

MINUTES OF THE MID CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION

Monday, May 9, 2022, 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/MCmay2022>

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 **818 6827 9309**.

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

Case MC-6443: 33 West Street, by Yan Mou. Install vinyl siding and pvc trim.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and the history of the house as the residence of Clifton Merriman, decorated WWI veteran and assistant superintendent of the city's main post office. She also noted the review is non binding.

Ms. Yan Mou, the applicant, clarified work being done on the exterior that was not reviewed, explaining that the brick chimney was in such disrepair that pieces were falling out. Ms. Mou then described the proposal to install vinyl siding with 6-inch pvc corner boards and she is not sure at the moment if they will keep the shutters.

Commission Questions

Vice Chair Lestra Litchfield asked about the condition of the clapboards, noting that in the pictures of the house they don't look bad. Ms. Mou responded that the siding does need repair. Ms. Litchfield asked if they considered patching. Ms. Mou answered yes but it is too expensive. Ms. Litchfield asked if the quote she received was for all the clapboard or just fix and repair what's needed. Ms. Mou replied the quote was just for repair and it was \$30,000.

Public Questions – none

Public Comments - none

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield commented that it's such a great little house in a great area, it's a cute cottage with an amazing history. She also noted that someone in 1988 thought it special enough to restore the clapboards and was careful to outline the windows that were removed. Ms.

Litchfield explained that vinyl looks nothing like wood and recommended patching the siding and repainting. She also noted the value of the home could decrease with the loss of the wood siding. She encouraged Ms. Mou to keep the wood siding and reiterated that it's not in bad condition. Ms. Mou responded that it has been a struggle to decide what to do, they have to look at the budget, that there were unanticipated costs such as leveling the walls that were no longer straight. Ms. Litchfield noted that it is an investment.

Ms. Mou asked for input on alterations to the front entry but was informed that it was not included in the scope of work submitted for review.

Commissioner Charles Redmon stated that he concurred with Ms. Litchfield's comments. Commissioner Margarat McMahon agreed as did Mr. Hsiao.

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

Case MC-6444: 89 Antrim Street, by Jonathan B. Houze & Julie A. Lim. Alter fenestration and install window wells.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and noted that the review is non binding.

Ms. Danielle Pactovis, architect for the owner, described the project involving the renovation of the basement into livable space with a bedroom that requires an egress. Ms. Pactovis presented a 3-d model showing the proposed new windows and window well and noted that there will be landscaping to screen the well.

Commission Questions - none

Public Questions

Ms. Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the proposed windows and if there would be mullions. Ms. Pactovis answered that the new windows will be operable and will have mullions similar to the other windows on the house. Ms. Meyer asked if they considered possible leaks because of the depth of the well. Ms. Pactovis replied they don't foresee any issues with water.

Public Comment

Ms. Meyer commented that she hopes the landscaping is significant enough to screen such a large new window well.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon and Ms. Litchfield stated they had no issues with the project. Mr. Hsiao agreed noting that it is very straightforward.

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

Case MC-6445: 343 Harvard Street, by Nathaniel Lin. Replace slate roof with asphalt shingles.

Ms. Crosbie showed slides of the property, noting that the building is listed in the Harvard Street National Register District, and the review is therefore binding.

Ms. Litchfield stated that she is an abutter to the applicant and recused herself from the review.

Mr. Christopher Sennott, the owner's representative, described the asphalt product made by Certainteed that he is proposing to use as replacement for the slate shingles. He stated that slate shingles had fallen off and there is possibly wood rot around the chimney. He also stated that the cost of using slate is huge.

Commission Questions

Mr. Hsiao asked about the dimensions of the proposed shingle and its longevity. Mr. Sennott replied that it's 8 to 8 ½ inch exposure and it's a 50-year roof. Mr. Hsiao asked how many slate shingles would need to be replaced. Mr. Sennott answered 60 to 70%.

Mr. Redmon asked if the plan is to just replace one-half of the roof. Mr. Sennott answered yes. Mr. Redmon then asked if there would be a seam down the middle. Mr. Sennott confirmed that there would be a seam, and that they want to talk to the adjacent owner about unifying the shingles.

