

Minutes of the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission ***Approved at the May 9, 2016 Meeting***

March 14, 2016 - 6:00 PM at Friends Meeting House, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge

Members present: James Van Sickle, *Chair*; Judith Dortz, *Vice Chair*; William King, Charles Smith, and Peter Schur, *members*

Members absent: Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, Deborah Masterson, *member*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: see attached list

Mr. James Van Sickle, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03pm and gave an overview of the agenda. Mr. Van Sickle discussed meeting procedures.

Mr. Van Sickle noted that all Commissioners present would be voting.

HCM-323: 138 Mt. Auburn Street, by Loreda, LLC. Alter exterior, demolish rear ell, and construct new ell.

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

Mr. Nick Maynard, architect, introduced himself and outlined the proposal. He stated the goal was to clean up the previous additions, update mechanicals and maximize their office space within the building while maintaining a transition between the taller commercial structures of Harvard Square and the residential properties outside of the Square. He said the proposal included reworking the third floor and removing the existing ell, constructing a new, large ell, and upgrading the building to allow for ADA accessibility. Mr. Maynard added that they were proposing to reroof the structure with a synthetic slate shingle and add brackets to the eaves.

Ms. Judith Dortz, Commissioner, asked where the parking was proposed. Mr. Maynard pointed out on the proposed plans that the new parking space was proposed by the new rear entry door.

Mr. William King, Commissioner, asked if the bollard would be removed. Mr. Maynard responded yes. Mr. King asked how tall the head house was. Mr. Maynard said that it would depend on the final elevator chosen and the goal was to avoid it completely. Mr. King expressed concern about what's approved in the sky. Mr. King asked if there was currently an elevator. Mr. Andy Stevenson, owner's representative, said that there was only a lift, which they would be removing with the proposed alterations. Mr. Maynard added that the elevator would service the entire structure.

Mr. Van Sickle noted that there was a fire that reduced the structure to a two-story structure with a flat roof but was later altered into a mansard with a third floor and reviewed under a non-binding review by the Half Crown Commission before the districts merged.

Mr. Craig Appel, of 11 Gerry Street, asked if it had to go to BZA. Mr. Maynard responded no it's conforming.

Mr. Ken Cleary, of 16 Gerry Street, asked if this was being done for a particular tenant. Mr. Maynard responded the new owner is the end user. Mr. Cleary added that the previous owner during the 1990s renovation said that the use would be a dentist office and the dentist would live above, but the tenants changed multiple times over the years. He said that the changes in use required various changes to the building, additional mechanical equipment, and he was concerned about the impact of the proposing changes and that it would crowd the property. Mr. Stevenson responded that the property was deeded with 9 parking spaces and they were not proposing to increase that or add additional paving. Mr. Stevenson noted that their business was in financial portfolio management and that they did not have clients coming and going, only the employees.

Mr. Cleary added that he was also concerned with the bank of windows facing Gerry Street, wrapping around to the rear elevation. Mr. Maynard responded that the proportion was similar to surrounding structure. Mr. Cleary added that the bank of windows felt imposing. Mr. Maynard said he would be open to working with the neighbors on the window design.

Mr. Van Sickle asked Mr. Maynard to clarify what was being proposed for the dormers. Mr. Maynard responded that they were looking to steepen the pitch to increase the square footage on the interior. Mr. Van Sickle asked if all of the roof pitch would change between the dormers. Mr. Maynard responded yes.

Ms. Nancy Porter of 14 Gerry Street, asked if Fire and Police would have enough room in the alleyway to access the rear elevation in the event of an emergency. Mr. Maynard said that it met required setbacks and they were proposing to add sprinklers to the building.

