

## **MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT ARCHITECTS COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, May 19, 2021, 8:30 AM, online Zoom meeting

Commission Members present: Tony Hsiao, *Chair*, Lestra Litchfield, *Vice Chair*, Charles Redmon, Monika Pauli, *Members*

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

Members of the Public: See attached list

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Meeting held via online zoom webinar, <https://tinyurl.com/4ap6z5hs>.

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 **841 1201 4083**.

Commission Chair Tony Hsiao called the meeting to order at 8:45am and made introductions and explained the meeting procedures. The meeting was recorded.

**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.

Architect Alison Hammer presented the three recommendations by the Commission for further refinement of the design of the new structure.

1. Reduce first floor deck,
2. Flip the layout on the third floor,
3. Provide greenery/plantings at rear of house.

Ms. Hammer discussed the third floor and compared previous schemes, noting they straightened out a wall, reversed the bedroom and bathroom layout, and pulled the back of the penthouse further from the edge of the building.

Ms. Hammer presented their exploration of a green wall. A trellis on the roof was considered not a best practice because vines could potentially infiltrate and damage the structure. A trellis off the building disrupts the passive house structure, so they looked at the back deck as a trellis itself. Ms. Hammer also presented a staggered back wall on the penthouse. And she showed the reduced back deck.

Mr. Hsiao asked how much is the wall stepping back. Ms. Hammer replied 2 and a half feet at each stagger/step. Ms. Hammer explained that this accommodates door placement and bathroom layout, and gets rid of dead space. Mr. Hsiao asked what is the change in sf. Ms. Hammer answered that it's 40 sf bigger, 5 to 10% bigger, but it could be tighter, but thought this is simpler for construction. Mr. Hsiao asked if there's a deck on the front. Ms. Hammer

answered no, but they are looking at solar or energy efficient features for the space, it won't be accessible. Mr. Hsiao asked about the parapet height. Ms. Hammer answered 20 inches.

Mr. Charles Redmon, Commission member, thanked the applicants for their effort, that they have addressed a lot of the issues about the third floor.

Ms. Monika Pauli, Commission member, asked about the thickness of the walls and the material. Ms. Hammer replied that the thickness is a result of the passive house approach which requires continuous exterior insulation, so 13 or 12- inch walls. The material will be standing seam, matte finish. Ms. Pauli asked about the parapet. Ms. Hammer answered that it will be a consistent height, possibly have solar panels, no decking or railings.

Ms. Crosbie summarized a letter from abutters. Ms. Hammer said they are continuing to address water storage and permeability. Mr. Andy Collins, one of the applicants, stated they have a groundwater hydrogeologist who will be issuing a report. And they will remove invasive plant material.

### Public Questions

Mr. Hugh Russell of Corliss Place said that the proposal looks smaller but he prefers the first scheme which was simpler. He suggested changing the closet from a strip to a 6' square walk-in closet which would allow a window, and noted that the penthouse is closer to his home.

Mr. Allen Speight echoed Mr. Russell's suggestions regarding the closet. He also noted the increase in square footage, and the neighbors want a reduction.

Ms. Heidi Samojluk stated she would like to see a building that is historical, she would like to look at something that looks like the existing house. This design is massive and has no visual appeal.

Ms. Hallie Speight echoed bitter disappointment over the design, she knows they have worked hard on the design but they have now added to the third floor, and expressed disappointment in Ms. Crosbie for not mentioning the letter's reiteration of the desire for a 2-story building. This design is ugly, boxy, and begs the Commission to consider the current increase of the size of the third floor.

Mr. Hsiao thanked the neighbors for their comments.

### Commission Comments

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield stated she appreciates the abutter's comments, she liked the windows in the front, they break up the third floor wall, the size of the rear deck is better, and that we're beyond getting rid of the third floor.

Mr. Redmon suggested putting a trellis over the rear deck, like a pergola, to break up the massing, possibly cantilevered. Ms. Litchfield noted that with posts, plants could grow up them. Ms. Hammer replied they could do something as suggested.

Mr. Hsiao noted that the window in front does help with the bathroom/closet, and suggested adjusting the bedroom pushing on the right side, the previous scheme was narrower, look at

the side with the bathroom, get closer to what you originally designed, the staggering is understandable with the issues with the layout.

Mr. Hsiao asked how wide is the bedroom. Ms. Hammer replied 12 feet. Mr. Hsiao stated that it is a legitimate concern about the added square footage, how you do this is up to you, straight or staggered, focus on the back side, does the back deck have to extend as much? Every inch counts, pull back 3 feet from the rear, create a square, the trellis in the back is very helpful. Check the views from eye level.

Mr. Redmon stated the staggered scheme really helps. Mr. Hsiao agreed, but pull in the bedroom. Regarding the exterior color, the color palette should make both buildings look like a family, they should be complementary colors. The front is traditional, and you are doing a contemporary mansard passive house, the passive aspect is an important way to design projects.

Mr. Redmon recommended putting a trellis in the middle step to break up the mass.

Ms. Litchfield asked about fences. Ms. Hammer replied there will be fences and they will be talking with neighbors about them. Ms. Litchfield noted that fence shouldn't be too high in order to preserve views.

Ms. Pauli stated they need to shrink the top, she agreed with the trellis idea, and stated there are details missing, there's no breakdown like the symmetry of the windows in the back, the trellis will add details to soften the box, the proportions are better, even the front entrance could use a trellis.

Mr. Hsiao noted that as you detail the façade, there are games you can play with the cladding that allows more detail, the window surrounds, in the rear elevation. The trellis on the third floor and first floor imply symmetry.

Mr. Hsiao and Mr. Redmon suggested looking at the cornice of the existing house and respond to it on the new house, you're not copying it, it needs to be distinct. It comes down to window details, siding, and the penthouse, reveal joints, there's a lot of nuance - right now it's an unadorned box.

Mr. Redmon asked about the window details. Ms. Hammer responded that they are set into the structure because of the depth of the insulation - jamb extension, copper, wood tones, play with texture. Mr. Redmon asked about the glass. Ms. Hammer answered that the glass will align with the framing of the house, 4 to 6 inches, European tilt turn, energy efficient, needs to be approved for passive house.

Mr. Hsiao stated the trim surrounding the window should be high quality materials. Ms. Hammer noted that it's difficult to render the materiality that they are going for. Mr. Hsiao asked if the cladding in the image of the window is what they are planning to use. Ms. Hammer answered possibly, but not exactly the same. Mr. Hsiao advised that the shadow line is important, this detailing helps give it a more residential quality. Ms. Hammer thanked the Commission for all the suggestions.

Mr. Hsiao called for another Architects Committee meeting the first half of June, on a Wednesday morning. The meeting ended at 9:50 am.

**Members of the Public Present on May 19, 2021**

## Panelists:

Alison Hammer, architect

Sean Hope

Scott Zink

Andrew Collins

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## Attendees:

John Gorman

Sonia Sake

Hallie Speight

Allen Speight

Hugh Russell

Helen Snively

Katherine Ellin

Amy Meltzer

Heidi Samojluk

Regina Barzilay

14 Fayette Street

32 Carleton Road

33 Antrim Street

33 Antrim Street

1 Corliss Place

1 Fayette Park

2 Corliss Place

45 Antrim Street

33 Antrim Street

39 Antrim Street