

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION
Approved at the March 7, 2016 Hearing

Monday, January 4, 2016, 6:00 PM, McCusker Center, 2nd Fl. Meeting Room, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Sue-Ellen Myers, Lestra Litchfield, *Members*; Margaret McMahon, and Charles Redmon, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: Monika Pauli, *Member*

Staff present: Samantha Paull

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01pm. She reviewed the agenda as well as meeting procedures. She designated Mr. Charles Redmon and Ms. Margaret McMahon to vote on MC-4844, Ms. Goodwin and Mr. Redmon to vote on MC-4873, and Ms. McMahon and Mr. Redmon to vote on MC-4887.

MC-4844: 344 Broadway, by City of Cambridge. Erect bike shelter and alter landscaping.

Ms. Paull showed slides, gave an overview of the structure and application. She said that this review was binding as the building was a publicly owned structure.

Mr. Justin Schreiber, a transportation planner for the City, gave a presentation with photos reflecting the existing conditions, bike parking areas and areas where the City was proposing to add new bike parking. He noted that there were 22 existing vehicular parking spaces to service 281 employees. He said it wasn't possible to remove existing vehicular parking spaces. He showed slides that reflected the proposed project.

Ms. Sue Ellen Myers, Commissioner, asked if it was redundant to have the fence behind the shelter. Mr. Schreiber replied that it was requested at the last hearing, and also serves to protect the shelter from vehicles. He added that the shelter would be approximately five (5) feet from the corner of West Place and would have a single surface of concrete pavement to create uniformity. He noted that the shelter may improve visibility because the tall grass would be removed.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commissioner, asked if the sidewalk sloped away from the shelter or if it was flat. Mr. Schreiber replied that the bike parking area would be level with the sidewalk, the parking area was approximately a foot taller than the sidewalk grade. He noted that the fence/granite curbing would act as a small retaining wall.

Ms. Paull asked if they were adding additional bike parking racks in the open area or if they were spreading out the existing racks. Mr. Schreiber replied that they were adding two more racks for a total of nine (9) bike parking racks in 25 feet by the sidewalk. He added that the racks currently occupied only 18 feet.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the shelter was required to be eight (8) or nine (9) feet tall. Mr. Schreiber replied that he spoke with the manufacturer about it and they felt like it could be safely lowered one foot so it would measure seven (7) feet in the rear and rise up to eight (8) feet, three (3) inches in the front. He said it could also have a one (1) foot glass overhang onto the sidewalk to provide further protection from precipitation.

Mr. Schreiber detailed out the proposal for the fiberglass bike lockers off Inman Place. He said that the space was approximately twelve (12) feet by nineteen (19) feet, adding that they were leaning toward the tan color but were open to gray if the Commission preferred it. He noted that the lockers would be installed in one row, set back from the building about five (5) feet, ten (10) inches. He said the lockers would only be used by the parking enforcement officers.

Ms. Myers asked if the curbing was staying where it was or if it was being removed. Mr. Schreiber replied that it would stay and a concrete pad would be poured within the existing curbing.

Ms. Monika Pauli, Commissioner, asked if any consideration had been made for adding a fence to hide the locker to match existing fencing around structure. Mr. Schreiber replied that he believe they could do that but he would need to look into details before committing. Ms. Goodwin asked what the back of the locker looked like. Mr. Schreiber replied that it was similar to the front, as there was technically a door on each side, however they were only utilizing one of the doors. Ms. Goodwin asked the height of the locker. Mr. Schreiber replied four (4) feet.

Mr. Tony Hsiao, Commissioner, asked if there were issues accessing the lockers from the parking area. Mr. Schreiber replied that the parking area was separate from the locker area and the lockers would only be accessed from one side.

Mr. Redmon asked if they could add a brick wall for screening. Mr. Schreiber replied that a brick wall was not in the budget. Ms. Paull stated that staff would be concerned with something as permanent and substantial as a brick wall, as the lockers may not be a permanent feature of this area. She continued that the existing landscaping helped to visually buffer the proposed bike lockers.

Mr. Redmon recommended adding a pattern to the glass on the back of the shelter and asked if the sides could be left open. Mr. Schreiber said he would have to look into it, as he was not certain if this was something the company did.

Ms. Alina Bosch, resident at 155 Prospect Street, voiced her concern about the glass being treated to prevent birds from flying into it. Mr. Schreiber replied that he would follow up with the company.

