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Town of Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE January 17th, 2023 MEETING
Held Virtually using Zoom Online Software

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Commissioners Present:

Elton Elperin
David King,
Richard Panciera, Vice Chair
David Jack, Chair
John Spiers, Alternate
James Batchelor
Elizabeth Armstrong

Commissioners Absent:

Alex Villanueva, Alternate
Peter Kleiner

Staff: Tina McCarthy, Victoria Pardo

Mr. Jack called the meeting to order at 6:32.

Mr. Spiers was appointed to vote for Mr. Kleiner for the duration of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes: January 3rd, 2023-Preservation Priorities for CPA Sub-committee

Mr. Panciera asked to change the footer date to January 3rd, 2023.

Mr. Spiers made a motion to approve the edits. Elton seconded the motion.

John Spiers-yes; David Jack-yes; Elton Elperin-yes

Mr. Jack stated the motion passed and the comments were approved as submitted.

Public Comment

None

Public Hearings-Local Historic Districts

36 Glen Road (Pill Hill LHD) – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to add two skylights to the rear roof of the building (Erik Wurster, applicant). **Precinct 5A**

Ms. Pardo presented the case report.

Eric Wurster (owner) thanked the Commission for their consideration and explained the reasons for the application.

Public comment:

48 None.

49

50 **Commissioners-**

51

52 Mr. Panciera and Mr. Elperin had no objections.

53

54 Mr. Elperin made a motion to approve the proposed skylights in the proposed locations as submitted.

55 Mr. Panciera seconded the motion.

56

57 David King-yes; Richard Panciera –yes; David Jack – yes; Elizabeth Armstrong-yes;

58 John Spiers- yes; Elton Elperin- yes; Jim Batchelor-yes

59

60 The motion passed and the design was approved as submitted.

61

62

63 **25 Cottage Street (Olmstead-Richardson LHD)** – Continued application for a Certificate of
64 Appropriateness to relocate, renovate and build an addition to the rear of the building; final review
65 of mitigation to package (Pioneer Construction, applicant). **Precinct 14**

66

67 Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.

68

69 Ms. Gilbert stated they want to get started as soon as possible, as delays are costly and the historic
70 materials need to be secured. She stated that she believes they submitted everything the commission
71 asked for. She wanted to discuss the plantings for the viewshed. She stated they want to provide an up
72 screening, for the view to be protected, but also allowing privacy for the inhabitants. She stated they
73 received the Riley report on Jan. 17th and thought it adequate. She will incorporate it into the
74 memorandum of agreement for the Baird Foundation.

75

76 Mr. Troy Sober asked how they can come to an agreement so that the commission will have
77 reassurance they can preserve the views, but also give the homeowner the ability to use plantings for
78 privacy.

79

80

81 **Public Comment-**

82

83 No comment.

84

85 **Commissioners-**

86

87 Mr. Jack asked the commission to discuss the viewshed last.

88

89 Ms. McCarthy stated the seating nook will need to be called out more specifically, because there are
90 scraps of fabric that they would like to include with the other materials going to the Baird Foundation.

91

92 Mr. Elperin stated the HABS drawings looked good, but he did not see any vertical dimensions.

93

94 Mr. Panciera asked about the vertical dimensions on the HABS drawings as well, but thought they
95 were adequate to describe the building. He had no issue with the Point Known letter. He stated he

