

Approved 6/24/13

Minutes of the Avon Hill Neighborhood Conservation District

Monday, March 18, 2013 - 5:30 PM - 831 Massachusetts Ave., Basement Conference Room

Commissioners Present: Constantin von Wentzel, *Chair*; Art Bardige, Robert Crocker, Catherine Henn, *Members*; Heli Meltsner, *Alternate*

Commissioners Absent: Mark Golberg, *Vice Chair*; Theresa Hamacher, Maryann Thompson, *Members*

Staff Present: Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: see attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Chair Constantin von Wentzel called the meeting to order at 5:32 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed the hearing procedures. He designated alternate member Heli Meltsner to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

AH-443: 12-14 Avon Pl., by Avon Place Investment Trust LLC. Reconstruct stairs and deck of front porch; increase height of basement windows; remove bulkhead and replace with a window.

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner for the Historical Commission, distributed a photograph of the porch in its original configuration. She showed slides of the property's current condition. She reported on the non-binding staff review that had taken place several months prior and summarized the work to be done. She noted that Avon Place was a private way and pointed out the elements of the project that were visible from Avon Hill Street and what was not visible.

Jonathan Leffell, an owner, described the work that was in progress and the proposed modifications to the existing basement entry and the front porch. The stairs down to the basement would be eliminated and replaced with new stairs up to the front porch. A bulkhead basement entry existed behind the porch and would remain.

Sylvia Fine, of 6 Avon Place, inquired whether the stairs at the back end of the porch would be removed. Richard Tuck, an owner, answered in the negative.

Art Bardige asked if new columns would be installed on the porch. Mr. Leffell answered that the existing columns would be retained.

Catherine Henn commented that the proposal was very reasonable. It was a good idea to remove the cavernous basement entryway that currently existed on the front of the building.

Robert Crocker commented that the design was commendable.

Mr. Bardige indicated no objection to the proposal.

Mr. Leffell inquired if there was a preference for a wood or an iron handrail at the new porch stairs.

Ms. Meltsner suggested wood, noting that they could just extend the design of the porch railing down the stairs.

Ms. Fine said she had no objections to the proposed alterations.

Ms. Henn moved to approve the application, as presented and including the replacement of the basement window sash, on the basis that the applicants were proposing to restore a missing detail and remove an unfortunate later alteration (basement entry). Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0 with Ms. Meltsner voting as alternate.

AH-436 (continued): 85 Washington Ave., by Matthew L. Fisher. As condition of certificate, return to Commission with details of the proposed repair or replacement of windows.

Ms. Burks reported that she had met a couple of times with Paul Hajian, the architect, and she thought had arrived at a good compromise proposal for the windows.

Mr. Hajian explained that he had met with a window restoration contractor to discuss the condition of the existing windows and the process for restoring them. He reviewed the elevations showing which windows would remain and be restored and which windows were proposed for replacement. On the visible elevations, 7 windows would remain in their existing locations, 3 original windows would be moved to the front and re-used, and 4 windows would be replaced. Some salvageable parts from windows that would not be restored could be used to fix those that were to be restored. The sash pockets would be sealed with caulking to reduce energy loss. He said he was still investigating storm windows.

Ms. Henn asked for the staff opinion on spring balances. Ms. Burks replied that it was a common change and since it was a change on the interior of the building it was not regulated.

Mr. Bardige reported that his storm windows stopped most air infiltration, even with uninsulated weight pockets.

Mr. von Wentzel noted that he had some spring balanced newer windows at the back of his house and the spring balances had already broken.

Ms. Henn commented that the proposal was a fine compromise. Mr. Crocker agreed.

Ms. Meltsner said the architectural integrity would be so compromised by the other proposed changes to the building that it did not much matter whether the windows were or original or not. The integrity would be lost.

Mr. Bardige said the architect had done a good job of thinking the window issue through. He moved to approve the window proposal, as presented. Ms. Henn seconded the motion, which passed 4-0. Ms. Meltsner abstained.

Staff Report

Ms. Burks reported that the porch repairs at 24 Avon Hill Street had been completed.

Minutes

Mr. von Wentzel noted that "Jeldwen" had been misspelled with a G several times in the February minutes.

Mr. Bardige moved to approve the February 2013 minutes, as corrected. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Ms. Henn moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
that Signed Attendance Sheet
March 18, 2013**

Jonathan Leffell	68 Harvard St, Brookline 02445
Richard Tuck	68 Harvard St, Brookline 02445
Ronald Tartaglia	68 Harvard St, Brookline 02445
Paul Hajian	29 Williams St
Sylvia Fine	6 Avon Pl

Addresses are in Cambridge, unless otherwise specified.