

Approved 8/3/09

**Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission**

Monday, July 7, 2009, 6:00 P.M., 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Members present: Nancy Goodwin, Tony Hsiao, Carole Perrault, Chuck Redmon, members; Siobhan McMahon, Monika Pauli, alternates.

Staff present: Paul Trudeau

Members of the

Public present: See attached list

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With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. She introduced the Commission and outlined the meeting procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC 3415 (amendment): 21 Irving St., by Julie Peters & Nathaniel Berman:** To amend previous certificate to include modifications to windows, decks, and skylights.

Mr. Trudeau explained that the Commission had approved several alterations to the building at a previous public hearing, and the applicant was proposing a few changes to the approved plans. He showed slides of the building and reminded the Commission of the previous approvals.

Mike Szalaji, the architect, explained the revisions to the approved plans. He said the front (east) elevation would remain the same except for one window that would not be reduced as previously proposed. The south (left) elevation would have a larger deck and spiral stair, and the low deck would be eliminated. The stair tower windows and door would be altered, and there would be a roof deck with low visibility from the street. There would also be an additional skylight. All the windows would be replaced with double-hung wood Pella window sash. The north (right) elevation would have some minor adjustments to the fenestration and three additional skylights.

Ms. Goodwin asked for questions of fact from the Commission.

Ms. Perrault asked if the neighbors had been notified of the proposed amendments.

Mr. Trudeau said notices were sent to the abutters as per the previous hearing.

Ms. Perrault asked if the decks and handrails would be constructed of wood. Mr. Szalaji said they would.

Mr. Redmon asked if the chimneys were being taken down because the fireplaces were inoperable. Mr. Szalaji said the chimneys were currently only used for boilers and not fireplaces.

Ms. McMahon asked for clarification that all the windows were being replaced. Mr. Szalaji confirmed, noting that the replacement windows would have the same two-over-two muntin configuration.

Ms. McMahon noted the window casings and trim details were varied on the elevation drawings. Mr. Szalaji explained that many of these details had been altered over the years and his goal was to try and maintain the existing trim.

Ms. Goodwin asked for comments and questions from the public. There being no public comment, she asked for comments from the Commission.

Ms. Pauli said the doors to the stair tower on the south elevation seemed nondescript. Mr. Szalaji explained that he did not want to have too much elaboration on subsidiary components of the house. Ms. Goodwin suggested the addition of a simple pediment detail over the doors to match the windows. Mr. Szalaji said he would consider the suggestion.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to approve the amendments to the original Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, noting that the Commission's previous suggestion to reconsider the addition of a second-floor bay window on the front elevation was still in effect. Mr. Hsiao SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

**MC 3468: 285 Harvard St. #101, by Trent & Denise England.** To replace windows.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, a four story brick Colonial Revival that had many original windows replaced in other units. He said the windows for this unit were original, and showed a slide of another unit with vinyl windows for comparison.

Mr. England said the purpose of the proposal was to address energy efficiency concerns. The new vinyl windows would have the same grid pattern as the existing windows.

Ms. Perrault asked if the Historical Commission staff typically distributed the Commission's window preservation guidelines to applicants for these types of proposals. Mr. Trudeau said the staff regularly provides applicants with the guidelines, but that he had not been working directly with property owners on this case, only the contractors. He gave a brief overview of the contents of the guidelines.

Ms. Perrault asked why the vinyl windows were considered more energy efficient. Mike Bedard, the contractor, said the double glazing in the vinyl window provides more energy efficiency. He noted that many windows in the building had been replaced. Mr. England added that the existing windows were very drafty and had broken sash weight ropes.

Ms. Goodwin asked if just the window sash were being replaced. Mr. England said the whole window would be replaced. Ms. Goodwin asked for the window replacement manufacturer. Mr. Bedard said the manufacturer was Simonton.

Ms. Goodwin said the Commission typically liked to see a sample window, and often encouraged the restoration of original wood windows and the installation of a quality storm window to address energy efficiency concerns. She said it was a unique situation because many of the windows in the building had already been replaced. She noted that the case was non-binding.

Mr. Hsiao said the Commission would likely disapprove the proposal, but it would not prevent the applicants from obtaining their building permit as it was a non-binding case. He said the Commission's goal was to not set a precedent for vinyl replacement windows in the district.

Ms. McMahon noted that the colors of vinyl windows will fade over time.

Ms. Pauli said there were better quality replacement windows on the market. Mr. England said the proposed windows had a lifetime guarantee. Mr. Trudeau asked if this included failure of the seals in the insulating glass. Mr. Bedard said the warranty covered the glass and all parts.

Ms. Perrault encouraged the applicants to read Historical Commission's window preservation guidelines.

There being no public comment, Mr. Hsiao MOVED to disapprove the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted, on the basis that the restoration of the existing windows and upgrades to the storm windows would address energy efficiency concerns, and that the proposed vinyl window would detract from the historic character of the building. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

**MC 3470: 7 Ellsworth Ave., by Robbie Burnstine & Louis A. Rodrigues.** To install ventilation fan in window opening.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, and reminded that the Commission had approved several alterations to the building at a previous public hearing. He noted the

location of the proposed ventilation fan in a window on the shed dormer on the north (right) façade.

Ms. McMahon asked if the whole window would be removed. Ms. Burnstine said it would, and the fan would be painted to match the color of the house.

Ms. Pauli asked if the window casing would remain. Ms. Burnstine said she was unsure.

Mr. Redmon asked how large was the fan compared to the window. Ms. Burnstine reviewed the approximate dimensions of the existing window opening and the proposed conditions. She explained that the finished third floor made it difficult to find a location for the ventilation fan. She said that her only other option was to install a 4' x 4' box on top of the dormer to house the fan, which she considered inappropriate. The laundry room in the dormer was no longer in use, so it seemed like the best location for the fan.

