

Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

November 7, 2010 - 6:00 P.M. – 344 Broadway, City Hall Annex/McCusker Center, 4th Floor

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

Commission Members Absent: Siobhan McMahon, *Alternates*

Staff: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached sign-in sheet

With a quorum present, Ms. Goodwin called the meeting to order at 5:58 P.M.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3756: 1 Hancock Park, by Gary Gilbert. Replace existing wood windows, wood gutters, and front handrail with new materials.

Staff member Eiliesh Tuffy outlined the basic project scope. The property is one of several 2-1/2 story frame Gambrels constructed in 1896. #1 Hancock Park is at the end of what is a very short street. The application was to replace the original wood windows, reinstate a previously infilled window opening on the west elevation, remove a non-visible window on the rear elevation, and build a new wood stair railing at the front entrance. Shingles and window trim had already been replaced prior to the Commission meeting, but were outside the scope of the active building permit on file.

The owner, Gary Gilbert, introduced himself and mentioned that his previous project on Ellery Street had received an award from the Historical Commission, which he thanked the members for.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the proposed replacement windows would be simulated divided lites. Mr. Gilbert said he intended to install 1-over-1 vinyl windows, or perhaps 2-over-1 with simulated divided lites. He said anything other than those options seemed cost prohibitive.

Ms. Carole Perrault inquired about the condition of the existing wood windows. Mr. Gilbert said that 7 or 8 out of 35 windows were falling apart, equaling 20% of the total windows. Issues raised by the owner included wood rot, loose fitting windows, and the need for weatherstripping.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the building would be converted for condominiums, and the property owner said that was his plan.

Mr. Gilbert asked if anyone knew why there was a room in the basement with a staircase to the attic. Ms. Lestra Litchfield said her house had a similar plan, but it was unclear what the original intent would have been.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the second floor porch windows were included in the replacement window schedule. Mr. Gilbert said that they would also be replaced, but that he didn't believe the enclosed porch was an original feature to the house. Ms. Litchfield asked if new storm windows had been considered. Mr. Gilbert said that, if he kept the existing wood window plus storm configuration, each window would require seven pieces of bronze weatherstripping which posed concerns over the cost and labor involved.

Ms. Perrault asked how long Mr. Gilbert had been using vinyl windows in his redevelopment projects, and whether he had witnessed their failure. Mr. Gilbert did not feel they failed that often and that, if they did fail, he

DRAFT MINUTES

could reglaze the vinyl windows pretty affordably. The new windows would not change the dimensional opening, and would be vinyl on the exterior and interior.

Mr. Tony Hsiao asked about the condition of the existing siding. The owner said they had already done some repairs-in-kind to the shingles and that the new wood trim would match. Mr. Charles Redmon asked if the building would be painted, and Mr. Gilbert said it would be stained a golden yellow color. The Commission advised the owner to select an appropriate paint formula to cover whatever the existing paint is (oil vs. latex). He also intends to repaint the chimney.

Details of the front porch and entry stair were discussed. The Commission recommended that the proposed stair rail be redesigned to include balusters to match the front porch.

There were no questions from the public.

Ms. Monika Pauli asked about the exterior color of the new windows. Mr. Gilbert said they would be white because painting them would cost exponentially more. Ms. Litchfield suggested that, for aesthetic reasons, a clad-wood window with integral divided lites could be a great selling point. Ms. Goodwin mentioned a recent case in the district where the applicant's research had found restoration to be less expensive than installing new windows, and asked Mr. Gilbert if he had considered restoring the windows on this project. Mr. Gilbert said that he had not. He felt that the 20% of windows showing signs of rot would have to be thrown out and the others were all loose. Ms. Perrault mentioned the longevity of repairing wood windows vs. the shorter lifespan of vinyl windows, and noted that this case was subject to a non-binding review.

Mr. Hsiao moved to deny the application as submitted, because the proposed vinyl replacement windows are not in keeping with the goals of the conservation district. He added that the Commission supported reinstating the original window opening but recommended designing a stair handrail to match the porch railing and preserving the wood gutters. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

MC-3760: 285 Harvard St., by Elizabeth Brennan. Window replacement.

Ms. Tuffy showed slides and described the property, which is a 2nd floor unit at the rear of the 4-story brick condominium building facing West Street. The building was constructed in 1929. The proposal was to replace four wood windows with vinyl replacement windows and replace a steel casement window at the fire escape with new aluminum sliding doors.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there was a specific contractor doing the work throughout the building. Ms. Brennan said she believed there were two different contractors working throughout the building on window replacement projects. She expressed safety concerns with the existing steel casement windows at the fire escape and mentioned that several other units had been broken into from that location.

Ms. Litchfield asked if there had been a condominium meeting to discuss window replacement guidelines. Ms. Brennan said there had not been to her knowledge. Mr. Redmon suggested that needed to happen.

Mr. Hsiao suggested getting a bid from her contractor on the clad wood replacement windows that were approved by the Commission recently for another unit in the building. Ms. Brennan said she did not have a big budget for the work, and that her main concern was regarding safety.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

DRAFT MINUTES

Ms. Litchfield moved to deny the application as submitted and recommended speaking to the contractor installing more appropriate replacement windows in the building, or to the property owner themselves for better options. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

MC-3773: 7 Clinton Street, by Khartini Sjahrir Family Trust. Replace front window.

Ms. Tuffy described the proposal to replace the center window in the 1st floor bay with a vinyl window, painted on the exterior to match the existing windows. Window replacement occurred at this property several years ago, at which time a wood replacement was selected. This would be the first vinyl window installed at the property, and in a highly visible location. The Commission directed staff to deny the application.

Minutes

Ms. Perrault had a correction for the October 4th minutes.
Mr. Hsiao moved to approve the October 4th minutes, as amended.
Mr. Redmon seconded the motion.
The motion passed 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy
Preservation Administrator

DRAFT MINUTES

Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 11/8/10

Elizabeth Brennan
Adam Mara
Gary Gilbert

285 Harvard St., #212, Cambridge, MA 02139
285 Harvard St., #212, Cambridge, MA 02139