

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION
APPROVED AT THE MARCH 6, 2017 HEARING

Monday, November 14, 2016, 6:00 PM, Second Floor Meeting Room, City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, Cambridge

Commission Members present: Nancy Goodwin, *Chair*; Tony Hsiao, *Vice Chair*; Monika Pauli and Lestra Litchfield, *Member*; Margaret McMahon and Charles Redmon, *Alternates*

Commission Members absent: Sue-Ellen Myers, *Members*

Staff present: Samantha Paull Elliott

Members of the Public: See attached list.

Ms. Nancy Goodwin, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:03pm. She reviewed the agenda as well as meeting procedures. She designated that alternates Ms. Margaret McMahon and Ms. Nancy Goodwin would be voting.

MC-5076: 51 Trowbridge Street, Unit #3, by Michel Dahan. Construct addition and alter windows.

Ms. Samantha Paull Elliott, staff, showed slides, gave an overview of the structure and application.

Mr. Bhupesh Patel, the project architect, gave an overview of the proposal. He noted that the unit had an odd layout as it was originally an attic that was converted into a unit. He said an architect bought the unit in the 1980s and constructed large dormer additions to add additional living space to the unit so that it went from a studio into a two bedroom unit. Mr. Patel said that the owners were hoping to add additional space for storage and a home office so they could continue to live in the unit and expand their family. He continued, sharing that the project would also require a zoning variance as the existing structure was not within the existing setbacks. He said that zoning said that a rooftop addition could either meet the height of the existing ridge or 35 feet, to achieve a loft space. He also noted that they had met with neighbors who were opposed to other options, such as a rear addition or enclosing the existing open porch, beside the one they were proposing on the application. Mr. Patel stated that the final design included the addition of rafter tails and paneling to help the property relate to the existing structure's bay window and rafter tails. He closed stating that the application also included altering some window openings on the right (north) elevation.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commissioner, asked how many units were in the building. Mr. Patel responded three (3). Mr. Redmon asked how they would access this storage space. Mr. Patel replied via a ship ladder.

Ms. Lestra Litchfield, Commissioner, asked if the greenspace was shared. Mr. Patel replied that the first floor owned it.

Mr. Tony Hsiao, Commissioner, asked if there was a reason why the addition wasn't centered on the ridge. Mr. Patel responded that the location was limited by the existing supports in the unit. He clarified that to center the addition it would require additional walls and supports within the unit that would limit mobility.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the chimney height had to be raised to keep it above the roofline. Mr. Patel clarified that the proposed addition was below the main roofline and thus no alterations were required to the chimney. He added that they were hoping to repaint the chimney as part of the project.

Ms. Goodwin asked if the applicant was planning on replacing the windows. Mr. Patel noted that they were looking at replacing the metal windows with wood windows eventually.

Mr. Hsiao asked where the window they were proposing to alter was located. Mr. Patel pointed the window out on his plan boards and said that it was located in the bathroom.

Mr. Michel Dayan, an owner, shared that the back bedroom was a very small room that was primarily used as storage and a home office. He added that he and his wife hoped to stay in the area and were looking for ways to stay in their unit. Mr. Patel noted that the unit had very limited storage inside, it even lacked a pantry, so they were hoping to create a space that could be accessed daily and increase livability.

Ms. Litchfield asked how the neighbors felt about the design. Mr. Patel said that the proposal was something in the middle, something that met the needs of the neighbors and the needs of the owners. He said the neighbors were happy about it.

Ms. Goodwin said it reminded her of a pergola. Mr. Dahan said it had a similar feel to a widow's walk. Mr. Patel noted that the overall goal was to make it feel visually light. Ms. Monika Pauli, Commissioner, asked if the architect had considered making the windows all the same proportion. Mr. Patel responded that the window sizes were limited by the roof angle. Ms. Elliott added that the desire of the Commission was to have more vertically oriented windows than horizontally oriented windows. Mr. Patel added that he included wood panels to help it better relate to the existing structure.

Mr. Hsiao opined, the project proved a distinct challenge for the architect. He continued, it was clear that the problems and potential solutions had been well researched and options considered before proposing the idea presented to the Commission. Mr. Hsiao noted that it appeared though that it had been overthought - bordering on overwrought with a need for simplification and unification. He said that side elevations would appear lighter if the glass panels were brought closer to the roof and the wood panel designs removed. He acknowledged that the existing shed dormers impacted the character and expressed concern that the new dormers as proposed would appear as yet another addition on the roof versus a unified structure. Mr. Hsiao suggested that the architect look to the existing structure for clues and amend the plans to reflect a more simplified design that was lighter with more glass. Mr. Redmon concurred.

Mr. Patel asked if Mr. Hsiao's commentary would have the windows pulled down to the roof on the north and south elevations of the dormers. Mr. Hsiao replied yes, which would help to make it more compatible with existing additions on the structure. Mr. Hsiao continued that the highly decorative rafter tails were not compatible with the existing detail on the structure. He expressed concern that as proposed it would be a heavy addition to the structure. Mr. Redmon agreed and mentioned that the ends could be solid, without windows as well as removing the rafter tails. Mr. Patel said he understood but was concerned how it would tie in and he felt it would look industrial. He noted that they would have to do metal windows. Ms. Pauli asked if he could use an eight (8) inch base then use wood. Mr. Patel said he could use wood.

Ms. Elliott expressed concern with the addition of Craftsman details. Mr. Hsiao said it should use existing details and language.

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

1. simplification of the dormer element with the glass windows along the two sides of the addition extending down toward roof;
2. removing lower panel trim on the addition;
3. the ridge line extension of wall be simplified with a reduction in windows and trim detail; and,
4. a reduction or removal of rafter tails.

Ms. Litchfield seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0.

Mr. Redmon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hsiao seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Paull Elliott
Preservation Administrator

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

Bhupesh Patel	Architect	3 Bowdoin Street
Audrey Phillepot	Owner	51 Trowbridge Street
Michel Dahan	Owner	51 Trowbridge Street

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