

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Approved at the September 21, 2015 Hearing

August 17, 2015 - 6:00 PM at Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; Deborah Masterson, Charles Smith, Marie-Pierre Dillenseger and William King, *members*

Members absent: Peter Schur, member

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: see attached list

Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02pm and gave an overview of the agenda. Mr. Van Sickle discussed meeting procedures. Ms. Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Commissioner, recused herself from voting, because she was an abutter. She removed herself to the audience.

HCM-300: 41 Gibson St, by Anne Duggan & David Ranieri. Enclose portion of front porch, second floor deck, exterior alterations, and renovation.

Ms. Samantha Paull, staff, gave a brief history of the structure and an overview of the proposed application.

Ms. Anne Duggan and Mr. David Raneiri, owners of 41 Gibson Street, introduced themselves and made a presentation for the project. Ms. Duggan stated that they were hoping to restore the structure while updating it for modern living and making it family friendly. She noted that on the first floor, they were proposing to restore the windows and for the second floor, they were proposing to replace the windows, as they had been previously replaced. She stated the replacement product would match the remaining historic windows on the structure with a two over wood design in wood, fitting the historic openings.

Ms. Duggan continued that on the first floor there were three windows to be altered; the first window to be altered was on the left (north) elevation, which would be restored to the full size opening where the historic trim still reflects the previous size. She added that they hoped to utilize a historic window for another location on the first floor as possible.

Ms. Duggan continued, noted that on the front elevation they hoped to re-establish the historic window opening on the front elevation that had shutters over it. She added that on the front elevation, the plans included adding a foyer/mudroom space, which would be achieved by enclosing a portion of the open front porch. She said the historic front door would be reoriented to Gibson Street and the window that faced Gibson Street would be reused on the new foyer/mudroom space on the left/north elevation. She noted that three basements windows were also slated to be enlarged and have window wells added to allow more light into the basement. Mr. Van Sickle asked if the window wells were needed for egress requirements. Ms. Duggan replied yes.

Mr. Smith asked if she was proposing to keep the hedge. Ms. Duggan replied yes.

Ms. Judith Dortz, Vice Chair, asked how the porch was proposed to be altered. Ms. Duggan said they hoped to create a vestibule within the current porch, the portion that was under the second floor area, not the entire porch. She noted that the stairs would remain as would the historic arch detail on the porch. Ms. Dortz asked how far the space came out. Mr. Phillippe Saad, architect for 41 Gibson Street, responded seven (7) feet and showed her the proposed floorplans. Mr. Van Sickle asked if this would have a zoning issue. Ms. Duggan responded no, it would not because it was already under the roof.

Ms. Deborah Masterson, Commissioner, asked what the owners proposed for the gutters. Ms. Duggan said that they were replacing the metal downspouts with the same and using wood gutters.

Mr. William King, Commissioner, asked how the owner proposed to address the shutters. Ms. Duggan said they hope to remove them as the shutters were in extreme disrepair and she thought they were uncommon to this style and some were missing.

Ms. Duggan added that they hoped to remove two of the three chimneys and keep one main chimney; the chimneys proposed for removal are located in the middle and rear of the structure. She said the main chimney would remain as it was attached to a functioning fireplace, while the roof openings would be infilled with matching slate.

Ms. Duggan added that the plans included the addition of air conditioning condenser, proposed for the left (north) elevation toward the back of the house, close to where the neighbor currently had theirs. The architect showed the Commission a site plan, which was not included in their application packet. The Commissioners noted that the submitted application packet did not include this site plan and the elevations were incorrectly labeled. The architect aided the Commission in properly labeling the elevations with the help of said site plan.

Ms. Duggan pointed out the new bulkhead, which they proposed to move from the rear (east) elevation to the north (left) elevation. She noted on the rear (east) elevation the plans included altering the window into a door with sidelights, a small wood landing and stairs down to the patio with a railing to match the Victorian railing on the front porch. Ms. Duggan added that on right side (south) elevation, facing Kenway, a door and a single window would be altered into two single windows, removing the stairs. She showed that the plans also included the addition of a railing and door to turn the flat roof over the kitchen space off Kenway Street into a small roof deck. She said the plan proposed a railing with Victorian spindles the same as proposed for the steps to get out of the back door.

