

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., November 15, 2010 at 6:00 PM, Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Pk., Cambridge

Commission Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*, Robert Banker, Judith Dortz, *members*; Deborah Masterson, Grenelle Scott, *alternates*

Commission Members absent: William King, *member*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

Chair Van Sickle called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. The first order of business was to introduce the commission members present and authorize Deborah Masterson and Grenelle Scott to vote. Mr. Van Sickle read the rules and regulations for public hearings.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

HCM-92: 100 Foster St., by Edward Serues and Patricia Wanner. Replace wood gutters.

Ms. Eiliesh Tuffy presented slides of the property at 100 Foster Street, which is a frame worker's cottage dating to 1860. At the time of the staff's site visit, the wood gutter had been removed from the west elevation. The remaining gutters showed signs of rot and deterioration. The property owner, Mr. Serues, submitted samples of the proposed replacement gutter which were available for the Commission to view at the hearing.

Ms. Deborah Masterson asked about the Commission's purview in this case. Ms. Tuffy stated that any change in original building materials is subject to review by the Commission. Ms. Masterson asked the property owner if he had considered repairing the existing wood gutters. Mr. Serues said the gutters had been replaced with wood to match one previous time and that, after their failure, he was not willing to replace with wood again.

Mr. Van Sickle asked about the shape of the wood gutters, which were said to be half-round. Ms. Masterson asked about the difference in functionality of wood vs. metal gutters. Mr. Serues said the metal gutters could hold more water and would last longer than the wood.

There were no questions from the public.

During public comment, Mr. Jay Connor of 98 Foster Street and Mr. Rory O'Connor of 9 Foster Place both spoke in support of the applicant's proposal, stating that numerous other properties in the neighborhood already have aluminum gutters.

Mr. Robert Banker stated his support of the proposal. Mr. Van Sickle mentioned that the aluminum gutters would be consistent with other properties in the neighborhood, which are simple workers cottages, not elaborately detailed mansions.

Ms. Masterson moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Banker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

HCM-93: 5 Willard Street, by Nicholas Negroponte and Deborah Porter. Alter select windows and doors; install new skylights and exterior lighting.

Ms. Tuffy described the residence at 5 Willard Street, which was designed in 1906 by architects Gay & Proctor of Boston. While the property is sometimes cross-listed as 116 Brattle Street, it is not in the Old Cambridge Historic District nor is the rear (Brattle Street) elevation visible from a public way. She summarized the scope of work before opening the floor to the project team to further elaborate on the proposed changes.

Mr. Kevin Musumano with the design studio C&J Katz explained the window alterations first. On the south elevation, second floor, double-hung windows on either end of that floor would be replaced with a 44"W x 50"H wood divided light awning window at each location. This change would drop the sill height 15 inches from the existing level. The east elevation has an existing set of French doors that are proposed to be replaced with one large fixed, true divided light bronze window.

The exterior deck is proposed to be extended 25 inches, which would require BZA approval but was determined to be non-visible and therefore not subject to review by the Commission. New exterior lighting fixtures were proposed for multiple locations on the property, including the front and side elevations as well as on the deck and suspended from a tree on the patio.

The Commissioners asked if any trees were being cut down, or if any landscape changes were part of the proposal. Mr. Musumano said the scope was limited to lighting.

Ms. Masterson asked what the existing lighting consisted of. It was determined that the lighting plan primarily called for new, upgraded fixtures where exterior lighting already existed on the building. In addition, new deck lighting would be installed and three pendant lights would hang from a tree on the side patio.

The Commission asked if the lights would be on timers, but the designer said they would all be on regular switches. Ms. Judith Dortz asked if the lights mounted along the side elevation would spill over into the neighbor's yard. Mr. Van Sickle asked what the distance was from the side elevation to the neighbor's property line. The project team said it was a distance of 20 feet and that the new lights would be no brighter than those that had been in place previously. Ms. Dortz noted that, for such an extensive lighting program, it did not appear to be using green lighting technology.

There were no questions of fact from the public.

During the public comment period, Mr. Neil Levine of 5 Foster Place asked the Commission to consider seriously the enlargement of window sizes on historic houses in the district.

Unlike changes to gutters, he felt window sizes were a very important element in the hierarchy of the Commission's review.

Ms. Masterson asked the project team what was the rationale behind the window alterations. They stated additional daylight, fire safety and egress concerns in the rooms where the windows are located, which are a second floor master bedroom and guest bedroom. It was also pointed out that the house does not have one standard window style, but several different sizes and styles of windows throughout the residence, making it easier to introduce new window types into the design.

Ms. Van Sickle said this is not a typical house for the neighborhood, but rather a Craftsman style cottage with a stucco exterior that stands out as an individual building. He also reminded the Commission that previous owners had come before the Marsh Commission to review the front mudroom addition, giving precedent for approved changes to the property. He felt these additional changes seemed consistent with the rest of the house, but that the detailing would be very important. Mr. Van Sickle also stated some concern over potential intrusion on the neighbors' property posed by the lighting plan, but noted that there were no neighbors present at the public hearing to voice any such concerns.

Ms. Dortz was concerned about incremental changes to a property that, little by little, cause the structure to transform into something much different. She felt that these types of collective alterations change a building's character considerably. Mr. Van Sickle said the issue of footprint creep had been discussed by the Commission before, in relation to porch additions that are later enclosed and, in turn, added on to again. He pointed out the different levels of review in a Conservation District versus a Historic District, maintaining that a goal of a Conservation District is to protect the character of the area. The Half Crown-Marsh District has undergone changes over time, which is part of the charm inherent in its structures.

There were no questions from the public.

During the public comment, Mr. Neil Levine of 5 Foster Place said there is a desire for more light in houses today, which is part of contemporary architecture. When the size of windows is increased in older houses, the buildings look compromised.

The Commission commented that they were concerned about the extent of the lighting in the proposed plan and asked about the existing lighting elements on the side elevation. The team said they were currently flood lights with bare bulbs, and that the new fixtures had shields around the bulb to better direct the light.

Mr. Banker made a motion to approve the application as submitted for proposed changes to the windows and exterior lighting. Ms. Grenelle Scott seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

HCM-94: 61 Foster Street, by Daniel Bauer and Jill Desimini. Add one window on the second floor, southeast elevation.

Ms. Masterson recused herself from deliberations, as she is an abutter to the property under review.

Ms. Tuffy summarized the proposal to add one double-hung, divided-light wood window, stating that there was no record of a window existing previously in that location. However, other houses in the group of four in this development display a similar window pattern on the second floor.

There were no questions from the public.

During the public comment, Ms. Masterson of 53 Foster Street stated her support of the proposal. Mr. Neil Levine of 5 Foster Place commended the property owner for the restraint this design shows, adding that the change would help, not hurt the property.

Ms. Dortz made a motion to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Banker seconded the motion, which passed 4-0, with Ms. Masterson abstaining.

Minutes

The minutes of the August 2010 Commission meeting were deferred for approval at the next Commission meeting, pending further review.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, November 15, 2010

Jay Connor	98 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02139
Ed Serues	100 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Kevin Musumano	139 E. Berkeley Street, Boston, MA 02118
Rory O'Conner	9 Foster Place, Cambridge, MA 02138
Jill Desimini	61 Foster Street, Cambridge, MA 02138
Neil Levine	5 Foster Place, Cambridge, MA 02138