96 reviewed the salvage specifications and was happy to hear more detail was put into the fabric and the
97 seating nook.
98
99 The rest of the commission agreed that the materials presented on behalf of 25 Cottage were adequate.
100
101 Mr. Elperin stated that it would be helpful to label the trees in the photographs.
102 He continued that it is important that plants at the entrance should be low enough so that what is visible
103 and what is not visible has a clear intention. He believed the revised viewshed is an improvement.
104
105 Mr. Jack agreed with Mr. Elperin's comment.
106
107 Mr. King agreed with Mr. Elperin that trees should be indicated. He stated it was difficult to determine
108 what was being presented in the plans (e.g. Height of plants, density etc.).
109
110 Mr. Jack asked Ms. McCarthy if the commission can approve the viewshed this evening, and at a later
111 date have a detailed discussion that details the height of the plants.
112
113 Ms. McCarthy agreed with Mr. Jack and stated there is nothing about the viewshed that impacts what is
114 happening currently at 25 Cottage. She did think they could move forward with the other items. She
115 continued that the staff would prefer the viewshed document to be worded to reveal what will be
116 visible instead of how high the plants will be. She stated the staff will need a better understanding of
117 what this will look like.
118
119 Mr. Spiers stated that he agreed it would be better to focus on the views and facades the commission is
120 looking to preserve, and then discuss the details of the particular types of plantings separately.
121
122 Mr. Batchelor preferred to see carefully done renderings or photos and was concerned by the drawing
123 presented. He did not feel the drawing was consistent with the intent. In particular, he stated the
124 plantings close to the driveway needed to be considered carefully.
125
126 Ms. McCarthy stated they can approve everything else and that is sufficient to issuing the building
127 permit. However, they need to make sure the CO is still conditioned. She wanted an established path
128 forward for this viewshed. She stated this is a preservation restriction held by preservation planners and
129 that the restriction should be plain and comprehensible.
130
131 Ms. McCarthy asked the applicant how they would like to move forward.
132 Ms. Gilbert stated that a subcommittee where they could do a site visit would be preferred. She was
133 fine with getting approved tonight with the contingent of having a subcommittee for the viewshed.
134
135 Mr. Sober said he would be happy to work with a subcommittee once 25 Cottage is put in an approved
136 location. Then, the commission could have a better understanding of the site, and an opportunity to see
137 how open or obscure the existing vegetation is that is scheduled to remain in front of the existing
138 structures.
139
140 Mr. Elperin made a motion to accept all elements of the presentation (drawings, specifications for
141 removal, Point Known Letter, and photographs) with the exception of the viewshed.
142
143 Mr. King seconded Mr. Elperin's motion.

144
145 David King – yes, Richard Panciera –yes, David Jack –yes; Elizabeth Armstrong-yes;
146 John Spiers-yes Elton Elperin-yes; Jim Batchelor-yes;
147
148 Mr. Jack stated Mr. Elperin’s motion was approved.
149
150 Ms. McCarthy stated the viewshed will be required to be approved before the CO is issued. A
151 Subcommittee needs to be formed, and the building permit can move forward without this being
152 finalized. She agreed that the plantings could be discussed once 25 Cottage is finalized.
153
154 Mr. Batchelor asked the applicant to include a description in the form of photos with notes or
155 renderings with examples of what will remain visible.
156
157 Mr. Batchelor made a motion that the viewshed be further defined in a process which will include the
158 following: First, the building permit for work on the buildings will be allowed to proceed. Second, that
159 the body of the work to be done on this will take place after 25 Cottage has been moved to its new
160 location. Third, that the viewshed will be defined in terms of what portions of the facades will remain
161 visible at 25 Cottage. Fourth, a subcommittee will be appointed to address the viewshed.
162
163 Mr. Jack seconded Jim’s motion.
164
165 David King – yes; Richard Panciera –yes, David Jack –yes; Elizabeth Armstrong-yes;
166 John Spiers-yes; Elton Elperin-yes; Jim Batchelor-yes;
167
168 Mr. Jack stated the motion was approved as submitted.
169
170 Mr. Batchelor, Ms. Armstrong and Mr. King volunteered to be on the subcommittee for reviewing the
171 viewshed.
172
173 **Public Hearings- Demolition**
174
175 161 Hyslop Road – Request to lift the stay of partial demolition on the building (Paul and Nicole
176 Lipson, applicants). **Precinct 14**
177
178 Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.
179
180 Mr. John Gasset (architect) discussed various elements of the plan.
181
182
183 **Public Comment-**
184 None
185
186 **Commissioners-**
187
188 Mr. Jack asked Ms. McCarthy to explain to members of the public the limitations the commission has
189 in reviewing cases in a National Register District as opposed to a Local Historic District.
190

191 Ms. McCarthy stated in National Register Districts they can review character defining features. She
192 explained that the demolition review process does not have the same guidelines as local historic
193 districts. She also explained at the end of 18 months the applicants can move forward with what they
194 would like to do. She also stated the preservation process is separate from the zoning process. She was
195 not aware of zoning issues on this application.

