

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, September 26, 2011 - 5:30 P.M. - 831 Massachusetts Ave., Basement Conference Rm

Commissioners Present: Art Bardige, *Vice Chair*; Catherine Henn, Maryann Thompson, *Members*; Mark Golberg, Heli Meltsner, *Alternates*

Commissioners Absent: Theresa Hamacher, Robert Crocker, *Members*; Constantin von Wentzel, *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 5:30 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed the hearing procedures.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-386: 37 Lancaster St., by John McQuillan, Jr. Letter received August 24, 2011 withdrawing the application. Consider accepting withdrawal of application without prejudice.

Maryann Thompson recused herself from the case because she owned a property across the street.

Mr. Bardige reported that the Commission had received a letter requesting to withdraw, without prejudice, the application for 37 Lancaster Street on August 24, 2011.

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner, noted that it was not necessary for the Commission to vote on the withdrawal, but it was standard practice.

Cornelius Moynihan, of 58 Washington Avenue, recommended that the commission condition the withdrawal without prejudice on the dropping of the curb cut application.

[Mr. Golberg arrived].

Brian Levy, attorney for Seth Friedman of 36 Arlington Street, noted that the application had been pending for about five months. The applicants' attorney, Sean Hope, had indicated that the plans were not changing. Mr. Levy said the applicants should not come back with the same driveway application.

Seth Friedman, of 36 Arlington Street, said it appeared that the applicants were parceling out the project, trying to get permission for things in a piecemeal fashion.

Mr. Levy said the enabling ordinance was silent on the matter of withdrawing with or without prejudice. He suggested the Commission approve the request, but with a condition on it.

Mr. Bardige noted that the Commission had never had a presentation by the applicants on the design proposal. The hearings were all continued without a presentation. The matter was a blank slate for the Commission, so there was no reason to vote to accept the withdrawal with prejudice or with conditions. He said he would support accepting the withdrawal without prejudice.

Mr. Moynihan said the application included a driveway. The curb cut permit process was being handled in the same manner.

Mr. Bardige closed the public comment period. He designated both alternates present, Heli Meltsner and Mark Golberg, to vote on all matters.

Catherine Henn said she agreed that the Commission did not have the authority to prohibit the applicants from applying for a driveway.

Heli Meltsner said the application was never presented. It would be improper to restrict them from reapplying.

Mark Golberg agreed.

Ms. Henn moved to accept the applicants' request to withdraw the application for Case AH-386, without prejudice. Ms. Meltsner seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Levy asked a process question about the curb cut permit application.

Ms. Burks said she had not received the curb cut permit application at the Historical Commission, but when she did, she would keep the permit request on hold and invite the owners to apply to the Avon Hill NCD Commission for the driveway and parking arrangements.

AH-378 (Continued): 27 Raymond St., by Harvey C. Mansfield, Trustee. Review amended design proposal for house, where alterations were previously made without first receiving approval of the Commission.

Ms. Thompson returned to the table for discussion of case AH-378.

Ms. Burks reviewed the history of the case. Work had been commenced out without a building permit and without a certificate from the Commission. Work had been stopped. A hearing was held on April 21, 2011, but the design issues were not resolved and the hearing was continued for several months because the owners were planning to be out of the country for the summer and needed time to consult an architect about the design problem. The Commission had encouraged the applicants to find a design approach that would clarify the house's architectural expression. Ms. Burks described the house, the unapproved alterations, and reviewed the factors to be considered by the Commission in reviewing alterations to buildings in the district.

Jim Zegowitz, architect of MZO Group, noted that the house's architectural integrity had been diminished by previous modifications including the 2nd story bay window, modern addition, and replacement of windows.

Ms. Meltsner pointed out that the house was an example of a First Period Colonial Revival, and was not a typical Colonial Revival based on Federal or Georgian precedents. The house was designed to look primitive, medieval. The asymmetry and small window sizes made sense in that context.

Mr. Zegowitz said he and his clients had studied many different options of what could be done to the exterior of the house including different trim packages, projecting first floor windows, siding changes, etc. He proposed replacing the shingles with lap siding with a 6 or 8 inch exposure, removing the beam ends and storing them in the basement, retaining the size of the remaining windows on the façade (2nd floor), extending the base of the bay window, replacing the front door or just changing the door casings, and removing the crown molding. The changes would unify the design of the façade in a more modern look. He reviewed three design studies, A3, B3, and C3.