Public Questions

Ms. Litchfield of 25 Dana Street stated that she lives behind the house and knows the owner of 341 Harvard Street very well. She noted that she has had conversations with the owner and that he has no intention of replacing the shingles. He has just restored the whole building and had no water leaks. Ms. Litchfield asked if they considered re-using some of the slate shingles after making repairs? Mr. Sennott replied that the owner recently purchased the property, and the roof has not been repaired in a long time, and he said that removing the slate will cause more damage. Ms. Litchfield asked again if they considered looking at re-using the slate. Mr. Sennott replied that from past experience they would lose about 30% of the removed slate.

Ms. Meyer asked if the applicant looked at other products. Mr. Sennott replied that this product is what the owner likes, and that they are all pretty similar.

Public Comments

Ms. Litchfield remarked that this is a special property within the National Register District and feels very strongly about National Register structures. She also commented that if the whole roof had to be replaced, then it merits some consideration, but other avenues must be explored. She also stated that the owner of 341 Harvard Street has been misrepresented.

Ms. Meyer stated that the building she lives in has a slate roof and that they patch it periodically. They don't have the money to do it all at once and they have a box of slate on hand for patching projects. She also commented that the back of the roof is asphalt. She agreed with Ms. Litchfield and noted that there was a similar project on Brattle Street that the applicant could look at.

Commission Comments

Mr. Hsiao commented that the slate roof is one of the defining characteristics of the building and is very visible. He also agreed with Mr. Redmon's comment concerning covering half the roof in a different material, noting that it will really stand out, and the proposed replacement is a thinner product and the change in material will make it stand out. Mr. Redmon concurred. Ms. McMahon also agreed stating that the historic slate shingles should remain.

Mr. Redmon motioned to reject the proposal as submitted. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed, 3-0.

Ms. Sarah Burks, CHC Preservation Planner interjected that the Commission must also consider if this is a hardship and referred to a CHC case on Brattle Street where the owner was asked to return with quotes.

Mr. Redmon amended his motion to have the applicant return with cost estimates on repairs and replacements. Ms. McMahon seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

Case MC-6441: 18 Myrtle Avenue, by Jeremy Flower. Install fiber cement siding, pvc trim, and alter front porch.

(Ms. Litchfield returned to the Commission.)

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and noted the review is non binding.

Mr. Jeremy Flower, the owner, described the project, explaining that there are currently two types of vinyl siding on the house, that there is wood underneath but the contractor said it can't be restored and it would be too expensive to install new cedar clapboards. He also mentioned that the gutters have failed, there is rotted trim, and the stairs have rotted. He would like to use Hardie Plank siding with 4-inch reveal, smooth finish. He also wants to install open style wood railing and replace the window trim. He would also like to widen the stair entry.

Commission Questions - none

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked if they could salvage the clapboard to install on the front elevation. Mr. Flower responded that he was told that it was too far gone but he also said that they have not removed all of the vinyl siding, but there has been a lot of water penetration.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer commented that the proportions of the windows are charming and that the proposed new trim is too gentrified and modern. The adjacent house shows more appropriately proportional frames.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon commented that the proposal was straightforward and that he prefers that Hardie Plank not be used but understands the cost of using cedar and there's not enough to salvage.

Ms. Litchfield agreed with Ms. Meyer's comment about using cedar on the front elevation only. She asked if the dormers are sided with cedar. Mr. Flower answered yes. Ms. Litchfield said she understands the expense of using cedar, but there's really no substitute, and that Hardie Plank has that new construction look, it just won't look as historic, would still prefer the cedar siding.

Mr. Hsiao commented that the proposal includes a lot of positive moves including the new stairs and railing, they are definitely improvements, but he also stated he concurs with the other Commission members that perhaps the front could have cedar siding as it's the most

public side of the house, this would be a favorable compromise. This is non binding review, but the Commission is bound by their directive.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to reject the proposal as submitted based on the use of fiber cement siding that is incongruous to the historic character of the house but noted that the proposal in general looks great. Mr. Redmon seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Case MC-6436: 19 Leonard Avenue, by 19 Leonard Avenue LLC. 1-story rear addition with deck, exterior egress stairs; replace and add new decks; alter fenestration, doors, and front porch.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and mentioned the review is non binding and requires a Special Permit.

Ms. Sisia Daglian, architect, went over the proposal including a gut interior renovation explaining the house is in poor condition and not up to code. They are proposing a second entrance at the front, updating the railings, altering windows, adding a bulkhead with screening in front. The basement is being lowered, and window wells to be installed in the rear. Ms. Daglian went over the rear alterations, new windows on the side to optimize the southern exposure. The existing cedar shingle siding and trim to remain.

