

Approved 4/5/10

## Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

February 1, 2010 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Commission Members: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield and Carole Perrault, *Members*; Sue-Ellen Myers and Monika Pauli, *Alternates*

Staff: Sarah Burks

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

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With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and made introductions. Ms. Goodwin designated both alternates to vote on all matters.

### Minutes

With representatives missing for all of the advertised cases, the Commission reviewed the minutes of January 4, 2010.

Ms. Perrault moved to approve the minutes, as submitted. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. Ms. Goodwin designated Ms. Pauli to vote, and the motion passed 5-0.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-3595 (new hearing): 99 Prospect St., by Christ the King Presbyterian Church.** To construct access ramp and replace door at left side of church building.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the church building (built 1851), which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Any alteration visible from a public way to a National Register building in the district was subject to binding review.

Joe Buckley, building manager for the church, described the proposed ramp, landing, railings, and new door at the side entrance. The ramp would be framed with pressure treated wood. The decking and sides would be gray Trex composite material or 5/4 pressure treated wood. The railing would probably be gray aluminum.

Ms. Perrault asked about the current paving material, and Mr. Buckley replied that it was brick up to the corner of the building, then concrete with a decorative band of brick beyond the front wall of the building. The window wells were filled in.

Ms. Perrault asked about the new door. Michael Kyes, the architect, replied that an interior wood paneled door would be cut down to fit the opening.

In response to a question about visibility of the proposed work from St. Paul Street, Ms. Burks noted that she did not have a slide ~~taken from St. Paul Street~~ from that vantage point. She thought, however, ~~which she believed was~~ that St. Paul Street was a private way.

Mr. Kyes asked if it would be acceptable to use a new door and apply the diagonal slat design as on the existing door.

Charles Korn, of 6 Austin Park, asked if the church could locate the ramp on the other side of the building.

Mr. Buckley answered that it had been studied, but for many reasons, that was not the preferred location.

Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the alterations, as submitted, including the proposed paneled door. The door would not be visible from a public way. Ms. Goodwin designated Ms. Myers to vote, and the motion passed 5-0.

**MC-3414 (amendment): 116-118 Amory St., by Cacciola Development.** To alter plans.

Ms. Burks showed slides and introduced the case. She showed before and during construction views. The windows along the side walls of the front building had been constructed in a different manner from the drawings approved at the last hearing. She noted that the review was non-binding.

Helena Eckert, the architect, noted that the use of the front building had changed from two condominiums to one. She indicated how the windows had been changed.

Ms. Burks noted that on the right side of the ell, the kitchen window was a single, not a double as drawn on the most recent drawings.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the windows were the same size as originally proposed, and Mike Giocopello, the builder, answered affirmatively.

Ms. Litchfield asked why the brackets had been removed from the front entrance hood.

Mr. Giocopello answered that the hood was very low and the approach was from the side, where the path steps down to the landing. If the brackets were there, someone might bump their head on them.

Ms. Burks suggested lifting the hood a little higher to take care of the problem and allow for the brackets.

Mr. Giocopello said this was possible, as was making the slope of the roof of the hood flatter.

Ms. Burks suggested a hip roof instead of a gable.

Ms. Perrault asked about the landscaping plan.

Ms. Eckert answered that an English Ivy ground cover would be used between the buildings, where the unpaved areas were too small for bushes. It would be simple, like a Japanese garden. At the front, she suggested ground cover and hostas.

Mr. Giocopello described the 8 x 8 inch concrete pavers with a cobblestone edge that would be used for walkways. The patios would also use the pavers and cobblestone edging.

Greg Hyde, of 117 Amory Street, noted that the previous submittal showed a planting strip along the house, adjacent to the driveway.

Ms. Eckert said the change allowed for more space for parking. Two compact cars would fit side by side. Larger cars could park tandem. Mr. Giocopello disagreed, saying the cars would be parked tandem. Ms. Eckert said the paving would ease snow removal issues.

Mr. Hsiao said that 14' was not wide enough for side by side parking. He suggested simpler landscaping because the architecture was so simple.

Ms. Goodwin suggested planters and an Architects Committee meeting on site.

Ms. Perrault said the number of windows on the right side seemed excessive and would distract from the simplicity of the house.

Ms. Goodwin shared some concern, but noted that the windows faced south and the exposure was nice to have.

Ms. Litchfield moved to approve the application for the windows as built, on the condition that the issue of the entry hood be revisited and reviewed and approved by the staff and on the condition that the landscaping be reviewed and approved by the Architects Committee after the zoning requirements for parking are checked by the applicant. She further moved that the applicants consider using a greener buffer zone. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. Ms. Goodwin designated Ms. Pauli to vote, and the motion passed 5-0.

### Informational Presentation

**259 Harvard Street (Jackson Gardens Apartments), by Cambridge Housing Authority.** Hear presentation about proposed alterations and additions and formulate comments to the Board of Zoning Appeal for its hearing on a comprehensive permit application. Ms. Burks showed slides of the property.

Ms. Goodwin recused herself because she was working with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) on another project. She left the table. Mr. Hsiao assumed the chair.