Ms. Thompson asked if the proposed changes would only occur on the front façade, and Mr. Zegowitz replied in the affirmative. Ms. Thompson asked if the house was framed with heavy timbers. Mr. Zegowitz answered in the negative but noted that there were very interesting interior beams, which he believed to be decorative and not structural because they did not match up with the beam ends seen on the exterior.

Ms. Burks asked if the proposed siding was cedar. Mr. Zegowitz proposed fiber cement boards.

Jamake Pasqual, of 10 Laurel Street, said she really liked proposal B3.

Judy Bagalay, of 15 Raymond Street, said the proposal was very attractive. If the house was to be altered with modern features, they should go all the way with it including 8" board siding, removing the beam ends, changing the door, adding a rectangular base to the bay window, and replacing the second floor windows. She noted that cedar clapboards held up well on her own house. Clapboards and shingles mix well and complement each other.

Ms. Henn asked which proposal was preferred by the owners.

Mrs. Mansfield said the preferred B3 with a new door, square base to the bay window, and 8" exposure on the siding.

Ms. Thompson said she found it odd to change to clapboard siding on only the front elevation. She had no objection to retaining the shingles. They were not incongruous to the large windows of the first floor. If the siding changed to clapboards, then there would need to be corner boards.

Ms. Meltsner said the house had lost its architectural integrity. It was basically a new house and the Commission's role was not to redesign the house, but to determine what alterations were appropriate. She recommended keeping the door.

Ms. Thompson recommended keeping the door and beam ends, adding a rectangular base to the bay window, enlarging the windows on the second floor, and retaining the shingles.

Ms. Henn agreed the architectural integrity of the house had been lost. She said option C3 was clean looking (except for the shape of the base of the bay window). She did not have a recommendation for clapboards vs. shingles but if clapboards, they should be cedar, not fiber cement.

Mr. Golberg said he was also neutral on the issue of clapboard vs. shingle. He recommended keeping the existing door and beam ends.

Ms. Meltsner commented that the new window trim on the first floor was stark and metallic looking. Mr. Zegowitz explained that the new windows had a very thin frame and no beefy sill. He said the trim of the windows elsewhere on the house could be replicated on the first floor.

Ms. Henn said she was persuaded by Ms. Thompson's argument that the shingles should be retained.

Mrs. Mansfield and Mr. Zegowitz expressed their preference to retain the old door.

Ms. Meltsner said there were two competing approaches being discussed: keep remaining original features vs. making the façade uniformly new and modern. She said she preferred to keep some of the originality of the house, that would hint at its past as a First Period revival style.

Ms. Henn made a motion to approve the following changes:

- Replace double hung windows with new casement windows on the 2nd floor
- Install molding and sills at first floor windows to match existing details at the 2nd floor windows
- Construct a square base below the bay window on the 2nd floor
- Retain and patch cedar shingle cladding
- Retain the original door and door casings
- Retain the decorative beam ends

Harvey Mansfield indicated that he would regret removing the new double hung windows on the second floor, but he was okay with the recommendations. He said had heard the intelligent comments of the Commissioners.

Ms. Meltsner seconded the motion with the additional of the following, "On the understanding that this building, having previously lost its architectural integrity, and without setting a precedent for doing work without a building permit, the Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work described because of the previous loss of architectural integrity and because the alterations would have no adverse effect on the surrounding properties in the district. Ms. Henn agreed to add the language to the motion. Mr. Bardige commented that the loss of integrity had occurred prior to the recent first floor alterations and had occurred over a long period of time. The motion passed 5-0.

Minutes

Ms. Henn moved to approve the minutes of June 27, 2011. Ms. Meltsner seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Henn moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Golberg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
that Signed Attendance Sheet
September 26, 2011**

Jamake Pascual	10 Lauren St., Apt 5
Cornelius Moynihan	58 Washington Ave
Brian Levy	15 Walnut St, Wellesley
Seth Friedman	36 Arlington St
Elizabeth Moynihan	58 Washington Ave
Judy Bagalay	15 Raymond St
James Zegowitz	92 Montvale Ave., Suite 4350, Stoneham, MA 02180

Addresses are in Cambridge, unless otherwise specified.