Commission Questions

Ms. Litchfield asked about the window trim, that Ms. Daglian said they would remain, but the drawings show pvc trim. Ms. Daglian answered that the *new* windows will have pvc trim. Ms. Litchfield asked if there are muntins. Ms. Daglian replied they are not using muntins. Ms. Litchfield noted they prefer the original style. Ms. Litchfield asked about the windows on the first floor, they will be taller? Ms. Daglian replied yes, by 6 inches, that there are currently 9-foot ceilings and want to add as much light as possible, it should work proportionally. Ms. Litchfield asked about relationship of windows to deck. Ms. Daglian clarified the layout. Ms. Litchfield asked about the stairs, are they using composite for the back only or the front as well? Ms. Daglian replied that the front stairs are currently concrete, and they want to replace with composite.

Mr. Redmon asked about rear façade with stairs coming down from deck with what looks like a screen. Ms. Daglian explained that the intermediate landing has a screen aligned with the window for privacy for the bedroom and privacy for the neighbors as well, 5.5 feet tall from the landing.

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked if the new exterior doors will be painted fiberglass. Ms. Daglian answered yes. Ms. Meyer asked if they are removing the chimneys. Ms. Daglian confirmed they are being removed.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer stated that this is a fascinating house with a twin next door, she thinks it deserves better than composite and fiberglass. Regarding the windows, she noted there are a lot of windows and curious about their placement.

Commission Comments

Ms. Litchfield asked if they ever considered using wood on the front first floor porch, the proposed composite decking just looks like plastic and wondered if wood was ever a consideration. Ms. Daglian said she understood the concern, it is the most visible feature. And Ms. Litchfield mentioned the doors as another key feature and if other options were considered. Ms. Daglian replied they can look at other options, they also don't want them to look cheap. They have been looking at Pella windows. Ms. Litchfield noted that the entryway is an important statement.

Ms. Litchfield asked about the proposed raising of the first-floor windows and how they affect the impact of the view from the street as compared with its adjacent twin house. Ms. Daglian clarified that they are just raising the windows on the first floor and could look at leaving the windows on the front as is and understands the impact of the view from the street. Ms. Litchfield also encouraged the use of divided lites, the one over one windows just look like a blank stare.

Mr. Hsiao thanked the applicant for a thorough presentation.

Ms. Litchfield motioned to accept the proposal as presented with the following recommendations,

- That the vinyl windows are 2/1, simulated divided lights
- The front entrance doors be wood
- The entry flooring on the first floor also be wood
- Rethink the raising of the windows since you are already adding more windows.

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

Case MC-6439: 78 Ellery Street, by Jenna Larson and Jason Smigiel. Alter roof and fenestration.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property and showed the property set back from the road and minimally visible from a public way, the most visible features being the gable roof with Palladian window. She also noted the review is non binding.

Ms. Kelly Boucher, architect, presented the renovation project to increase the interior space by raising the roof, changing the gable and Palladian window. The raised roof will align with the main house, and the doors and windows on the front will be altered as well. Ms. Boucher also explained that the change in windows will require a special permit because they are in a setback. The total additional gsf is 284 sf and it still meets FAR.

Commission Questions - none

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked about what was old and new about the building. Ms. Crosbie noted some changes since the 1938 conversion of the stable into apartments. The full extent of alterations since then is not clear from records.

Public Comments

Ms. Meyer expressed concern that lining up the roofline will make it look massive, that she prefers the way the roofline is stepped. Ms. Boucher pointed out that facades aren't aligned, one juts out in front, and you'll never see the whole façade at once given how it's set back from the street behind another building.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon commented that the proposal looks nice and carefully developed.

Ms. Litchfield agreed.

Ms. McMahon noted it was delightful. Ms. Boucher thanked them and said they are trying to preserve the essence of the building.

Mr. Hsiao noted that there is full support from the Commission.

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

Case MC-6447: 123 Hancock Street, by MSW Hancock LLC. Remove rear and side additions and extend existing dormer. Construct 1 new detached dwelling unit.

Ms. Crosbie presented slides of the property, summarized the previous project and review, and noted the review is binding.

Heather Souza, architect, introduced the project and Sam Wolf, the applicant, explained that they did not get zoning relief for the rear setback or parking. He is now proposing a project that does not require any relief. He also stated that the proposed design keeps the previous recommendations by the Commission but is now only one additional unit, he hopes the proposal will feel familiar and acceptable.