Ms. Emily Talcott, abutter at 3 West Place, asked about the purpose of additional bicycle parking and lockers, as bicycle parking existed both, on site and inside the building. Mr. Schreiber replied that the existing bicycle room inside the annex was taken up primarily by the parking enforcement officers and the goal was to provide more parking, as well as protection from precipitation.

Mr. Ken Lynch, abutter at 3 West Place, expressed concern with the plan as he felt there was a lack of exterior maintenance at the annex.

Mr. Bill Deignan, Cambridge Transportation Planner, noted that the overall building maintenance is done by Public Works as well as the full time custodians, although he said he wasn't certain if the custodians were cleaning up the exterior as well. He said he would follow up with the Traffic Department about keeping the spaces clean once they were installed.

Ms. Talcott asked how the grade change in the parking area down to the front bicycle parking area was being address. Mr. Schreiber replied that he was looking to regrade the first space and landscape so it would be even. Ms. Talcott asked how they would address the geothermal well. Mr. Schreiber noted that he would be following up with the contractor who installed the well.

Ms. Noel Jette, resident at 149 Prospect Street, asked what was happening to the trees. Mr. Schreiber replied that some of the trees were being removed, some were being relocated, and one was in decline rather than thriving and that would be removed along with the grasses.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the entire parking lot was narrowing or if one parking stall was narrowing. Mr. Schreiber replied that all spaces were being narrowed, with six (6) inches dispersed evenly between the spaces reducing their width from nine (9) feet to eight (8) and a half feet.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the spaces will still be large enough for cars. Mr. Schreiber said that it had been confirmed with mini-vans. He added that the lines were also being narrowed as the lines were currently painted at six (6) inch widths and lines were traditionally four (4) inch widths.

Ms. Talcott added that she was concerned with the proposal and felt that it would affect the integrity of the renovation, which the city went to great lengths to restore the structure. She hoped that an indoor area could be found to provide additional parking for the bicycles.

Ms. Bosch offered her support of the project, stating that after living in Europe for over ten (10) years, it was great to see proper bicycle solutions being offered up by the city.

Mr. Lynch expressed concern about the snow plow damaging the bicycle parking areas. Ms. Talcott echoed that concern.

Ms. Goodwin asked if cobblestones could be used to differentiate the parking from the sidewalk, or using brick pavers instead of concrete. Mr. Schreiber replied that bicycles fall over on cobblestones and as concrete was already required around each post, the consistency of a uniform paving system seemed important to the cohesiveness of the project.

Mr. Redmon asked if a patterned or stamped concrete could be used to differentiate it from the sidewalk space.

Ms. McMahon expressed her preference for the removal of a parking space rather than the loss of visibility. Mr. Schreiber replied that it was not a viable option.

Ms. Talcott expressed that she hoped a parking spot would be removed for the bicycle parking.

Mr. Deignan responded that the idea was to provide additional parking for the building, not to remove parking.

Ms. Goodwin said that removing the parking space would allow for a location for snow and greenspace.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the depth of the sidewalk could be narrowed to allow for more of a buffer, and to provide space for snow. He expressed concern with adding complexities to the site versus address just one concern. Mr. Schreiber clarified that the covered bicycle parking shelter was already being altered from eight (8) feet to seven (7) feet deep. Mr. Hsiao responded that if the shelter was not there, would there be more room for bicycle parking. Mr. Deignan responded no, as the goal of the project was covered parking versus just additional parking.

Ms. Goodwin expressed concern over the shelter having limited practicality as any wind-driven rain or snow would be blown inside the shelter. Mr. Deignan said the shelters help to encourage bicycling versus protecting everything. Mr. Schreiber added that it made the decision to ride a bike somewhere versus driving or taking transit easier.

Mr. Lynch asked what happened when a bike was abandoned. Mr. Schreiber and Mr. Deignan gave an overview of how the process for reporting abandoned bicycles worked. Mr. Deignan added the goal of the shelter was to encourage bicycling in the City.

Ms. Goodwin expressed support for additional bicycle parking but was concerned with removing landscaping from the site for the bicycle shelter. She offered her support of the bicycle lockers, noting it was an out of the way installation. Mr. Schreiber asked if the Commission had recommendations on how to mitigate the design. Ms. Talcott echoed the Commission's concern with removal of greenspace. Mr. Hsiao agreed with Ms. Goodwin.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to approve the proposal with the following conditions:

1. The first two parking spaces shall be eliminated;
2. Three additional trees shall be planted to provide a total of six (6) trees in the greenspace; and
3. A patterned paving solution shall be used to differentiate the zone where the bicycles are parking.

