

1 *Town of Brookline Preservation Commission*
2 **MINUTES OF THE January 10th, 2023 MEETING**
3 **Held Virtually using Zoom Online Software**
4

5 **Commissioners Present:**

6 Elton Elperin
7 David King
8 Richard Panciera, Vice Chair
9 David Jack, Chair
10 John Spiers, Alternate
11 James Batchelor
12 Elizabeth Armstrong
13

Commissioners Absent:

Alex Villanueva, Alternate

14 **Staff:** Jake Collins, Victoria Pardo
15

16
17 Mr. Jack opened the meeting and appointed Mr. Spiers to vote for Mr. Panciera.
18

19 **Approval of Minutes:**

20
21 12/13/22
22

23 Mr. Spiers noted that the word “panels” was misspelled in line 169 and requested that list
24 Commissioner Alex Villanueva be included in the list of absent Commissioners.
25

26 Mr. King asked that line 347 be amended to note that there was majority agreement, not
27 complete agreement.
28

29 Mr. Elperin asked that lines 99-100 be reworded for clarity and mention that Mr. Elperin found
30 the work acceptable based on precedent. Noted that he did not agree with line 228, which
31 stated that the Commission does not regulate the spill of light. Requested that line 478 be
32 clarified to note that Mr. Birnbaum meant that all the delays have compounded
33

34 Mr. Elperin made a motion to approve with revisions. Mr. Jack seconded the motion.
35

36 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Elizabeth
37 Armstrong- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes, David Jack- yes
38

39 **Public Comment:**

40 Mr. Jack opened and closed the public comment period without any participants.
41

42 **59-61 Mason Terrace-** Application for full demolition of a two-family dwelling and detached
43 garage (RLAW, Applicant) **Precinct 11**
44

45 Ms. Pardo presented the case.

46

47 **Applicant Comment:**

48

49 Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, attorney on behalf for the owner, thanked Ms. Pardo for the
50 comprehensive report and offered to answer any questions.

51

52 **Public Comment:**

53

54 Alan States, neighbor a few doors down, noted that he lived here for 35 years and was a retired
55 architect. Did not see any real significance to the house. Believed the house has reached the
56 end of its life. Argued that restoration was not worth it and stated that he believed we can do
57 better improving the housing stock.

58

59 **Commission Comment:**

60

61 Mr. King stated that believed it was a handsome building and played an integral role in our
62 understanding of the streetscape. Argued that it did not appear to be worn out, as it retained
63 integrity of materials and can be restored. Advocated for a finding of significance.

64

65 Mr. Kleiner agreed with Mr. King. Noted that this building was characteristic of houses on the
66 street. Stated that it would be a shame to not preserve it. Argued that the garage is less or not
67 significant due its placement on the site.

68

69 Mr. Elperin- agreed with both Mr. Kleiner and Mr. King.

70

71 Mr. King made a motion to uphold staff's determination of significance for the house. Mr.
72 Elperin seconded the motion.

73

74 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes,
75 David Jack- yes, Elizabeth Armstrong- yes

76

77 Mr. King made a motion not to uphold staff's determination of significance for the garage. Mr.
78 Elperin seconded the motion.

79

80 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes,
81 David Jack- yes, Elizabeth Armstrong- yes

82

83 **124 Coolidge Street-** Application for full demolition of single-family dwelling (Alyssa Barquet,
84 Applicant) **Precinct 9**

85

86 Ms. Pardo presented the case and clarified that application does not the demolition of the
87 garage on the site.

88

89 **Applicant Comment:**

90

91 Matt Ramey, owner, offered to answer any questions the Commission may have.

92

93 **Public Comment:**

94

95 Thomas Mullin, neighbor and 25 year resident, thanked the Commission for its efforts to
96 preserve the town. House is quite unusual and unique design for the street and area. Touchman
97 family was in the building for four generations until it was sold to its present owner. Presently
98 house is habited with several different parties, which speaks to habitability and livability of the
99 house. Referenced failed historic district in the neighborhood.

100

101 Tom Schlatter, abutter to the rear, does not want to speak for the house itself. Wants to speak to
102 the process. Called out 116 Thorndike Street as a case where demolition was stopped and noted
103 that it still remained a vacant lot. Would hate to see that on the other side of the house.

104 Generally speaking, the owner should have the ability to do what they would like to do with
105 the property, within reason.

106

107 Edward Dumas, resident, referenced the case at 116 Thorndike Street and clarified that
108 construction was stopped due to the Coolidge Corner Overlay District, not a demolition stay
109 imposed by the Preservation Commission. Owner was informed of the requirement late in the
110 process, which caused the delay. Argued that the building has some unique architectural
111 features not replicated elsewhere in town. Stated that it's one of those buildings that you don't
112 see built anymore.