Ms. Masterson noted the presence of a car on the drawings and asked if the renovation plans included a driveway. Ms. Duggan said they were still researching the driveway and it was not proposed at this time. Ms. Masterson asked about dimensions of the lot. Ms. Duggan replied that the side yard was ten (10) feet wide, the length of the property was 75 feet. Ms. Masterson asked what the distance was from the front plane of the structure back to the HVAC condenser. Mr. Saad responded the house was setback twelve (12) feet and the condensers would be back 28 feet from the house.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the roof deck railing height met code as the plans reflected only a 37 inch rail. Mr. Saad responded that as the property was single family, only a 36 inch railing was required, higher railings are required for commercial or multi-family over two units.

Ms. Dortz asked the depth of the proposed window wells. Mr. Saad responded 24 inches.

Mr. King asked if the three proposed basement egress windows were all required. Mr. Saad responded that the owners were hoping for more light primarily; however, all three were not required by code. Mr. King stated a site plan would have helped with the window wells and elevation directions. Mr. Saad showed the Commission and public a floor plan of the basement that reflected the location of the window wells. Ms. Dortz asked where the bulkhead was proposed. Mr. Saad referenced the basement plan.

Mr. Ted Wagenknecht, abutter at 43 Gibson St, asked what was proposed for the second floor windows. Ms. Duggan clarified wood windows to match the historic two over two design. He asked what was happening with the hedges. Ms. Duggan stated they proposed to keep hedges. She added that the tree on the front elevation needs to come down due to the proximity to the foundation.

Mr. Smith asked if a driveway was proposed on the left (north) elevation. Ms. Duggan said it was a concept but not proposed on this application as they were still working out details.

Ms. Elizabeth Van Ranst, abutter at 120 Foster St, asked the owner for clarification on the statement that they had no plans to change the landscaping or hardscaping this year, if that would be discussed next year. Ms. Duggan responded that the renovation of the structure is the focus at this time, and beyond the tree on the front elevation, landscaping will be looked at after the renovation.

Fran Adams, abutter at 10 Kenway St, asked if the roof deck would obscure the mansard roof or the dentil molding below it. Mr. Saad replied no. Mr. Ross, abutter at 31 Gibson Street, stated that there had to be an impact as the window was being changed to a door. Mr. Saad clarified that there would be minimal impact under the window.

Genevieve Wagenknecht, abutter at 43 Gibson, asked if the lack of a site plan impacted the process of the application. Mr. Van Sickle responded that no, the Commission could proceed with the drawings, further stating that while it would have been helpful it was not necessary. Ms. Wagenknecht stated she did not see the actual location for the HVAC, and asked if it could be shown where it was being proposed. Ms. Duggan apologized and stated it was a small change, and was proposed to be located below the small window being altered, in front of the proposed new bulkhead. Mr. Wagenknecht, asked for the distance from the curb to the house, then from the house to the condenser. Mr. Van Sickle responded the house was setback 12 feet and it was another 28 feet from there to the condenser.

Ms. Dortz noted that the renovation would be an asset. She pointed out that the neighbors' condenser was located in the same area as the owners of 41 Gibson St were proposed to locate their new unit and Ms. Duggan agreed.

Ms. Van Ranst asked for the dimensions of the back porch, roof deck, and what would remain of the front porch. The architect responded that the back porch/stair was five (5) wide by seven (7) feet; the roof deck measured the same footprint of the existing flat roof, fourteen (14) wide by five and a half (5.5) feet deep. He stated that the remaining open portion of the front porch was six (6) feet by seven (7) feet.

Mr. Wagenknecht asked if it was feasible to locate the HVAC condenser by the patio off the rear (east) elevation so it would not be visible from the street. Mr. Saad responded that the HVAC condenser was pushed far back and the location suggested in the rear would reduce a lot of the useable rear yard.

Mr. Ross asked the Commission if they could speak up over the fan as it was hard to hear their comments. Ms. Paull offered to turn the fans off.

Ms. Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, abutter at 1 Foster St, asked if the Commission knew how many historic mansards were left in Cambridge that had not yet been renovated. Mr. Van Sickle asked Staff if they knew how many were original in this condition. Ms. Paull said she did not know, and noted that Mr. Charles Sullivan, executive director of the Commission state during a site visit that this structure had architectural elements and features that were unique for Cambridge.

Mr. Robert Ross, abutter at 10 Kenway Street, noting that there was a lot of talk about restoration and that all the wood that needed to be restored, asked what was meant by restoration and what was being replaced. Ms. Duggan responded that the goal was to keep the historic fabric and to replace only what was beyond repair as needed. She confirmed that the replacement elements would match the historic element that was needing replacement. She continued that the new siding and trim work would be all custom to make the replacement seamless, as that was their goal. Mr. Saad added that the house has a lot of unique details, and while no stock molding would match they were committed to finding a match or having one carefully made.

