

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, May 3, 2021, 6:00 PM, online Zoom meeting

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

Absent: Monika Pauli, *Member*

Staff present: Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator, Sara Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/MCmay2021>.

Due to statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response to COVID-19, this meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform. The meeting ID was **838 7717 4044**.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao called the meeting to order at 6:05pm and made introductions and explained the meeting procedures.

Case MC-6161: 8 Greenough Avenue, by Tomer and Orly Ullman. Construct shed dormer, replace front porch, alter fenestration, add window well, add basement entry on side elevation.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property.

Ms. Catherine Truman, architect, presented the proposal to construct a shed dormer to provide more headroom, and restore front porch to match as seen in photo and original drawings provided by CHC.

Commission Questions

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked about the front elevation, is it a window or door over the porch. Ms. Truman replied it's a window with final detailing to match historic photo.

Commission member Charles Redmon noted the doors on the two floors on the rear façade appear different sizes, is that intentional? Ms. Truman answered that they are using the existing door opening on the second floor.

No public questions or comments.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield recommended that the proposed dormer be pulled down just a little from the ridge line, noting that the Commission prefers this with shed dormers. Ms. Truman agreed.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal with the recommendation to lower the dormer on the east side. Commission alternate Margaret McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-6162: 1353 Cambridge Street, by Gill Aharon. Add dormer at front slope of roof, construct rear addition, replace all windows at 2nd and 3rd floor.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property.

Mr. Adam Glassman, the architect, described the proposal to construct a dormer replicating the adjacent existing dormer, and noted it will comply with the City's dormer guidelines. Mr. Glassman also explained that the existing chimney was removed inside the building rendering the remaining portion above the roof line unstable. He is proposing to rebuild a faux chimney with a wood frame and masonry exterior matching the existing. Mr. Glassman presented a proposal for expanding in the rear of the building using hardie board on the exterior while maintaining wood on the historic structure in front. The additional space will accommodate the applicant's growing family. The project requires zoning relief as well for the rear setback.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked how many square feet being added in the rear. Mr. Glassman replied 780 sf.

Ms. Litchfield asked what is the difference in height between the existing roof and proposed roof in the rear. Mr. Glassman answered 12 inches.

Mr. Hsiao asked if he is removing the chimney. Mr. Glassman answered yes but rebuild with masonry.

Mr. Redmon asked if he is keeping the gable overhang. Mr. Glassman replied yes.

Public Question and Comment

Mr. Seth Goldfine of 8 Oak Street stated that his property backs up the to the rear of this property and asked why two decks. Mr. Glassman replied that they are for the family's private use only.

Mary Jane Rupert asked why not build a real chimney. Mr. Glassman explained that it would be too heavy and there is no longer structural support in the building since the interior portion was removed.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon stated that the proposal was a skillfully done addition to a handsome building. Ms. Litchfield agreed, it looks great, a lot of thought has gone into matching the windows and dormer and chimney.

Ms. McMahan expressed concern that the other end of the building will look lopsided. Mr. Hsiao agreed but thinks the proposal is a sympathetic response and very respectful. Ms. Litchfield agreed and was glad Ms. McMahan pointed that out, perhaps another dormer in the future. Ms. McMahan noted that the building is very handsome.

Mr. Redmon motioned to approve the proposal as submitted. Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0.

Case MC-6154: 382-390 Harvard Street, by Plumosa, LLC. Complete renovation of property including new siding, trim, roof, decking, and railings; alter fenestration; construct window wells.

Mr. Nathan Wong, the applicant, introduced the project, noting he acquired it in 2013 and explained it is a complete interior gut renovation and proposes a light touch to the exterior.

Mr. Steve Hiserodt, the architect, explained the building is now 7 units and will be reduced to 6 units, with the goal to keep the current form, but replacing siding, trim, windows and doors, and a new entrance. Also proposed are three window wells for basement egress along the Harvard Street façade. Two courtyards are proposed for the rear, not visible from a public way. The three existing chimneys will be maintained above the roof line as wood frame structures with brick veneer. The goal is to match the existing exterior trim as much as possible using pvc or other material. The windows are not in good condition and will be replaced with more energy efficient wood windows. The existing square windows will be preserved. The siding will be replaced with wood or cedar. The brackets will be replicated or restored. There are several types of railings and would like to know what is most historically appropriate.