Ms. Susan Labandibar, of 10 Brewer St, asked how the new AC system compared to the existing. Mr. Maynard said the entire building was being reworked and would be designed to include the smallest number of condensers as optimally possible and if they were able to use a single chiller, they would. Dr. Peter Schur, Commissioner, asked if the applicant was removing the unit in front of the house. Mr. Maynard responded yes. Mr. Stevenson added that their largest philanthropic cause was the environment, and their view is pretty extreme. If they could get away without adding AC that would be the preference but they are not able to do that. He continued that the goal was to minimize the impact the structure and business will have on the environment and area as much as possible.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if the renovation would require a gut renovation. Mr. Maynard clarified that would be needed for the third floor and addition areas but they were still researching options for the first and second floors. Mr. Stevenson said they wanted to properly insulate the building and were still researching the best way to do that. Ms. Labandibar said she was concerned with the lack of greenspace and the massing and scale of the proposal. Mr. Dick Plumb of 14 Gerry Street agreed with Ms. Labandibar about the scale and that as proposed it didn't transition well to the residential abutting properties.

The abutters collectively expressed concern about the existing parking on site and its impact on the accessibility/walkability of the sidewalk.

Ms. Labandibar asked if the applicant could add additional greenspace. Mr. Maynard said they were open to it and could look at it.

Mr. Cleary expressed concern about juggling maximizing the space and fitting in with the scale of the area. Mr. Van Sickle added that it is a very prominent issue for the district, and the desire to preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. King expressed concern about additional utility boxes blocking open/green space. Mr. Stevenson said their goal was not to increase the need for meters or boxes on the property.

Dr. Schur asked if all the windows would have the same mullion, muntin and trim sizes. Mr. Maynard said they could look at maintaining consistency.

Mr. Van Sickle asked if there were any more questions or comments from the public. There were none. He closed the public hearing.

Mr. Charles Smith, Commissioner, expressed concern with the scale exceeding that of a residential building. Mr. King added that while the building is seeing some improvements, such as insulation, mechanical, and interior, the loss of thru views and impact of the scale is important to take into consideration. He noted that the area is zoned an office area. Mr. Maynard asked if Mr. King meant from Gerry Street to Revere Street. Mr. King clarified yes.

Mr. Van Sickle read the Commission's "Guidelines for Substantial Additions," and noted that it is important the additions remain subordinate in massing, scale, and height.

Ms. Dortz expressed her concern over the massing, band of windows along the rear elevation, lack of greenspace, and outstanding parking issues. She said she would prefer if it did not exceed two stories. Mr. Maynard said that the third story was important to the owner and said that he could reduce the size of the proposed addition to increase the rear setback. Dr. Schur added that the structure needs to appear residential in nature.

Mr. Van Sickle said it appeared that the building was morphing into an office building versus being part of an old residential neighborhood and converted. He stated the existing structure's addition does a good job of stepping down from the main structure to the residential to the rear. Mr. Van Sickle suggested looking at mansards in the surrounding area, that they had a steeper pitch on the main hip roof portion of the mansard than the flat roof reflected on the proposal. He added that he felt a larger two story addition that provided a transition would be more appropriate. Mr. King agreed and asked the applicant if he was open to that. Mr. Stevenson expressed concern over the reduction to two stories as they would not be able to add an elevator to the project. Mr. Maynard echoed the concern of the loss of the third floor for making the elevator work. Mr. Van Sickle said it would be helpful to see plans incorporating the concerns of the Commission and abutters.

Ms. Paull reviewed the options the Commission could choose, either continuance, withdraw, or vote on the application. Mr. King made a motion to accept the applicant's request for a continuance until May. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

Minutes

Dr. Schur made a motion to approve the January 11, 2016 minutes as submitted. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

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Mr. King made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 7:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull
Preservation Administrator

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

Nicholas Maynard	Architect	PO Box 457, Lincoln
Andrew Stevenson	Owner Rep	138 Mt. Auburn Street
Dick Plumb	Abutter	14 Gerry Street
Ken Cleary	Abutter	16 Gerry Street
Craig Appel	Abutter	11 Gerry Street
David Rich	Abutter	10 Gerry Street
Nancy Porter	Abutter	14 Gerry Street
Susan Labandibar	Abutter	10 Brewer Street

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