

## Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Mon., Feb. 4, 2013 at 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Charles Redmon, *members*; Monika Pauli, *alternate*

Commission Members absent: Lestra Litchfield, Carole Perrault, *members*; Sue-Ellen Myers, *alternate*

Staff present: Eiliesh Tuffy

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Chair Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

### Status Report: Certificate of Non-Applicability

#### **MC-4230: 83 Trowbridge Street, by J.T. Haffey Builders on behalf of Charles & Myo Smith Revocable Trust.** Repair/replace exterior siding following house fire.

This 1912 triple-decker was damaged by fire, and is currently under repair. The contractor attended the meeting to present the scope of exterior work that is planned for the property. The original cedar siding was covered at a later date with aluminum and the rounded corner bay was re-sheathed in historically inappropriate vertical aluminum siding. Substantial sections of the siding were damaged in the firefighting efforts and now require replacement.

The Commission members noted that the neighboring building at 85 Trowbridge St. was designed as the pair of #83 and could serve as a guide for restoring the exterior to a more historic appearance. The primary elevation facing Trowbridge, including the rounded corner bay, were felt to be the areas to focus on in the post-fire restoration efforts. If insurance funds were not available to use cedar throughout, it was felt that a substitute material would be acceptable for the secondary elevations in this case.

The contractor said cedar shingles would be best to work with for the rounded corner bay, and straight clapboards for the remainder of the façade. The trim is proposed to be an Azek composite material. A cottage-style door is proposed for the top floor balcony access.

Ms. Perrault said that if substitute material siding is to be used anywhere, the preference is for smooth finish rather than simulated wood grain.

Questions and comments were accepted from the public.

Tuny McMahon of 14 Highland Ave. said it was too bad the entire exterior could not be returned to cedar, but that the proposal to remove the inappropriate aluminum was refreshing.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to support the post-fire repair proposal as submitted, with cedar to be used on the front elevation and round corner bay. Ms. Perrault seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-4226: 285 Harvard St., #308, by Neerja Bylsma.** Replace original wood windows with composite-material replacements.

This four-story brick building was designed by architect Frank Bignaltt and constructed in 1929 as the John Alden apartments. The property has 48 units that are now each privately owned as condominiums.

This application was received at the same time that another unit owner was undertaking a window replacement project. This property owner was unclear why one application was approved while one required a public hearing. Staff explained that the other applicant's original windows were replaced years ago, which meant that historic fabric was not proposed to be removed as part of that project. In contrast, this unit still has its original, historic wood windows and the Commission's role is to encourage the preservation of historically significant architectural features, including wood windows.

Because of the confusion that arose from these two applications for similar work projects, staff attended a January meeting of the condominium's Board of Trustees to clarify the Historic Commission's guidelines for project review. At that time, it was proposed that the window replacement process could be expedited if the board wished to select a standard replacement window type that met with the Historical Commission's standards. The board, however, did not feel comfortable pursuing that option at this time primarily because their owners have a wide range of financial situations and might not be able to afford a high quality replacement window.

While the property owner was not in attendance at the public hearing, an Andersen Window employee was present to act as the owner's representative. He explained that the proposed replacement window is the Woodwright model, which is a wood composite material. The exterior wood trim will remain.

Ms. Perrault noted that it was unfortunate that the property owner could not be present to hear the comments of the Commission.

No questions or comments were received from the public.

Ms. Perrault commented again that, if the owners are not present to attend the public hearing there is no opportunity for the Commission members to talk to them about the effectiveness of repairing historic wood windows. If these windows were repaired they could last another 100 years.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to deny the application to replace the wood windows because it involves the further loss of original building fabric from this building. Ms. Perrault seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

### Minutes

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 2012 and January 2013 meetings. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eiliesh Tuffy  
Preservation Administrator

**Members of the Public who signed the attendance sheet, February 4, 2013**

John T. Haffey  
Tuny McMahon

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