Mr. Hsiao asked about the proposed windows. Mr. Hiserodt replied a clad window but he can do all wood. Mr. Hsiao asked what is pvc being used for. Mr. Hiserodt replied the pvc would be used for eave soffits, window casing, and porch details. Mr. Hsiao asked about the roof. Mr. Hiserodt answered the roof will be replaced with a synthetic variant of asphalt shingles. Mr. Hsiao asked how many windows are reusable, what is the percentage of salvageable. Mr. Hiserodt replied he couldn't say, at least half were in bad shape. Mr. Hsiao asked if these windows are true divided lites, Mr. Hiserodt replied yes, there are replacement windows on the rear.

Ms. Litchfield noted that Marvin makes a very good window with simulated divided lites and it should replicate exact pattern.

Mr. Hsiao asked about landscaping. Mr. Hiserodt said they have not looked at it yet, and noted the front steps are in good shape.

Mr. Redmon asked if the steps are concrete. Mr. Hiserodt replied yes, with metal rail.

Ms. Crosbie asked if they plan to screen the window wells. Mr. Hiserodt replied yes, they would like to shield the window wells.

Mr. Hsiao asked if the porch supports will be maintained. Mr. Hiserodt replied yes, if in good shape. Ms. Litchfield asked what material would be used if replacing supports. Mr. Hiserodt said it would be wood, but at this point not sure what specific type of wood to use.

Ms. Crosbie asked if the exterior lights on the Remington Street façade will be retained. Mr. Hiserodt said he will have to look into it.

Public Questions

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the windows and casings. Mr. Hiserodt explained that there will be new window casings. Ms. Meyer asked if the existing windows have the rope pulley system. Mr. Hiserodt replied yes. Ms. Meyer questioned the placement of a bedroom between two courtyards. Mr. Hiserodt explained the courtyards are for bringing in more light, not socializing.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer commented that the building is such a visual landmark and is concerned about the proposed use of plastic materials, they don't look like wood and can have a sheen.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon noted what an incredible undertaking, but why not wood instead of the proposed vinyl extrusions. Mr. Hiserodt explained that it is a price issue and also noted that some things cannot be done in pvc so wood would be used, there would be a mixture. Mr. Redmon asked if pvc would be used for the windows. Mr. Hiserodt answered that the flat work would be pvc. Mr. Redmon asked about the cornerboards. Mr. Hiserodt replied pvc. Mr. Redmon noted that the Commission should see mock-ups of pvc and wood. Mr. Hiserodt agreed.

Ms. Litchfield noted that this building is a National Register property which is a rare situation for the Commission, there has been foresight in this case making the review binding. She appreciated the undertaking and is agreeable to the simulated divided lites, but wood has to be replaced with wood.

Mr. Wong stated they appreciate the significance of the building, but wood tends to deteriorate faster and is concerned it won't stand up to wear and tear of rentals.

Mr. Redmon asked what would the NPS say about materials. Ms. Crosbie answered it's to match in kind, including materials.

Ms. Litchfield explained that she can tell the difference between wood and synthetic. Mr. Wong asked where should they replace with wood. Ms. Litchfield answered everywhere, this is a National Register building and it would be sad to see pvc being used here. Mr. Wong stated that they their work is sympathetic and have won preservation awards.

Ms. Litchfield stated that she is open to allowing pvc above the second floor.

Mr. Redmon asked if they have used pvc on a project in the last 5 years or more. Mr. Hiserodt mentioned 77 Inman Street from 2019. Mr. Redmon replied it needs to be older.

Mr. Hiserodt stated that allowing pvc on the third floor could alleviate some of the expense.

Mr. Hsiao asked about 297 Harvard Street as a renovation example. Ms. Litchfield said it used to be the Castle School. Mr. Hsiao said that project had a lot of complexity. Mr. Hiserodt answered that he did not work on it but can speak with the builder.