Ms. Souza presented the project, explaining that they are maintaining the same relationship between the new building and the existing house. She went over the planting plan with one tree to be removed, and shadow studies. She also presented floor plans that also show the previously proposed footprint. She went over the design of the rear third floor and how the front is only 2 levels. She also noted that they are staying with the same color scheme that was previously approved.

Mr. Wolff clarified the arborvitae hedge graphics, that they will have lower shrubs in the front to maintain views of the existing house.

Commission Questions - none

Public Questions

Ms. Meyer asked to confirm that it's a single unit. Ms. Souza replied yes, and the existing house will also be single family. Ms. Meyer asked about the square footage. Ms. Souza answered that the new square footage is 2,546 sf, whereas the previous new square footage was 4,091 sf. Ms. Meyer asked why does it still look so big? Ms. Souza showed plans and explained there are three bedrooms on the second floor and a bonus room on the 3rd floor, and there can be a bedroom on the first floor if there is a need such as an aged resident or in-law space.

Public Comment

Mr. Dan Mazur of 122 Hancock Street commented that he lives across the street from this property and stated there will be a big visual impact, that there is an appealing open view currently and it will be lost with the new building. He also showed a painting by his wife illustrating this view.

Mr. Evan Remington of 324 Harvard Street thanked the owner for incorporating the recommendations from the past hearing, he thinks the third floor is nicely terraced from the edge.

Ms. Meyer stated that she is concerned with the size of the new unit and how it reads from the street, it's a big square box with big windows and it dwarfs the historic house. She also doesn't understand the need for the third floor when there are plenty of bedrooms, and that the bonus room is a luxury. As a single unit it's overwhelming.

Commission Comments

Mr. Redmon congratulated the applicant for coming back after the BZA. Mr. Redmon noted that he is not worried about the third floor, that it breaks up the horizontality.

Ms. Litchfield stated she understood Mr. Redmon's comment but that she agrees with Ms. Meyer's comment that it's a single-family unit and so much bigger than the existing house. She said they don't have to build to the edge just because they can. She stated that either the bonus room or front square portion could be eliminated. She also congratulated the BZA for not supporting the previous proposal

Ms. McMahon stated that she still felt that the original house needs to be the dominant house, and the proposed building is competing with it and needs to be subsidiary to it.

Mr. Hsiao stated these are important comments and applauded the applicant for going through the BZA process. What's contributing to the comments is that the Greek Revival house has a simple formality and holds its relationship to the street - the secondary house should be held back. He encouraged looking at simplifying the secondary house. It is larger than the existing house, and there's a lot of window variety and articulation. The original house is very straightforward and simple. When a secondary house has too many moves it competes with the existing house. He suggested calming down some of the features, like the front bay. The third-floor setback is correct, but when you look at the views maybe there's a way to lighten it further, for an office perhaps. Mr. Hsiao said he is reminded of widow walks for the third floor that are lighter, and thinks that the third floor here still feels heavy. Try to reduce the moves to further simplify, pare down and pull back, examine the third floor and refine it and possibly reduce it. It looks bulky from the front view. It shouldn't mimic the existing house but reconsider the relationship of window proportions and refine and possibly shrink the size of the windows. The Greek Revival house is more composed and calm, and can give clues as to how to rework the secondary house. This is still an improvement over what we previously approved.

Mr. Redmon suggested fleshing out the third-floor elevation with the the second and first floor facing the street, eliminate the horizontal line, and consider changing the color as you have done on the side facing the park. And try to make it less busy. Ms. Souza replied that she did

intend to make the street facing façade darker, but it apparently doesn't show up in the graphics.

Mr. Hsiao suggested scheduling an Architects Committee meeting to address the issues that were discussed.

Ms. Litchfield noted that it still seems too big for a single unit.

Ms. Souza agreed to return to an Architects Committee with revisions to the third floor, windows and footprint. Mr. Wolff concurred and agreed to the meeting.

The Architects Committee meeting was scheduled for Thursday, May 26 at 8 am.

Mr. Hsiao stated that this design is going in the right direction and the next meeting will help to finalize the design.

Ms. Burks clarified that the case will still have to come back to a full hearing to vote on the Certificate of Appropriateness, noting issues that arose with a previous case where residents were not able to attend an Architects Committee meeting and felt they did not have a chance to be heard.

The April 4, 2022 minutes were approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison A. Crosbie, Preservation Administrator

Members of the Public Present on May 9, 2022

Panelists:

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