Mr. Van Sickle reminded the public that this is a neighborhood conservation district, not a historic district; he further stated that the Commission's objective was to save the character while allowing for updates that work for modern living. Ms. Duggan said that they bought this house because they appreciate and love this structure, including its unique craftsmanship, but want to make it functional and modern.

Mr. Reza Mahdavi, abutter at 140 Foster Street, welcomed the new neighbors stating that it was a great house. He asked what the plans were for a driveway or the shrubs. Ms. Duggan responded that there were no plans for a driveway or shrubs, rather they were focusing on the restoration of the structure.

Ms. Wagenknecht asked if the Commission would discuss the addition of new living space. Mr. Van Sickle responded no, further stating that additional living space was a zoning issue and that the zoning board of appeals would hold a hearing if the addition of space exceeded current code limitations.

Mr. Francis Neczypor, abutter at 9 Doane Street, asked if they were adding new living space. Mr. Van Sickle responded that the Commission did not discuss zoning issues. Ms. Duggan said she would be following up with other departments as needed throughout the project, doing the due diligence. Mr. Van Sickle added that if it was not allowed by right, it would be subject to a hearing which is a public process and as an abutter, Mr. Neczypor would be notified.

Mr. Mahdavi asked why the material proposed for gutters was galvanized metal and fiberglass as he used copper. Ms. Duggan said in terms of gutter and downspout, we worked with staff on options for materials, copper is an option but others in the area use galvanized steel or painted galvanized steel. Ms. Paull noted that fiberglass is approved on a staff level, as well as copper, wood or wood lined with copper; she said the main concern is if the proposed product matches the historic gutter profile. Mr. Mahdavi continued that he did not feel that the roof deck fit with the style of the structure.

Mr. Ross said that he lived across the street and would not want to look at a roof deck as proposed. He continued stating that everyone was ignoring the impact of the renovation on the site and would like to know that the landscaping that would be subsequently ruined during construction would be replaced with something. He also stated he took issue with adding a driveway as it was a very difficult site and putting

the driveway would be a huge issue. Mr. Van Sickle read the section of the District Order that noted items that were exempt from the Commission's review, which included driveways where parking is not located in front of the front plane of the structure.

Ms. Duggan responded that the goal was to live in this house and make it function while retaining a lot of the beauty and charm; there would be some inconveniences during the renovation with some things temporarily taken out of place. She continued that they had spent a lot of money on the house and that they did not want it to look bad - their goal was to make it a beautiful home to live in and raise a family, not to "flip" the house as a developer would. Ms. Duggan noted that the neighbor at 10 Kenway Street had a second floor porch in a similar location as the one they were proposing.

Mr. Neczypor stated he purchased 9 Doane Street because he did not want it to be demolished. He continued that he had seen demolition and projects that seemed to negatively affect the neighborhood. He noted his concern about how much of an impact the alterations would have on the structure and the overall area.

Ms. Dillenseger said that it was obvious from the number of neighbors at the hearing, that the residents love the neighborhood and the area; she noted it was hard for the residents to disassociate an individual structure from the neighborhood as a whole. She asked for confirmation that there would be landscaping added in the future. Ms. Duggan responded that they had plans to replant and make a yard, as they wanted an outside space for living and for the neighborhood to enjoy as well.

Ms. Dortz attempted to reassure the neighbors that the owners were conscious of detail as evidenced in the detail they were applying to the house restoration project. She suggested the neighbors allow the owner to deal with the renovation first and recognize the same attention to detail will be applied to the garden later. She offered her support of the balcony and stated it appeared to have minimal impact on the structure as the roof space was existing.

Mr. Ross asked if the Commission's minutes would reflect the driveway discussion. Ms. Paull responded yes, that the minutes traditionally reflect as much of the discussion as staff could capture. She continued that she attempts to provide detailed minutes similar to a transcript.

Mr. Wagenknecht asked if the chair would read the exemption section of the order, as the preamble stated that while the Commission's opinion on those exempt things is not binding, nothing prevents the Commission from expressing an opinion. Mr. Wagenknecht stated that as an abutter he wanted to express that a driveway was not appropriate and he hoped the Commission would state the same opinion. Mr. Van Sickle responded that the applicant did not present a driveway, additionally a driveway would most likely be exempt from the Commission's review. Mr. Van Sickle added that new curb cuts are reviewed by City Council at a hearing; that is a public process where the public could participate in discussion.