113

114 **Commission Comment:**

115

116 Mr. Jack confirmed that property is in Coolidge Corner Overlay District.

117

118 Mr. Elperin asked if any photos showing the original windows exist. Ms. Pardo responded that
119 she did not find any during her research.

120

121 Mr. Jack responded that 87 Thorndike Street has similar massing and may be used as a
122 comparison.

123

124 Mr. Elperin noted that the lack of original windows did not sway him, as the basic volumes
125 remain intact. Admitted that it was a more difficult case than last since the building had been
126 so altered.

127

128 Mr. King agreed with Elton. Believed the house was quixotic and would be much improved if
129 the cladding was redone. Commented on the interesting flair on the side of the building.
130 Supported upholding determination.

131

132 Mr. Batchelor agreed that the building should be found significant.

133

134 Mr. Elperin made a motion to uphold staff's finding of significance. Mr. Batchelor seconded
135 the motion.

136

137 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Elizabeth
138 Armstrong- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes, David Jack- yes

139
140 **774 Boylston Street-** Continuation of the request to lift the stay of partial demolition on the parish
141 building (Timothy Burke, applicant)

142
143 Mr. Collins presented the case.

144
145 **Applicant Comment:**

146
147 Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, attorney, noted that the former proposal affected the west side of the
148 lot, which upset the neighbors. The new proposal should alleviate their concerns.

149
150 Tim Burke, architect, stated that he added some glass panels to the building to break up the
151 massing of the masonry and limestone elements. Noted that he added additional fenestration,
152 including the oculus window, to the Boylston Street elevation, which allows more natural light
153 into the sanctuary.

154
155 **Public Comment:**

156
157 Mr. Jack opened and closed the public comment period without any participants.

158
159 **Commission Comment:**

160
161 Mr. Elperin questioned whether or not this project was appropriate for the lift of stay process.
162 Stated that he disliked it in its original form and may like it even less now. Expressed concern
163 on the two-tone, banded wall cladding.

164
165 Mr. Jack concurred with Mr. Elperin. Expressed confusion over the Preservation
166 Commission's purview given the Dover Amendment.

167
168 Ms. Dopazo Gilbert responded that the Dover Amendment exempts educational and religious
169 structures from specific zoning requirements. Noted that the applicant still intended to go
170 before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

171
172 Mr. King agreed with Mr. Elperin about the forms, but believed the architect has tried to
173 improve the project by adding additional fenestration. Believed there can be movement on the
174 design.

175
176 Mr. Burke noted that the design is an integral part of seminarians' ritual and practice and some
177 changes may not be possible.

178
179 Mr. Spiers argued that the octagonal chapel is reasonable but it must relate to the existing
180 buildings on the site. Believed the rectangular connection point seemed large and imposing and
181 obscured too much of the chapel. Wondered if there was a more fluid way to connect the
182 buildings. Expressed support for a revised proposal along those lines.

183
184 Mr. Elperin noted that the historic buildings on the site made this plan a problem but stated that
185 he would not find this building attractive as a standalone structure either.
186
187 Mr. Batchelor suggested prioritizing the view along Boylston Street by making the new forms
188 less assertive than proposed. Believed that the alternating bands weighed the structure down
189 and made a strong emphasis on space. Questioned the appropriateness of the design in an
190 urban landscape.
191
192 Mr. Elperin remarked that the addition has a fortress look. The triangular rooftop elements are
193 reminiscent of a battlement and serve no purpose in the design.
194
195 Mr. Batchelor argued that reducing the severity of the plinth and building may help the design.
196 Suggested proposing geometric forms that may relate better to the site.
197
198 Mr. King suggested prioritizing the view from Boylston Street. Noted there may be a path
199 forward if the view from Boylston Street works, even if it does not adequately protect the
200 building at 51 Reservoir Road.
201
202 Mr. Batchelor agreed that it would be preferable to sacrifice the dormitory to give comfort to
203 the facade of the rectory.
204
205 Mr. Burke asked if removing the plinth was one way to address the concerns. Mr. Elperin
206 responded that it is not the location of the plinth, but rather the design.
207
208 Mr. Kleiner asked about order associated with the building. Ms. Dopazo Gilbert responded by
209 noting that they were a Catholic order. Mr. Kleiner argued there is a legible history of Catholic
210 design that is not closely related to this design.
211
212 Ms. Dopazo Gilbert requested clarification on the hopes for design revisions. Asked if a stone
213 wall may help. Mr. Elperin stated that a stone retaining wall with plantings would look more
214 natural in the environment and may improve the design.
215
216 Mr. Batchelor suggested investigating ways to make the area to the right of driveway read
217 more like a landscape wall than a building.
218
219 Mr. Elperin asked if the building could be constructed of wood. Mr. Burke responded that he
220 would have to check.
221
222 Ms. Armstrong concurred with virtually everything that had been said. Suggested proposing a
223 stone wall that is more respectful of the buildings it sits between. Thanked the applicants for
224 their patience and continued work with the Commission.
225
226 Mr. Batchelor tasked the applicant with creating a design that preserves the view of the
227 driveway, church and rectory.
228

