

## Minutes of the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission

Monday, February 3, 2014, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl., 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Lestra Litchfield, Charles Redmon, *Members*; Margaret McMahon, *Alternate*

Commission Members absent: Carole Perrault *Member*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Monica Pauli, *Alternates*

Staff present: Sarah Burks, Samantha Paul

Members of the Public: See attached list.

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Chair Nancy Goodwin called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and explained procedures.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**MC-4384: 99 Prospect St., by Christ the King Presbyterian Church, Inc.** Install fence at right side to screen mechanical equipment. *Request received to postpone hearing to March 3.*

**MC-4417: 207 Prospect St., by Gary Gilbert/Concept Properties.** Extensive exterior renovations, including windows, skylights, doors, exterior cladding, chimney removal, and trim. Replace handrails at stairs.

Staff introduced the item, giving a brief history of the structure itself. The existing structure was covered in vinyl siding as well as the soffits enclosed, which removed much of the trim details from the home. The applicant has started removing some of the vinyl and exposed wood shingles, which were a common addition in the 1920s and are most likely not original as the home dates from approximately 1843. A permit was issued in 1934, #35678, for a storefront addition and attached garage. It is believed the home was converted into a non-residential use at that time. Staff clarified that the previous use was an office and is proposed to be changed to residential after these renovations, as confirmed by the owner's representative Derek Snare.

Staff continued on to state that the structure currently has primarily 1/1 windows with a 2/2 window visible along the left elevation. The time period of the house would indicate it was originally of a Greek/Italianate mix most likely with a 6/6 window or 2/2. The current 1/1 windows are a replacement window product, some casements and sliders were also added at a later date.

The applicant is proposing to install new windows throughout the structure with a black vinyl product. The sliders on the front elevation will be removed and sash windows, to line up with the windows on the second floor will be added. The applicant also proposed to replace the doors, install skylights and add trim as needed.

The representative, Mr. Snare confirmed the scope of work. Mr. Snare stated that the owner wants guidance on the window design, but knows that he wants to do double hung sash windows. He confirmed the addition of trim and detail, as much was removed over the years and with the installation of vinyl siding. He also noted that the owner wanted to extend the roof lines on the addition on the

front elevation as the eaves are rather small currently. Mr. Snare stated that the owner wanted to add decorative shingles in the third floor gable end as an accent.

Ms. Lestra Litchfield asked what color the windows were proposed as. Mr. Snare responded black vinyl.

Mr. Snare continued that the attached garage will be converted into a live-in unit and will remain CMU but will be painted to match the remainder of the primary structure. Currently, the property has a paved lot containing approximately 10 parking spaces and he stated that the lot will be landscaped and pavement reduced to provide parking for 3 cars.

Staff asked Mr. Snare if any fenestration will be added or altered along the right or rear elevations as those elevations were not included in the application submittal. Mr. Snare clarified that nothing would be altered on those elevations as the structure is built on the property line and would not allow for windows to be altered, merely replaced in the same location/size. Ms. Goodwin asked if they were all double hung and if he would consider wood. Mr. Snare stated yes they would all be double hung, those are his intentions but as for wood, he will let the owner know that the commission asked about doing wood.

Ms. Goodwin asked Staff to clarify what window design would be appropriate. Staff responded either a 6/1 or a 2/2 window design. Staff also noted that you don't need to take off the shingles, but they are not original to the structure. The layers of siding, including the vinyl outer later, can be peeled off to verify the condition of the siding underneath and what trim to add. Mr. Snare mentioned that there is T-111 on the one-story addition piece, but that will be removed and recovered with whatever the remainder of the primary structure is sided with. Ms. Goodwin mentioned that the owner can meet with staff or architect's committee on site to discuss the renovation and siding materials.

Mr. Hsiao articulated that when going down the trim path, how much and where is important. It is important that the new trim is not arbitrary or capricious. Further stating that with all the other work, the trim may go overboard. It's important to keep it simple. Mr. Snare clarified that as there are a number of additions, the idea was that the trim would break up the bulk of the house. He will discuss the potential of not doing trim to break up the floors. Mr. Redmon concurred with Mr. Hsiao, expressing that as the house is quite small, one will need to be careful not to go too far with the trim and detail. Mr. Redmon also emphasized that seeing the original siding will be important to the renovation project. Ms. Litchfield questioned if the owner was open to clapboard, to which Mr. Snare answered yes.

