

Ms. Litchfield asked about the foundation of the proposed structure. Ms. Boucher answered because of the slope it's 4 feet in the front and 2 feet in the back.

### Public Questions

Michael Papish of 10 Ellery Street asked about the backyard, who will own it. Ms. Boucher replied that half of the rear yard will belong to each rear unit, the existing side yard amenity will belong to the front house. Mr. Papish asked about fences, Ms. Boucher stated that they are putting in fences.

Mr. Orhun Mortaglu of 5 Dana Street stated they purchased their backyard and it backs onto the 8 Ellery property. He noted that his house is missing on the shadow studies. Ms. Boucher replied that she used the City's GIS and it apparently is not up to date. Mr. Mortaglu stated the architect needs to update the shadow study and asked if she considered a more modern approach to the new design, right now he can't tell what is old and what is new. Mr. Purdy responded that this was intentional, that he's done modern style buildings, but felt this was more appropriate. Mr. Mortaglu asked if they're cutting trees. Mr. Purdy answered no. Ms. Boucher explained that because of the setback, the construction is far from the trees. Mr. Mortaglu noted there is a dead tree that should come down. Mr. Purdy offered to work with him to resolve this. Mr. Mortaglu asked about the 34-foot height of the new structure. Ms. Boucher said it's measured around the grade of the house.

Mr. Timothy O'Donnell of 3 Dana Street asked about the construction time frame. Ms. Boucher replied once the permit is issued, 8 or 9 months. Mr. O'Donnell noted that his bedrooms face the rear of the property. Ms. Boucher explained that there's 30 feet between the rear of new construction to his fence. Mr. O'Donnell asked if there will be chimneys. Ms. Boucher said no. Mr. O'Donnell noted water table issues. Ms. Boucher explained that they are not digging down so they will not impact the water table. The new basement will be higher than the existing one. Mr. O'Donnell asked about height of the back. Ms. Boucher explained 35 feet from low point and 30 feet above grade from where O'Donnell resides. Mr. O'Donnell asked about the shadow study. Ms. Boucher explained the study shows his building will not be impacted, not long shadows, but maybe at sunset. Mr. O'Donnell asked how does this project benefit the historic neighborhood. Mr. Purdy answered that they are preserving the existing building. Mr. O'Donnell asked how does the new construction provide any benefit. Mr. Purdy replied that the addition of only 2 new units in the rear with Greek Revival details seems preferable.

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the height of both basements. Ms. Boucher answered they're almost level. Ms. Meyer asked about ceiling heights. Ms. Boucher answered depends on the floor. Ms. Meyer asked about a third story. Ms. Boucher answered yes, same as existing.

### Public Comment

Ms. Megan Marshall, historian, author of Margaret Fuller biography and board member of Margaret Fuller Society, stated that this house is as significant as Fuller's birthplace. She read her comments from a letter to the Commission. Ms. Boucher responded that they agree with her, their goals are the same, they are preserving most of the existing building, except for a kitchen renovation, the underground parking will remove cars from the front.

Ms. Amy Thornton of 7 Dana Street noted that the back of the proposed house appears 2 ½ times larger than the existing house. Single family houses are extremely rare in this area, did

they consider a single-family home on a smaller footprint? Ms. Boucher answered that they are not maxing out the space, only proposing 2 new units. Ms. Thornton responded that a single-family home would be worth 2 million, what's the motivation for an additional unit? Why?

Ms. Meyer stated that she has been worried about this house, if the new addition was a barn, it would work. Perhaps the height can be skimmed to drop the roofline. What is the sf of each unit? Ms. Boucher each unit is roughly 2100 sf, the new units have 3 bedrooms each. Ms. Meyer stated that she appreciates using the vocabulary of the existing house, but it's just too big. Ms. Meyer asked about the Fire Dept input. Ms. Boucher answered that they have not discussed this with them yet, noting that they usually require 14-foot wide drive, and that they can use the grass edge to meet that, typical of the area. Ms. Meyer concluded to rethink the grade and shrink the proposed structure.