Mr. Hsiao stated they know the architecture firm's reputation and appreciate the wood cladding and Marvin windows, but Ms. Litchfield's comments should be considered. Ms. Litchfield asked the Commission for their thoughts on allowing pvc above the second floor but not the crown molding under eaves. Mr. Hsiao noted that at that point, the whole building should be wood. Mr. Redmon agreed.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to accept the proposal with the following conditions:

All trim is to be wood and replicated in same style and detailing.

The applicant is to consult with the Commission on the treatment of the balcony railings.

The applicant is to submit a landscape plan for the whole site.

The exterior light fixtures on the Remington Street façade be preserved if possible.

Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passes 4-0.

Case MC-6112: 12 Fayette Street (Continued), by 12 Fayette Street Ventures LLC. Construct new building in rear of lot, alter rear portion of existing structure, reconfigure windows, remove chimney.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property.

Mr. Sean Hope, one of the applicants, thanked the Architects Committee for their direction and hopes that people will look at the subtle moves in total, a two-story structure with third floor pop-up, the third floor has been reduced 30%, 850 gsf to 460 gsf. Mr. Hope also noted that they are proposing to plant 10 new trees and they have submitted a letter from a consultant in response to concerns regarding drainage on the site.

Ms. Alison Hammer, the architect, presented the revised design, simplified massing, height of 33'-6", she showed elevations and massing studies.

Mr. Redmon asked the applicant to read the letter from the consultant. Mr. Collins, one of the applicants, complied.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked about the third floor. Ms. Hammer replied the area in front of the railing is not useable. Mr. Hsiao asked if the windows have been reduced. Ms. Hammer answered yes, and they are close to a final arrangement. Mr. Hsiao asked about materials. Ms. Hammer responded brick foundation, fiber cement siding, windows are wood clad and set into the building, the penthouse will be a standing seam material.

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked how tall is the ceiling on the third floor. Ms. Hammer replied 8 feet.

Mr. Allen Speight of 33 Antrim Street asked for total square footage. Ms. Hammer answered 2,500 sf plus 870 sf in the basement. Ms. Hammer said they are still working with the passive consultant on the thickness of walls and insulation. Mr. Speight asked what is the reduction in square feet. Ms. Hammer answered 400 to 450 sf.

Mr. Hugh Russell of 1 Corliss Place asked for clarification of letter from civil consultant. Mr. Collins explained that the underground tank is perforated for infiltration so it stores up to a certain amount, and the excess goes to a City pipe. Mr. Russell asked about the location of the tank. Mr. Collins said they haven't decided yet. Mr. Russell expressed concern over potential impact to tree roots.

Mr. John Pitkin of 18 Fayette Street asked to have the list of attendees read out.

Ms. Heidi Samojluk asked how does the building fit in with the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Hammer replied that it has elements of vernacular design with its own stylistic effect, the materials are lap siding and standing seam materials with no cornerboards giving it a unique character that is still in conversation with the existing building. Ms. Samojluk asked why 4.5 bathrooms in one home. Ms. Hammer replied there's one on each floor and one extra, which is typical for a house this size.

Public Comments

Sara Mae Berman of 23 Fayette Street asked which trees will remain and do you feel it is appropriate to fill in every back yard in the neighborhood. Ms. Hammer responded that all the trees will be retained except for the dead one in front. Mr. Collins stated that he spoke with Mr. Gorman, an adjacent neighbor, and will install a smaller tree in front and get his input. Ten additional trees will be added. Regarding infill, Mr. Hsiao stated that the Commission's review is based on what's presented, and each case is reviewed individually. Mr. Redmon encouraged neighbors to address zoning. Ms. Litchfield noted that the Commission works within what exists in zoning. Mr. Hsiao also noted that the Commission's purview is the exterior only.

Philip MacArthur of 45 Antrim Street asked how do you define excessive infill? He also referred to the section in the infill guidelines regarding public support and asked where is the support? Ms. Litchfield explained it's a process, this is the third hearing, there were some neighbors who supported it, this is less excessive, we understand your frustration.

Ms. Amy Meltzer of 45 Antrim Street stated the infill guidelines clearly talk about public support.