Ms. Myers added a condition that the fence between the covered bicycle parking area and the vehicular parking area be removed. Ms. McMahan added the condition that the glass on the back of the shelter be cleaned or textured. Mr. Redmon accepted the two additional conditions. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 with Mr. Redmon and Ms. McMahan voting.

Mr. Deignan said he appreciated the desire for the additional landscaping but told the Commission that they were effectively denying the project. He continued that the two spaces could not be removed. Ms. McMahan asked why it could not be done as conditioned. Mr. Deignan replied that he discussed the option with the departments and it was not an option. Mr. Redmon added that he hoped they could come up with a new plan that was appropriate for the building then. Ms. Goodwin added that it was a difficult item to review but needs to be done right.

MC-4873: 147R Prospect Street, by Marcia Kirssin o/b/o Mahmood Firouzbakht. Move and renovate existing house, and construct new two-family dwelling.

Ms. Paull showed slides, noted that the application was previously heard in December and the applicant had returned with amended plans. She gave an overview of the structure. She said that this review was binding as the historic structure was being moved and the new structure exceeded 750 square feet.

Ms. Heather Davies, architect with Mark Boyes-Watson's office, presented the application with updated plans, noting that the amended plans for the new structure reflected a gable roof with dormers to bring down the massing of the structure. She added that it would decrease square footage of the structure but relate better to the surrounding area. She pointed out that the muntin pattern was a simplified two over two pattern.

Mr. Mahmood Firouzbakht, applicant, said he worked to incorporate the neighbors's comments and Commission's comments. He said they looked to simplify the structure and reduce the massing. He said the reduction in square footage was hard but felt that the benefit of working with neighbors and having a better end project was important.

Ms. Goodwin said that the application was much improved.

Ms. Myers asked how many parking spaces would be located in the side yard and how many were being lost. Ms. Davies replied that the proposal included four (4) spaces with about twelve (12) feet of travel lane. Ms. Myers asked if Emergency Services vehicles could pass through the travel lane. Mr. Sean Hope, attorney for the applicant, stated that there was not parking in the private way and as such the parking would not be reduced. He added that it would be worked out to either confirm access by emergency services or sprinkle the building. Mr. Firouzbakht said he would do what was required. Ms. Jette added that typically emergency service vehicles parked on Prospect Street.

Ms. Jette asked what the construction timeline was. Mr. Firouzbakht stated that he hoped to start in spring and was estimating construction would take ten (10) to twelve (12) months to complete. He added that he hoped to get it done as quickly as possible, although he noted it was more complicated than a normal project.

Ms. Bosch asked what the highest point on the historic and proposed buildings were. Ms. Davies responded the historic structure was 28 feet and the new structure was 34 feet, eight inches. Ms. Bosch expressed her concern that it would shade her back yard. Ms. Davies added that the site restrictions and setback limitations drove much of the design choices and why they chose a three (3) story structure versus encroaching further into setbacks. Ms. Bosch asked why the bays were not extended the full height. Ms. Davies replied to reduce the massing. Ms. Bosch expressed her preference that the bays be extended.

Mr. Alan Zanslavsky, abutter at 149 Prospect St, asked what the setback was with the new building. Ms. Davies replied it would be eight (8) feet, two (2) inches from the property line to the structure. Ms. Jette asked if there was a shadow study. Ms. Davies showed her the shadow study. Ms. Bosch asked if it had changed from the previous proposal. Ms. Davies replied yes and noted that she did not have the previous plans with her.

Ms. Jette said she would like to work with the owner on fast growing screening trees, and was hoping for a cedar. She also wanted to confirm that if it died it would be replaced. Ms. Davies confirmed that they would be happy to work together. Mr. Firouzbakht echoed the sentiment.

Ms. Bosch asked if the dormer on the new building matched the dormers on the historic structure. Mr. Firouzbakht noted that they were replacing the dormers. Ms. Davies added that the dormers were

proposed to be slightly wider and the shed dormers on the rear elevation of the historic structure would be similar to the shed dormers on the new structure.