Mr. Michael Papish noted that the green space is an attraction and is concerned about the proposed construction and the creation of small tiny lots, worried about the construction going on with everyone stuck at home, and the loss of character to the neighborhood. Ms. Boucher responded that there will be open space, and the project will give two families the opportunity to enjoy the neighborhood. Mr. Papish expressed continued concern about the lack of light in winter.

Mr. Timothy O'Donnell stated his property abuts 8 Ellery and is strongly opposed to the project. He understands that the developer can do what he is proposing but saying that he can max out the space and is choosing not to makes him angry, and many people in his building feel the same way.

Mr. Mortaglu stated he is horrified by the proposal, it's gigantic and will dominate the historical house, it will compromise his privacy, cast shadows on his home, will increase density, and cramp the beautiful landscape.

Ms. Carole Perrault, former Cambridge resident, read her comments from a letter she submitted to the Commission, reiterating goals of the Commission and factors to consider.

Dara Manoach of 3 Dana Street expressed support of neighbors' comments. His bedrooms overlook the property and is sad to lose green space to more condos.

#### Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield stated that Ms. Perrault's letter sums up her feelings about the project. Ms. Litchfield stated that it is excessive infill and similar to 10 Ellery that the Commission tried to prevent. She also stated that this proposal is really lacking detail – no site plan, no landscape plan, the relation of back and front buildings is skewed, the back building is much more dominant, we need a model. She agreed with Mr. Redmon's earlier query about massing studies and it would be useful to see these, noting that the lot does affect how large the building appears, it is difficult. The four homes on Ellery and Dana form an ensemble and it breaks her heart to see this proposal, 10 Ellery also broke her heart, but we can work together to find solutions. Ms. Litchfield encouraged the applicant not to create "cubicles" with fencing, and further stated that they are in the dark because there is no landscape or site plan.

Mr. Redmon concurred with Ms. Litchfield and Ms. Perrault's comments. He stated that conceptually it lacks the effort to look at context and how to respond. Mr. Redmon would like them to come back with a real model from Dana to Ellery and provide a detailed site plan and building sections, this will help you pick up clues on how to respond to context, and show us your previous studies and a large scale model.

Ms. Pauli agreed with the Commissioners noting this is such a unique house that needs a unique solution, zoning should not be guiding this design. It could be a little gem, perhaps a study for potential buyers who could appreciate it, we don't want you to go broke, but this is such a special place.

Mr. Hsiao agreed with the Commission, reiterating that this is a very sensitive project, he applauds the intent to preserve the existing house, but the relationship of house to the site defining characteristics of the landscape needs attention. He further stated they need to address neighborhood concerns and take into account all the relationships to the landscape. Mr. Hsiao also encouraged more 3-d views from eye level and from the street. The goal is to complement, not mimic, the architecture, and allow the history of the existing house to be more evident.

Ms. Crosbie asked the applicants if they agree with a continuance, and they confirmed. Mr. Redmon moved to continue the review to the next hearing and the applicants provide context studies, landscape plan, site sections, a model of the site of Ellery to Dana Street, the width of Ellery to Dana to opposite of 8 Ellery Street. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0.

Minutes for September and October 2020 were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

### Members of the Public Present on January 4, 2021

#### Panelists:

Josh Marotske: [josh.marotske@brightwayenergy.com](mailto:josh.marotske@brightwayenergy.com)

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#### Attendees:

Gigi Ramakrishnan,	1-3 Dana st .02138
Linda Mckane,	1 Dana St 3B Cambridge Ma
Dara Manoach,	3 Dana St.
Michael Papish,	10 Ellery St. Unit B
Orhun Muratoglu,	5 Dana St.
Jay Poswolsky,	10 Dana Street
Timothy O'Donnell,	3 Dana Street
Megan Marshall,	
Carole Perrault,	
Marilee Meyer,	10 Dana Street
Doug Gesler,	16 Bigelow Street
Ellen Slater	10 Bigelow Street
Doriana Chialant	3 Dana Street