Terry Dumas, of the Cambridge Housing Authority, introduced the project. The CHA had received a \$10 million grant from stimulus money for work at Jackson Gardens and Lincoln Way and needed to start construction in May.

Ms. Burks showed slides and explained that the project was being processed as a comprehensive permit project, a type of permit available for affordable housing projects. The public hearing would be held by the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA), but other boards and commissions could forward comments to the BZA. The CHA had agreed to come to the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission to make an informational presentation, answer questions, and here-hear comments.

Stephen Baker, the architect of Baker/Wohl Architects, described the existing buildings at Jackson Gardens (1950). He said the 60 year old apartments were substandard for the needs of a modern family. His firm had studied ways to make the apartments larger by expanding up or out without losing the number of apartments/bedrooms. He described the proposed alterations and additions, including adding projecting bays, applied metal cladding in certain areas, modernized entries with more durable materials, additions at the rear of the buildings, replacing all the windows with 1-over-1 windows, and landscaping improvements.

Ms. Perrault said that by changing character defining features such as doorways and windows, the alterations would change the style of the buildings. She asked for the design rationale behind the choices. The neighborhood context was critical.

Mr. Baker said that at meetings with residents they had indicated a desire for covered entries.

Mr. Hsiao noted that Georgian Revival details were repeated elsewhere on the street. The goal of making the units bigger was admirable. He agreed with Ms. Perrault that the characteristics that define the development were proposed to be changed. The altered building would be very different from the existing. Wood trim had issues, but it had qualities that people associate with buildings of a certain era. He suggested that more could be done in the courtyard and encouraged further study.

Mr. Baker said he did not build with wood on multi family housing today. He challenged the convention of replicating the existing.

Ms. Burks said the design may have been antiquated for 1950, but it was very contextual for its Cambridge location. Wood trim and multi-light windows were character defining features. She suggested that the maintenance challenges might be eased if the cornice detail on the entries could be replicated in a composite material or fiberglass.

Chuck Redmon said the color palette of the Georgian Revival could be simply stated as red and white. If the proposed new metal panels were white instead of silver it might help to preserve the color balance.

Laura Bjorkland, of 9 St. Paul Street, said she understood the desire for low maintenance materials, but the proposal barely gave a nod to the existing style. She said she loved the building and that it was a cool, classic Cambridge building. The proposed altered building looked a little like an office ~~part~~ park building. She asked if there were environmental improvements, and Mr. Baker replied that the completed building would be less resource intensive and would have better indoor air quality.

Charles Korn, of 6 Austin Park, spoke complimented the design of the additions at the back of the buildings. He disapproved of the applied metal panels on the brick; they were out of place. Would they last over time? Would they oxidize or get streaky?

Greg Hyde, of 117 Amory Street, said the doorways were exceedingly important features. They had lasted 60 years with maintenance, which was not bad. The three entrances at the perimeter were the most significant. He recommended that those be preserved.

Mr. Redmon recommended that the doors be centered in the entrances and the bays not be curved.

Mr. Baker explained that the doors had been moved off center to meet accessibility requirements, but at the above grade perimeter entrances, the doors could be centered.

Ms. Myers said the 1-over-1 windows were very stark and smacked of remodeling. She encouraged the retention of divided lights.

Mr. Baker said he would consider using 6-over-1 windows.

Ms. Burks said it would still be a departure for a Georgian Revival but it was a half way point.

Ms. Perrault applauded the restraint used in the design of the additions.

Mr. Hsiao noted that many good things were achieved by the design. He encouraged the CHA and the architect to consider further refinements to the design based on the existing Georgian Revival style and including the color of trim, divided light windows, the treatment of the base of the bays, restoration of the existing entrances or keeping some of the stylistic characteristics and level of detail, especially at the three perimeter entries, centering of the doors, consideration of neighborhood context, further study of materials.

Ms. Perrault moved to forward the comments, as summarized by Mr. Hsiao, to the BZA. Mr. Redmon seconded. Mr. Hsiao designated both alternates to vote, and the motion carried 5-0.

#### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC 2154 (continued hearing): 1-15 Vail Ct./139 Bishop Allen Dr., by Mohammad S. Abuzahra, Trustee.** To demolish existing buildings and construct four new residential buildings.

No proponents had appeared for the Vail Court project. Ms. Burks reported that she had received a phone call from the owner who said a lawyer representing the owner might show up, but he couldn't guarantee it.

Mr. Redmon moved to find the application incomplete and to suspend discussion of the case at this time. He further moved to invite the applicants to resubmit at any time in the future. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. Ms. Goodwin designated Ms. Pauli to vote, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Redmon moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 2/1/10

Greg Hyde	117 Amory St
Nick Mildworf	7 Austin Park #2
Amril Lal	4 Jackson Gardens #21
Charles Korn	6 Austin Park
Laura Bjorhlund	9 St Paul St
Mike Giocopello	116 Amory St
Joe Buckley	99 Prospect St
Kyle Sullivan	675 Mass Ave, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fl
Karen Engels	8 St. Paul St
Jungok Jung	8 Jackson Gardens #40
Steve Baker	132 Lincoln St #4
Alan Sherr	9 St. Paul St
Etzhiwch Mengeste	3 Jackson Gardens #18