

Approved 9/26/11

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, June 27, 2011 - 5:30 P.M. - 831 Massachusetts Ave., Basement Conference Room

Commissioners Present: Art Bardige, *Vice Chair*; Heli Meltsner, Constantin von Wentzel, *Alternates*

Commissioners Absent: Theresa Hamacher, Catherine Henn, Robert Crocker, Maryann Thompson, *Members*; Mark Goldberg, *Alternate*

Staff Present: Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: see attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Vice Chair Art Bardige called the meeting to order at 5:42 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed the hearing procedures. He designated both alternates present to vote on all matters.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-257: 79 Raymond St., by Scylla Properties, LLC. To review landscape plan, including parking and paving arrangements and materials. (Commission review of the landscape plan was made a condition of the certificate of appropriateness issued for case AH-257 in October 2007).

Ms. Burks introduced the agenda item. She explained that the purpose of the hearing was to review the landscape plan, including parking and paving arrangements and materials, which review was made a condition of the previously-issued Certificate of Appropriateness in October 2007. She noted that the hearing was not an opportunity to rehash the entire project scope or change the design of aspects of the building. She showed slides of the existing conditions from Raymond Street, Bellevue and Wyman Street.

James Rafferty, attorney representing the applicants, introduced Dr. Eric Griffith, an owner, and Alex Zaras, the architect. Mr. Rafferty noted that the length of the pre-existing driveway off of Raymond Street had been reduced by approximately 50 feet. The new driveway off of Wyman Street had been approved on the site plan of October 2007 referenced in the plans approved in the Certificate of Appropriateness. He remarked that nearly every tree identified for protection during construction had survived.

Alex Zaras, architect, displayed a sample of the precast concrete pavers from the pre-existing Raymond Street driveway. He then displayed a sample of the proposed granite cobble paving material, to be used at both driveways. Regarding the size of the Wyman Street driveway, he explained that it would serve the guest portion of the house. As much lawn was to be preserved as possible on the site. He noted the location of new hedges and trees. The retaining wall on the south side of the property protects the root base of the tree.

Ms. Meltsner asked how drainage was being addressed. Would the height of the finish grade be brought back up from existing levels?

Mr. Zaras replied that all of the water would be collected on site, as required by the city. The finish grade would be brought back up. He noted that they had already started backfilling around the house to accomplish that.

Eric Griffith, an owner, noted that the construction entrance had been kept well away from the large beech tree at the front of the house. The area around the construction entrance would be filled in with curb and plantings and the tree that had been lost would be replaced.

Mr. von Wentzel and Ms. Meltsner asked about the details of the retaining wall.

Mr. Zaras replied that it would be finished with a veneer of fieldstone.

Ms. Burks asked for the driveway dimensions of the driveway off Wyman Street. She asked if any of the new trees and shrubs were high and dense so as to make a wall of plantings.

Mr. Zaras replied that it would be approximately 43' by 24' wide.

Mr. von Wentzel asked how many cars would fit in the driveway.

Mr. Zaras replied that if tightly parked, no more than 6 cars could fit there.

Mr. Bardige asked if the driveway would be paved up to the property line.

Mr. Zaras replied in the negative. There would be a 5' wide planted buffer from the property line, making the width of the driveway 19' instead of 24'.

Steve Fitzsimmons, of 3 Wyman Street, asked how much wider the driveway would be than the existing gate.

Mr. Zaras said the gate would stay the same size. The access to the driveway from the street could be narrowed to approximately 12' wide.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said he had observed the previous residents use of the Wyman Street driveway as seldom, maybe 5-10 times per year. He described Wyman Street as crowded with parked cars on both sides of the street. The street was also used by parents picking up and dropping off at the nursery school across the street in the morning and noontime hours. The street was used by the city for snow plowing, street cleaning, and trash collection. And it was used by the neighbors episodically.

Mary Jane Komacki, of 103 Avon Hill Street, asked if there was going to be a fence along Raymond Street. She noted that the parking area off Wyman Street had been dirt before.

Mr. Bardige pointed out that a fence up to 4' high was allowed as-of-right with no review of the Commission.

Mr. Zaras answered that for the time being, the existing wood fence would remain. If another idea were proposed in the future, it would be brought to the staff or the commission for review, as needed.

Margot Welch, of 77 Avon Hill Street, asked how the driveway would be used. Where would the household staff park?

Mr. Griffith replied that the driveway would keep any cars off of Wyman Street. It was intended for parking for the guest part of the house, so it would be used mostly for the grandparents when they were visiting. He said there was not much household staff. There was a generously sized driveway off of Raymond Street for parking of cars. The Wyman Street driveway was intended for guests of the family, when they were present. He said he could not promise that would be the case forever, but that was his intention.

Mr. Rafferty said the concept of the driveway was already approved in October of 2007 as shown on the site plan. The owners were not proposing any binding restrictions on the use of the driveway.

Mr. Fitzsimmons said that he did not oppose reasonable access to the property from Wyman Street, but his concern had been that it would be used frequently by cleaning staff, etc. He said he was interested in how much additional use would be made of Wyman Street.

Ms. Welch asked when construction would end.

Mr. Giffith answered that they hoped to finish exterior hardscaping on the north, west, and east sides before the frost this fall.

Ms. Meltsner asked if the brick walkway material was proposed to change.

Mr. Zaras replied in the negative.

Ms. Meltsner said the goals should include preservation of a maximum number of street parking spaces on Wyman Street for the use of the neighborhood. The driveway should be designed in order to meet that goal.

Mr. von Wentzel said the proposed landscaping materials were appropriate. He warned that the materials would still lead to compaction which could impact tree health. He noted that the steps proposed to avoid water run-off were good.

Mr. Bardige said he was pleased to hear that the driveway off Wyman would be necked down by 5'. He noted the district goal to preserve as much green space as possible. He noted the receipt of a letter from Judith Parker, of 8 Wyman Street, expressing concern about the frequency of use of the driveway and the congestion of traffic on the street.

Mr. von Wentzel moved to approve the material samples and landscape plans including the front brick walkway, rear and front parking and driveway arrangements, on the condition that the driveway access off Wyman Street be necked down to approximately 12' (so as to maximize the number of available on-street parking spaces on Wyman Street) and would have a planted buffer of 5' along the eastern property line. He further noted that the materials of the retaining walls were appropriate and congruent with the existing foundation materials. He noted that the walkway materials were permeable and that open space was maximized.

Ms. Meltsner seconded the motion, which passed in a vote of 3-0.

Staff Report

Ms. Burks reported on the staff non-binding review of applications at 114 Upland Road and 62 Upland Road, #1.

Minutes

Mr. von Wentzel moved to approve the minutes of April 25, 2011. Ms. Meltsner seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

Mr. von Wentzel moved to adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Meltsner seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public
June 27, 2011

Sarah Krieger	71 Avon Hill St
Judy Bagalay	15 Raymond St
Eric Griffith	79 Raymond St
Stephen Fitsimmon	3 Wyman St
Rob Adelberg	18 Bellevue Ave
Mary Jane Kornacki	103 Avon Hill St
Margot Welch	77 Avon Hill St
Peggy Kutcher	4 Washington Ave

Addresses are in Cambridge, unless otherwise specified.