Mr. Allen Speight of 33 Antrim Street expressed gratitude for the Commission's efforts but said the neighborhood is under stress.

Mr. John Pitkin stated that zoning is a problem. He encouraged the Commission to require underground radar be used to determine drainage conditions.

Ms. Regina Barzilay of 39 Antrim Street expressed concern over the appropriateness of the proposed building, that it is so ill fitting that it's puzzling.

Mr. Tony Hung of 43 Antrim Street stated he is opposed for the same reasons as his neighbors, that it looks out of character and urged the Commission to consider public opinion.

Ms. Gao Wen Shao of 9 Fayette Street appreciates the efforts made by the Commission and finally sees some significant change to the design, but it's still massive. She explained that at the last meeting the Commission mentioned 378 Broadway as an example, Ms. Shao stated that the second building is a little more modern, only 2 stories and smaller, and there are garages around it, the people on Antrim will still be looking at this place.

Mr. Hugh Russell of One Corliss Place expressed appreciation for the refinement of the design and arrangement of windows and asked if they would consider copper around the windows. He expressed concern about subsurface water, there's an impervious clay layer that will force water to go sideways instead of down, and that causes his basement to flood.

Ms. Heidi Somajluk stated that she watched the recording of the Architects Committee Meeting and understood the feedback was to come back with a two-story building, but you have made no effort. A two-story building would go better and work with the existing houses, it's only a small reduction.

Mary Jane Rupert of 36 Antrim Street expressed disappointment in the proposed design.

Ms. Berman asked how long will the construction last. Mr. Collins responded 12 to 14 months. Ms. Berman asked about hours of work. Mr. Collins noted the City regulations. Ms. Berman asked about parking. Mr. Collins said they will be able to park onsite.

Mr. MacArthur expressed surprise that the applicants did not make an attempt to design a carriage house type building as suggested by the Commission.

Ms. Shao spoke about the flood risk and that a large dry well could impact tree roots, this is a big issue. She mentioned there's a serious rodent infestation and neighbors have brought in exterminators. Mr. Collins went over city requirements regarding pest control.

Ms. Deborah Allen of 83 Inman Street asked about making the addition contiguous to the existing building. Mr. Collins answered that zoning does not permit that, and Mr. Hope stated that they can't get the program they want with an attached building,

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao stated that the Commission is aware of how difficult this is, there are many competing forces at play, and the Commission takes all feedback seriously. Mr. Hsiao said the scaling back is an improvement, have you considered flipping the bath and bedroom and pushing the penthouse further from the back? This would further minimize impact. A green roof around the perimeter, a green edge, would help. The regularization of the windows is very helpful. The reduction of windows helps to calm the façade and make it appear as more of a background. The earlier designs were more frenetic. And the idea of making the house passive is appropriate. But there is also a need to complement the existing house, and the service area needs more attention. There is strong opinion by the abutters to mitigate runoff and it warrants further attention. If you could mitigate this to their benefit that would be good. And work with your landscape architect to further this goal. The third floor penthouse is an improvement. In response, Ms. Hammer stated that they did look at other orientations and this one minimized the street view of the penthouse which is why the smaller size is on the street side. Regarding runoff, all the downspouts will connect to underground cistern and be appropriately stored and recharged.

Mr. Redmon agreed with the point made by Mr. Hsiao regarding orientation on third floor. That would reduce impact for neighbors, pull back as a flat surface parallel to sliding doors to deck you could project further back. The front would be less of a burden on the neighbors. Mr. Hsiao said yes, and flip the layout 180 degrees and take the edge away. Realign with no bumps. There would be a trade off and push it more to the front and lessen the impact on the rear neighbors with no deck. The swiss consulate used a green roof and they capture rainwater. Surface drainage and massing are all intertwined. Ms. Hammer replied they are looking further into ecological design.

Ms. Litchfield agreed with Mr. Hsiao's suggestion regarding flipping the layout in the penthouse. The massing and height of the building still seems excessive to the neighbors and it's something that needs to be considered.