Ms. Goodwin mentioned that she feels this project will be an on-going review.

Mr. Hsiao observed that the neighboring structure is more Greek Revival and more monumental in scale, however it might be a clue to trimming out this home. Further stating that he thought 2/2 windows were an appropriate option.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the application as submitted with the following condition: (1) the applicant work with staff on window design and siding, which can include an architect's committee if necessary. Mr. Snare asked for clarification on the condition, as to whether or not a decision would be made on the spot about the siding and windows. Mr. Redmon said yes a decision would be made at that time. This was seconded by Mr. Hsiao and approved unanimously, 5-0.

**MC-4418: 1575 Cambridge St., by Spaulding Hospital Cambridge.** Install banner signs.

Ms. Goodwin tabled this item, as the owner and representatives for MC-4420 were present and no one was present for MC-4418.

**MC-4420: 77 Amory St., by Richard Colbath-Hess.** Install solar panels on roof.

Staff introduced the application, starting with a background of the structure. 77 Amory was constructed in 1888 under permit #151733, with George Chaplin as the architect/builder. The two-family house has wood shingles and some original trim features remain intact. The front-facing gable roof is covered in slate with a dormer on each side elevation and accented by a number of skylights. The application is for the installation of solar panels on the left elevation roof. Staff noted that the application materials did include a special installation for slate roofing, and that the panels would be installed nine (9) inches above the roof and at the same angle as the roof. A company representative in the audience confirmed this, but clarified that they would be approximately four (4) inches above the roof.

Dan Covey, a representative from SunBug Solar, explained how the proposed product is attached to a slate roof with minimal impact to the roof. On this particular installation, only 24 slates will be directly drilled into and impacted. The specific product is made for slate, drilling into only 24 slates and will have aluminum flashing which is malleable and will attach through the slate. Mr. Covey goes on to state that the sturdiest rack was chosen. The rack has a maximum span of six (6) feet which will allow for the lowest impact to the slate roof.

Ben, a representative from SunBug Solar, gave a background of SunBug Solar, which is based out of Somerville. They are employing Garrett Laws of The Copper & Slate Co., Inc., a roofer who is an expert in slate roofing, who will be doing the installation and penetration into the slate roof. This roofer has already inspected the current roof for condition and to see if it can support the panels, which Mr. Ben noted it can.

Ms. Goodwin asked if SunBug had done this installation before. Mr. Ben stated that yes, they had done it on structures in Somerville and Jamaica Plain. It is not easy and does add to the cost, but preserves the roof.

Mr. Redmon asked how many support points. Mr. Covey responded, for this project 24 for the whole roof, approximately six (6) feet apart. Mr. Ben stated that they are building an exoskeleton on which the solar panels will be attached, sitting on the rails.

Ms. Litchfield questioned if it was reversible, repairable or if the panels could be replaced. Mr. Covey stated the panels have the longest warranty available and shouldn't need to be replaced. Mr. Covey went on to state that only 24 individual slates will be impacted by this installation. Ms. Litchfield asked for clarification that if one were to want to remove the panels that you would just replace the slates that were damaged and the roof would be as good as new. Mr. Covey stated yes, the slates would just need to be replaced. Mr. Ben noted that the panels themselves could also be removed from the rail system and new panels could be installed. Mr. Covey further expounded that the rail system proposed is a universal rail system and would allow for other panels to potentially be installed in the future.

Staff asked how a roof leak under the panels would be addressed if it were to happen. Mr. Covey noted that the SunBug crew would come remove the panels, a roofer could then get under the panels and repair the roof as needed then the panels could be reinstalled.

Staff asked if Garrett would be there to do the installation and check the roof. Richard Colbath-Hess stated that Garrett was there to check to roof already and said it would support the addition of the panels. Mr. Ben confirmed that Garrett would be there for the installation.

Mr. Hsiao asked about previous installations, how long they had been installed elsewhere in the area. Mr. Ben state SunBug has been in business since 2009 and of the other slate installations using this method were completed, one was completed two years ago and another a year and a half.