229 Applicant agreed to continue the case.

230

231 Mr. Spiers made a motion to continue this case. Mr. Jack seconded the motion.

232

233 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Elizabeth

234 Armstrong- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes, David Jack- yes

235

236 **30 Amory Street (Cottage Farm LHD)** – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the
237 replacement of existing windows, reconfiguration of the existing rear addition and pergola,
238 removal of the rear chimney, installation of new window openings in the garage, replacement of
239 the existing front door, and the installation of vents (Karina Melo, applicant). **Precinct 1**

240

241 Mr. Collins presented the case.

242

243 **Applicant Comment:**

244

245 Karina Melo, applicant, thanked the Commission and offered to answer any questions.

246 Jonathan and Jacoba Bell, owners, offered the same.

247

248 **Public Comment:**

249

250 Mr. Jack opened and closed the public comment period without any participants.

251

252 **Commission Comment:**

253

254 Mr. King stated that he was comfortable approving the removal of the secondary chimney.

255

256 Mr. Elperin asked about the visibility of the chimney from Amory Street. Sam Kachmar,
257 project architect, responded that it was only minimally visible.

258

259 Mr. Batchelor asked about the visibility of the rear. Mr. Collins presented photographs
260 showing the extent of the visibility from Powell Street. Mr. Batchelor agreed that approval of
261 the demolition of the chimney should be granted based on its limited visibility.

262

263 Mr. Elperin was pleased that the plans called for retaining the beveled edge on the addition.

264

265 Mr. King agreed with Mr. Elperin and expressed support for approving the alterations to the
266 addition.

267

268 Mr. Elperin appreciated the proposed light fixture. Thought it was modern and would not cast
269 any excess light.

270

271 Mr. Elperin believed extending the pergola was a reasonable request. Mr. King agreed.

272

273 Mr. Jack made a motion to approve the project as submitted. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion.

274
275 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Elizabeth
276 Armstrong- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes, David Jack- yes
277

278 **36 Osborne Road (Graffam-McKay LHD)** – Continuation of an application for a Certificate of
279 Appropriateness to construct a unit to the rear of the existing building (RLAW, applicant). **Precinct**
280 **8**

281
282 Mr. Collins presented the case.

283
284 **Applicant Comment:**

285
286 Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, attorney, explained that the only zoning relief required by the new
287 plans is for the parking.

288
289 Dennis Greenwood, architect, explained design changes and mentioned that they eliminated the
290 garage, an entire story, and the projecting element. Proposed plans added a shed dormer to add
291 interest to the rear and reallocated interior space.

292
293 Michael Courtney, owner, thanked everyone being here so late and so often to hear this case.
294

295 **Public Comment:**

296 John Harris, across the street abutter, asked the owner to look at 51 Abbotsford Road garage.
297 Noted that the neighbor’s letter might have appeared a little too strident and clarified that he
298 was not opposed to building as long as it retains open space. Argued that the proposal does not
299 go far enough. If the garage was rehabbed, open space would be retained. Garage rehab would
300 be a boon for the Commission and Michael Courtney’s reputation as a developer.

301
302 Nancy Heller, Graffam-McKay resident, opined that there seemed to be a real shift in the way
303 the Preservation Commission views its role in local historic districts. Argued that this deviation
304 from the established guidelines should be written into the guidelines and discussed at a public
305 hearing. Objected to the proposal.

306
307 Barbara Cohen, Osborne Road resident, noted that the overwhelming precedent on the street
308 was to convert a single family dwelling into two units. Argued that adding a unit does not add
309 true density to the neighborhood and advocated subdividing the building. Received denial for a
310 rear addition from Commission, which now felt unfair. In support of family getting into
311 Brookline’s school system, but felt that it is inappropriate that neighbors must suffer because
312 the applicant cannot afford the house without substantial alterations.

313
314 Anita Johnson, abutter, believed that the addition was still too large and not discreet enough to
315 conform to the Local Historic District Guidelines. Seconded the idea of developing the historic

316 garage as an ADU. Pointed out 51 Abbotsford Road, 26 Abbotsford Road, and 175 Babcock
317 Street.

318
319 Jon Roffman, immediate abutter at 198 Babcock Street, stated that he was looking forward to
320 welcoming Courtney family to the neighborhood. Recalled that he incurred a significant
321 expense restoring his windows in 2015. Came into the neighborhood knowing that was the
322 tradeoff. Expressed support for an ADU in the existing garage.