Mr. Hsiao applauded the efforts of the team in response to the comments of the Commission from the previous hearing. He noted that the roof pitches did not seem to match between the historic structure and the new structure. He added that the slight hip on the east and west elevations was not consistent with the historic structure and suggested that they tie the two together more clearly. He recommended they look for more clues in the historic structure, in regard to siding dimensions, dormer windows, and construction details. Mr. Hsiao also recommended squaring off of the bays.

Ms. Goodwin noted that the plans said Hardiplank versus clapboard, she said it has been supported on new projects in the past. Mr. Firouzbakht replied that they were only looking to use it on the new structure. Ms. Goodwin noted that as the project is a higher end project, she felt using wood was important. Mr. Firouzbakht replied that he would amend the plans to reflect that.

Mr. Hsiao showed his sketch, noting that he recommending the applicant amend the plans and utilize a full gable end instead of the stepped in gable edge as proposed. Mr. Redmon agreed.

Ms. Bosch said she hoped that the new house would look more similar to the historic house. Ms. Goodwin asked if she had seen the previous plans. Ms. Paull showed Ms. Bosch the plans. Ms. Bosch noted that she had seen the previous plans and still would prefer that the new house look more like a historic house than a new structure. Ms. Goodwin clarified that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation number 9 emphasized differentiation of the new from the historic rather than replicating the historic. Mr. Hsiao noted that it was still helpful to take cues from the historic structure. Ms. Pauli said it would be helpful if the windows were more vertically oriented and consistent with others on the structure. Ms. Davies said that it could be done.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to approve the application with the following recommendations:

1. the roof pitch on the proposed two family be amended to mimic the pitch of the roof on the historic structure;
2. the plan of the proposed two family simplified by squaring off all the bays and making them consistent with all bays on the structure;
3. the windows on the shed dormers of the proposed two family be vertically oriented rather than square;
4. the siding details on the proposed two family be carefully explored to better relate to the siding details on the historic structure;
5. staff to have final review and approval of plan details prior to submitting for permitting; and
6. staff to have final review and approval of the landscape plan.

Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0, with Mr. Redmon and Ms. Goodwin voting.

The Commission took a brief break from 8:08pm to 8:12pm.

MC-4887: 411 Broadway, by Geoffrey Peters. Remove chimney.

Ms. Paull showed slides, gave an overview of the house and application. She said that this review was non-binding.

Ms. Josy Raycroft, designer, noted that the owner was completing a major renovation of the second and third floors. The goals were to recapture the floor area and to remove the five (5) foot by eighteen (18) foot thermal bridge and fully insulate the interior of the house. She noted that the chimney had been assessed and was deemed to be in poor condition.

Ms. McMahon asked if the chimney could be preserved above the exterior with the chimney removed on the interior. Ms. Raycroft responded that she was concerned that would be a structural issue. Ms. McMahon said it was unfortunate to lose the chimney as it was part of a pair on that elevation.

Ms. Goodwin shared Ms. McMahon's sentiments and noted that the Commission always encouraged the preservation of the fabric and character of the building. She suggested Ms. Raycroft look into building a frame and using a veneer brick to mimic the chimney on the exterior.

Mr. Jeff Peters, an owner, said he had not been before the board before and was not aware that the chimney was crucial to the character.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to reject the application as submitted as the Commission did not support the removal of historic fabric or character defining features. He encouraged the owner to figure out how to maintain the chimney or rebuild above the roof line. Ms. Myers seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0, with Mr. Redmon and Ms. McMahon voting.

Minutes

There were no minutes to review during this hearing.

Mr. Hsiao made a motion to adjourn the hearing. Mr. Redmon seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull
Preservation Administrator

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

Justin Schreiber	Transportation Planner, City	344 Broadway
Marcia Kirssin	Owner	75 Myrtle St, #201, Somerville
Jeff Peters	Owner	411 Broadway
Ken Lynch	Abutter	3 West Place
Emily Talcott	Abutter	3 West Place
Josy Raycroft	Contractor/Designer	411 Broadway
Heather Davies	Architect	30 Bow Street, Somerville
Bill Deignan	Transportation Planner	344 Broadway
Mahmood Firouzbakht	Agent for 147R Prospect	9 Crescent Street
Noel Jette	Abutter	149 Prospect Street
Alina Bosch	Abutter	155 Prospect Street
Alan Zanslavsky	Abutter	149 Prospect Street

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