Ms. Goodwin asked if there were any other questions. Mr. Hsiao made a motion for approval as submitted. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. It was supported unanimously, 5-0.

Mr. Redmon asked what the annual savings would be. Mr. Covey responded approximately 85% and noted that there were additional credits for installing solar. Mr. Ben asked if there were guidelines for solar panel installation from the Commission. Staff stated that there are general criteria, but no formalized criteria or guidelines. Staff expounded that generally, the Commission verifies that the solar panels are symmetrical, set in from the edges, ridge and cornice, as well as remaining at the same plane as the roof unless it is a flat roof. Staff mentioned that in the past installation on slate roofs had been a problem so the installation details with this application are great and very helpful.

Staff confirmed that no one was present for **MC-4418: 1575 Cambridge Street** but advised that the Commission could consider the application if they wanted to. Staff noted that the application is coming before them, as it will need zoning relief for the proposed signage. Ms. Goodwin stated that the proposed signage looked excessive. Staff noted that the pillars are approximately eight (8) feet tall and the proposed signs will sit on top of that and measure an additional nine (9) feet. Ms. Goodwin mentioned that that seemed high.

Margaret McMahon asked if this was because they are concerned with visibility. Staff clarified yes. Ms. Litchfield noticed that the signs do not explicitly reference Spaulding. Staff directed that the Commission could make decisions and recommendations based on the proportions, height, materials, placement, etc but not the content itself. Ms. Goodwin asked if the applicant was seeking the Commission's support for their zoning application. Staff stated that the other signs proposed were awning signs that do not trigger the Commission review, it is only the signs on the pillars that needed zoning relief and NCD review.

Ms. McMahon commented that the existing sign has blank space and the applicant should look at utilizing the existing sign on site. Ms. Litchfield stated that, as proposed, it was a lot of signs and they were too large with minimal information. Ms. Litchfield thought maybe one on the corner might be appropriate, and observed that the proposed signs would be rather tall.

Ms. McMahon noted that Spaulding has been a great asset to the neighborhood.

Mr. Redmon concurred with Ms. Litchfield. As proposed, there are too many signs and suggested something smaller, perhaps just the logo.

Ms. Litchfield made a motion to deny the application based on the number of signs and the proposed height, which were found to be inappropriate to the property and the district. She recommended that the hospital install one flutter flag or to install multiple signs at a reduced height. The motion was seconded by Mr. Redmon. The motion passed, 5-0, with all voting.

Staff reported on a meeting with Mahmood Firouzbakht, the owner of 24 Clinton Street. He would be going to the BZA for a zoning relief. However after further review, he wanted to seek a additional FAR relief to keep the basement FAR rather than raising the floor height. This would make the application binding versus the non-binding review it had with the Commission previously. Staff asked if the Commission wanted it to come back to them for review. Ms. Goodwin commented that there was so much public support for the last review, she did not think it was necessary to return to Mid Cambridge NDCD for this interior change. Mr. Redmon said he did not think it needed to come back. Ms. Litchfield asked Staff if it was ok if it did not come back and the existing decision was kept, would it affect zoning. Staff said no it would not affect zoning. Ms. Litchfield stated it sounds like something we missed under our review. Staff stated that we did not get a direct answer when we asked the question. Staff also noted that the changes are all interior and will not affect the exterior appearance of the structure.

#### Minutes

Mr. Redmon moved to approve the minutes of December 2, 2013. Ms. Goodwin seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 with Nancy Goodwin, Tony Hsiao, Charles Redmon and Margaret McMahan voting. Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2014 meeting. Ms. Goodwin seconded the motion which passed 3-0 with Nancy Goodwin, Charles Redmon and Margaret McMahan voting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull  
Preservation Administrator

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

Hewan Adem	195 Prospect St, #5
Derek Snare	Snare & Snare, 158 Central Street, Somerville, MA
Richard Colbath-Hess	79 Amory Street
Dan Covey	SunBug Solar, 411 Highland Ave #312, Somerville, MA
Mr. Ben	SunBug Solar, 411 Highland Ave #312, Somerville, MA

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