323
324 James and Sylvia Yee, direct abutters, argued that the proposed addition still loomed over their
325 backyard and asked the applicant to revise the plans further.

326
327 Yolanda Rodriguez, Osborne Road resident, noted that there were at least seven houses that are
328 two-family dwellings in the neighborhood. Questioned if the applicant was aware that the
329 property was located in a local historic district before purchasing it. Believed this proposal, if
330 approved, would be precedent setting and lessen the strength of the local historic district.

331
332 David-Marc Goldstein, Osborne Road resident, agreed with everything that has been said.
333 Wanted to point out that both luxury units that the applicant seeks can be used by converting
334 the basement. Asked for a continuation or rejection of denial. Asked the applicant to explore
335 putting units in existing house. Noted that 2000 square feet is twice the size of the average
336 apartment in Brookline. Pushed for lowering the height to one story, if approval was on the
337 table.

338
339 **Commission Comment:**

340
341 Mr. King asked about numbers of two-family dwellings in the neighborhood. Mr. Collins
342 responded that there are several in the vicinity but most are consolidated into a historic
343 building.

344
345 Mr. Jack asked Ms. Dopazo Gilbert about the zoning relief referenced earlier in the hearing.
346 Ms. Dopazo Gilbert responded that the proposal required a special permit for a parking
347 setback.

348
349 Mr. King felt that the project did not seem inconsistent with the Local Historic District
350 Guidelines. Argued that the applicant took the Commission's advice and returned with
351 improved plans that addressed the concerns over height, massing, and zoning relief. Noted that
352 the Preservation Commission was not established to stop change but rather approve good
353 change. Torn on the proposal.

354
355 Mr. Elperin agreed with Mr. King. Refuted the point that it was a modern addition, as the
356 design picked up some details of the existing house. Problem appears to be the size, but it has
357 been greatly reduced. Noted that he would like more open spaces in most cases. Reminded the
358 public that the Commission encouraged additional development when petitioning for Lawrence
359 Local Historic District extension and full demolition would be on the table if the property was
360 not located in a local historic district. Argued that the Preservation Commission was tasked

361 with retaining character of the neighborhood, not being the size police. Believed that saying
362 that this addition will destroy the character of a neighborhood is an exaggeration.

363
364 Mr. Batchelor stated that he understood that people are frustrated to see the loss of open space
365 and buildings growing in size but reminded everyone that the charge of the Commission is to
366 retain the integrity of the streetscape. Agreed that the addition would be nicer if it was scaled
367 back but noted that it is only minimally visible from the public right of way and protection of
368 open space and other limits on FAR are ultimately up to zoning. Also torn on the proposal.

369
370 Ms. Armstrong stated that she understood how proposing the addition to make things work
371 financially may stick in the craw of neighbors but noted that the proposal met zoning
372 requirements, greatly reduced the size of the addition, and was pretty innocuous from
373 streetscape. Referenced the case 151-153 Babcock Street, which went around and around until
374 substantial revisions were made. Similar but not identical situation here. Reminded everyone
375 that living in a local historic district does not mean that nothing will ever change. Expressed
376 support for the proposal.

377
378 Mr. Panciera believed that restoring the front porch would give back to the community and
379 suggested that it be included in a motion, if approval was likely.

380
381 Mr. Elperin supported Mr. Panciera's idea. Believed restoration of the porch would be a
382 community benefit.

383
384 Mr. Jack agreed with other Commissioner's comments. Vast improvement over previous
385 iterations. Massing of the addition is noticeably smaller than the last and no longer in
386 competition with the historic building. Wanted to commend the applicant for showing good
387 faith. Understood feelings being expressed by the neighbors, but noted that the Commission
388 operated under rules and regulations, not Commissioner opinions.

389
390 Mr. Jack asked the applicant if he would agree to restore the front porch.

391
392 Mr. Courtney responded that he originally intended to restore porch but the time to approval
393 made more difficult. Stated that it may not be in the cards at this time but expressed open-
394 mindedness to the idea.

395
396 Ms. Dopazo Gilbert stated that applicant has agreed to restore the porch with an empowered
397 subcommittee.

398
399 Mr. Spiers made a motion to approve the application contingent on the approval of an
400 empowered subcommittee appointed to guide on the restoration of the porch. Mr. Jack
401 seconded the motion.

402
403 Mr. Spiers, Mr. Elperin, and Mr. Jack were appointed to the subcommittee.

404
405 David King- yes, Elton Elperin- yes, Jim Batchelor- yes, John Spiers- yes, Elizabeth
406 Armstrong- yes, Peter Kleiner- yes, David Jack- yes

407
408 Mr. Jack adjourned the meeting.
409