Mr. Redmon noted reducing the deck to just off the living/dining area, reduce by two thirds, away from kitchen area where you don't really need it. And it would provide more pervious

material. Ms. Litchfield agreed, and it would break up the massing. Mr. Redmon noted the deck is quite substantial. Mr. Hsiao agreed and looked at the rendering and also thinks rear deck should be reduced by a third which will add to greenscape and reduce the hardscape and soften the rear area. Consider scaling back the deck and it would be a plus for abutting neighbors. Mr. Redmon asked the deck is on the east? It's southeast. Mr. Redmon suggested using a lattice with vines growing on it and cover up that wall and it would change the character of the building. Ms. McMahon stated that she thought the proposal was excessive infill and the applicant needs to calm it down.

Mr. Redmon stated window configuration is simpler than before, anything you can do to calm the appearance of the building will help. Mr. Hsiao concurred that the vertical green garden structure on the cladding to mitigate impact to the neighbors. This could make the house of the garden, softening the rear façade with vertical plantscape on the side of the building.

Mr. Redmon noted we don't see the trees already on the site, there's quite a bit of landscape already, the trees can provide screening. Ms. Litchfield said she agreed with Mr. Hsiao to hold the wall where the stairs come up and with flipping the layout on the third floor and reducing the decking – these things would go a long way to making it better.

Mr. Hope asked for guidance regarding flipping the layout. They have made a lot of effort and would like to keep square footage while still flipping the layout as suggested. Mr. Redmon and Ms. Litchfield said yes, flip it and pull it forward to align with the wall and put bathroom on either side of stair, you still have room for mechanical. Mr. Hsiao said we want to see mitigation for the neighbors in rear and are willing to trade off with the front of the house, and we recognize that you have reduced the programming on this floor. We can see that if you pull the penthouse away from all the edges, it has a positive impact. It looks more like a 2-story house with a setback penthouse at the top. Hold the line further at the back, just push everything and make it contiguous, no bumpouts and reduce the deck. And consider a green edge to create a more landscape driven approach to the design to soften the exterior and mitigate neighbor concerns and runoff.

Mr. Hope asked if these adjustments could be handled by staff. Mr. Hsiao said Architects Committee, we know zoning allows more square footage than you are proposing. We have competing interests.

Mr. Hsiao appreciates the added trees.

Ms. Crosbie asked if they agree to an Architects Committee meeting. Mr. Hsiao replied yes.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the proposal as submitted with modifications discussed for the third floor and that going forward carefully and openly discuss with neighbors regarding the groundwater/drainage impacts on adjacent properties.

Ms. Crosbie asked to include the Architects Committee meeting. Mr. Redmon complied.

Ms. Litchfield seconded, the motion passed, 4-0. Mr. Hsiao asked everyone attending and thanked them for their comments.

Mr. Redmon motioned to accept the minutes, Ms. Litchfield seconded, and the motion passed, 4-0.

Minutes for the April 5, 2021, and April 20, 2021 Architects Committee meetings were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on May 3, 2021

Panelists:

Alison Hammer, architect	ahammer@hammerdesign.com
Sean Hope, applicant	sean@hremassdevelopment.com
Scott Zink, applicant	scott@zredevelopment.com
Andrew Collins, applicant	
Catherine Truman, architect	
Orly Ullman, applicant	8 Greenough Avenue
Steven Hiserodt, architect	
Nathan Wong, applicant	382-390 Harvard Street

Attendees:

John Gorman	14 Fayette Street
Sonia Sake	32 Carleton Road
Gao-wen Shao	9 Fayette Street
Hallie Speight	33 Antrim Street
Allen Speight	33 Antrim Street
Hugh Russell	1 Corliss Place
Helen Snively	1 Fayette Park
Katherine Ellin	2 Corliss Place
Amy Meltzer	45 Antrim Street
Philip MacArthur	45 Antrim Street
Heidi Samojluk	33 Antrim Street
John Pitkin	18 Fayette Street
Regina Barzilay	39 Antrim Street
Phyllis Bretholtz	65 Antrim Street
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Sara Mae Berman	23 Fayette Street
Mary Jane Rupert	36 Antrim Street
Deborah Allen	83 Inman Street
Mary Kennedy	16 Fayette Street
Patsy Baudoin	26R Antrim Street