Mr. Hsiao asked if there was any possibility for a custom-sized fan to fit the window opening. Ms. Burnstine said that was not an option.

Ms. Perrault asked for the length of the dormer. Ms. Burnstine said it was roughly the distance of the gable roof. Mr. Trudeau noted that the dormer was not original to the house.

Mr. Redmon noted that the existing window opening seemed wide enough to accommodate the fan but not tall enough. He suggested that the sill be lowered instead of raising the header further into the eave. Ms. Goodwin agreed.

Mr. Hsiao agreed that the other option for the fan described by Ms. Burnstine would be an inappropriate addition to the house, and noted the current proposal was reversible.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted, with the recommendation to lower the sill of the window to accommodate the fan. Ms. Perrault SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

**MC 3471: 1436 Cambridge St., by Alan Feiner.** To enclose porch and replace windows.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides and reviewed a recent proposal to alter windows on the building, which was approved by the Commission at a previous hearing.

Mr. Feiner explained that the reason for the porch enclosure was to allow for more light in the dining room.

Ms. Perrault asked if the porch columns were original or a later addition. Mr. Feiner said he was unsure. He said the porch may have been altered when the adjacent addition was constructed in the 1950s. Ms. Goodwin asked if the columns would be altered under the current proposal. Mr. Feiner said they would remain the same.

Ms. Perrault asked if the existing double-hung windows on the house were six-over-six. Mr. Feiner said some of the windows were six-over-one.

Mr. Redmon recommended that the walls for the enclosed porch be recessed so to retain the splayed brackets on the columns.

Ms. Pauli recommended that the porch door have glazed openings to better match the windows. Mr. Feiner said he was open to suggestions. He said the windows would have simulated divided lites.

Mr. Redmon suggested to eliminate the transom detail on the proposed porch windows and glazed openings on the porch door. He acknowledged that the splayed brackets would have to be removed for the installation of the walls, as they were thicker than he realized.

Ms. Goodwin recommended six-over-one windows for the porch.

Mr. Redmon MOVED to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted, with the suggestion to eliminate the transom detail on the porch windows, to add glazed openings to the porch door, and to use a six-over-one muntin configuration on the porch windows. Mr. Hsiao SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

**MC 3472: 74 Ellery St., by David Szlag.** To replace third-floor windows.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building and indicated that the replacement windows would be in the third-floor dormers.

Ms. Goodwin asked for the condition of other windows on the house. Mr. Szlag said the other windows were original. He said the third floor served as an attic for a long time and the windows were neglected. He said only the sash would be replaced, and the storm windows would remain.

Mr. Redmon asked if the replacement windows would be two-over-two. Mr. Szlag said they would.

Ms. Goodwin asked for clarification that the proposed windows were PVC vinyl. Mr. Szlag confirmed.

Ms. Pauli asked if a wood replacement window was considered. Mr. Szlag said the vinyl window was the model he wanted to work with. He said he had no intention of replacing the original windows on the house with vinyl windows.

Ms. Goodwin said that with the retention of the storms the vinyl windows would not be highly visible from the street.

Ms. Perrault agreed, and noted that the applicant had made it clear that he did want to replace the original windows on the house.

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal as submitted based on the low visibility of the windows. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

**MC 3473: 81-87 Amory St., by 81-87 Amory St. Condominium Trust.** To install fiber cement siding and aluminum trim.

Mr. Trudeau showed slides of the building, an 1870s Queen Anne row house that had been clad with wood shingles in the 1970s. He said the original cladding material was wood clapboards with a band of shingles above the second floor, which likely were still beneath the existing wood shingles.

Ms. Goodwin asked why the aluminum trim was needed. Alfredo Correia, the contractor, explained that the condominium trust wished to have a maintenance-free material over the existing cornerboards and soffits. Ms. Goodwin asked why HardiePlank could not be used in these areas. Mr. Correia said it was the decision of the Trust.

Mr. Redmon asked for the width of the exposure of the fiber cement siding. Mr. Correia said it would be approximately 8". Mr. Redmon said that would be twice the exposure of the original clapboards.

Ms. Perrault said she was concerned about this proposal because of the size of the building and the large amount of exterior cladding required. Mr. Correia said it would cost the Trust less money to have a wider exposure for the HardiePlank siding.

Ms. Pauli asked for details on the existing shutters. Mr. Correia said they were vinyl and would be re-installed. Ms. McMahon suggested that shutters remain off once taken down, as they were not functional or original to the building.

Ms. Perrault said she was not in favor of the proposal as described. Mr. Hsiao agreed, adding that the Commission would need to recommend a great deal of changes if it were approved.

Ms. McMahon noted that based on an older photograph provided by staff, the window sizes had been significantly altered when the wood shingles were installed.

Mr. Hsiao MOVED to disapprove the proposal as submitted based on the proposed wide exposure of the fiber cement siding, and that the installation of aluminum trim would detract from the historic character of the building. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

Minutes: 6/1/09

Ms. Perrault MOVED to approve the minutes for the 6/1/09 meeting as submitted. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, which PASSED 5-0.

There being no further business, Mr. Hsiao MOVED to adjourn. Mr. Redmon SECONDED the motion, and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 7:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Trudeau  
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the public that signed the 7/7/09 attendance sheet:**

Mike Bedard	345 Greenwood St., Worcester
Mike Szalaji	20 Chestnut St.
Alan Feiner	1436 Cambridge St.
Julie Peters	21 Irving St.
Robbie Burnstine	7 Ellsworth Ave.
David Szlag	74 Ellery St.
Trent & Denise English	285 Harvard St., #101