Ms. Adams said that while many of these changes were appropriate, she was concerned with the addition of a roof deck and felt it would be inappropriate to the neighborhood as it did not maintain the character. She continued that the residents of the area like the greenery and the hedge; she emphasized that the natural hedge was important.

Ms. Duggan noted that the earlier removal of landscaping, primarily the smaller trees including the Japanese maple, was due to the desire to preserve the house and keep trees away from the power lines.

Mr. Ross stated his concern about other shrubs in the neighborhood that were out of control. He continued to urge to the Commission that the house is a precious resource - it was rare, an anchor of the neighborhood, and very splendid.

Ms. Van Ranst stated she felt the roof deck was rather large. She noted that while there were some existing in the neighborhood, she felt like adding a new roof deck was not good for the neighborhood. She expressed concern with how close the houses were in the neighborhood already and as there was a lack of privacy, a roof deck would only aim to further reduce visibility and privacy in the area. She said it was sad how many trees have come down in the area and hoped that the owners would save the pine tree in the back yard.

Mr. Van Sickle read a letter from Mr. Tom Traynor, owner of 9 Kenway Street, in support of the project. Mr. Van Sickle asked staff if the letter was from an owner who shared a property line with 41 Gibson Street. Ms. Paull confirmed the letter was from a property owner who shared a property line with 41 Gibson Street.

Ms. Dortz said she liked the plan as submitted and hoped the owners would keep vegetation on the property. She continued that she had no issue with the roof deck, as it was more akin to adding a railing to an existing space. She added that it would be a nice space to have for that house.

Mr. Smith noted that many of the houses on Kenway Street have had changes to them, including window alterations and roof decks added to many of them. He voiced concern that the roof deck on this structure would negatively impact the house. He stated his support for the project, but noted that he was not in support of the roof deck. Ms. Masterson voiced her agreement with Mr. Smith.

Mr. King commended the application for keeping the historic windows and the prominent chimney, as other property owners have been tempted to remove all chimneys in the past. He expressed his concern with the smaller windows in the kitchen under the roof deck area, as the other window alterations were focused on establishing a more consistent size, the size of the kitchen windows did not relate to any other windows on the structure. He stated his support of the roof deck and hoped the applicant would provide staff with a landscaping plan that included landscaping around the HVAC condenser.

Ms. Masterson stated her hesitations about the addition of the roof deck and concern about the two small windows in the kitchen. She offered admiration for all the other components, specifically with keeping the windows. She offered her support for the proposed alteration of the entrance as well.

Ms. Duggan asked about how the Commission would prefer her to address historic windows on the right (south) or Kenway Street elevation. Mr. Van Sickle offered a variety of options including a backsplash that covered the windows and would flip back to allow for access to clean.

Ms. Dortz said in regard to the south elevation, removing the door away would be a substantial benefit. She felt the trade of the window for the door was a viable option.

Mr. Van Sickle noted the Commission encouraged plantings but not specific plants or specific locations. He stated that the Commission always encourages owners to talk to neighbors. Ms. Duggan said we talked to almost all adjacent neighbors, none of whom mentioned the concerns they were stating at the hearing.

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Mr. King made a motion to approve as submitted with the condition that staff have final construction detail approval prior to permitting and that the applicant screen the HVAC condenser with landscaping. Ms. Dortz seconded. Mr. Van Sickle added that the new windows should be a two over two true divided light product. Mr. King and Ms. Dortz accepted the amendment. Mr. Smith asked if Mr. King was approving the roof deck. Mr. King said yes but was allowing staff to determine whether construction details should be reviewed at the staff level or brought back to the Commission. The motion was approved 3-2, with Ms. Masterson and Mr. Smith voting against the motion as they did not support the addition of the roof deck.

Ms. Dillenseger joined the Commission.

Minutes

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the July 13, 2015 minutes with edits. Ms. Dortz seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

Ms. Masterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm. Ms. Dillenseger seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

**Members of the Public
(who signed the Attendance list)**

Robert Ross	Abutter	10 Kenway Street
Ted Wagenknecht	Abutter	43 Gibson Street
Fran Adams	Abutter	10 Kenway Street
Reza Mahdavi	Abutter	140 Foster Street
Francis Neczypor	Abutter	9 Doane Street
Elizabeth Van Ranst	Abutter	120 Foster Street
Genevieve Wagenknecht	Abutter	43 Gibson Street
Anne Duggan	Owner	41 Gibson Street
David Ranieri	Owner	41 Gibson Street
Philippe Saad	Architect	281 Summer Street, Boston

Note: All addresses are located in Cambridge unless otherwise noted.