196
197 Mr. King stated the FAR is nonconforming and they are adding more.

198
199 Ms. Gilbert stated it needed a finding from the zoning board of appeals that the increased
200 nonconformity in FAR (400 square feet) is not substantially detrimental.

201
202 Mr. King though the dormers on the third floor were a dramatic move, breaking up the mass of the
203 roof. He asked the architect if he considered or will consider other solutions for the dormers.

204
205 Mr. Gassett stated they studied placement, and tried to make them as minimal as possible on the
206 roofscape. Mr. King did not understand the need for them.

207
208 Mr. Elperin thought the plans were well drawn and detailed. He also stated there were dramatic
209 changes to this building. He stated he would like to keep the character of the building intact. He was
210 not sure that compromises could be made at the rear. He believed the east elevation was successful. He
211 preferred the vestibule and crest to not be removed. He noted that some of the windows are not original
212 (2nd floor at front).

213
214 Mr. Jack agreed with Mr. Elperin that this is a large project and that there are a lot of moving parts. He
215 stated they could not address all of the proposed changes at tonight's meeting. He asked the applicant if
216 they would be willing to meet in a subcommittee. He asked the other commissioners to establish a
217 subcommittee to review this project.

218
219 Mr. Jack's first concern was the replacement of all of the windows, and the installation of transoms on
220 the first-floor windows. He was concerned the original muntin patterns on the windows was being
221 removed. He was concerned about the addition and the relocation of the crest. He was also concerned
222 about removing the strong chimney element in the rear. He agreed with Mr. King on the number of
223 small dormers appearing on the third floor. He also stated he wanted to address the additions being
224 proposed on the rear. He thought the window choices were out of character with the Tudor style and
225 many were too large. He stated the commissioners needed to spend time to understand all of the
226 changes being made.

227
228 Mr. Gassett stated the painted brick is not being removed, but the stucco areas and half timbering are.

229
230 Mr. Gassett confirmed that the graduated roof will be replicated.

231
232 Mr. Spiers brought up concerns about the back window, the roofline change, and the rear elevation
233 redesign. He worried the window changes are out of character with a Tudor style house, and that they
234 detract from the existing style.

235
236 Ms. Armstrong and Mr. Panciera echoed the concerns of the other commissioners.

237

238 Mr. Batchelor added that this house is not in a Local Historic District, but it is a building with
239 significant architectural character. Therefore, he believes it is a good basis to look at these changes
240 through the lens of the Local Historic District guidelines.

241
242 Mr. Jack is concerned the applicant can make any changes they want after the 18-month stay. He stated
243 the applicant does not have to follow any of the commission's recommendations, which concerned
244 him.

245
246 Mr. King stated because 161 Hyslop is located within a National Register District, they have a right to
247 pay a lot of attention to it.

248
249 Ms. Armstrong stated the legal standard is to look at character defining features. She stated these
250 additions affect the character defining features. She stated the commission can be informed by them,
251 but the commission should not be stating on the record that they are applying Local Historic District
252 guidelines to this property.

253
254 Mr. Jack's concern is as the commission starts to determine the character defining features, (as they
255 look at all of the alterations), if the applicant feels that the commission is being too demanding, the
256 applicant can just wait out the demo stay.

257
258 Ms. Armstrong stated they still have a process that is part of the by-law to work with the applicant
259 cooperatively.

260
261 Mr. Spiers agreed with Ms. Armstrong. He stated the commission's goal is to be an advisor in this
262 case. He thought the subcommittee is a good way to accomplish this.

263
264 Ms. Gilbert re-stated the applicant is willing to work with a subcommittee.

265
266 Mr. Elperin made a motion to continue the application to a subcommittee that will return their full
267 recommendations to the commission.

268
269 Mr. Speirs seconded Mr. Elperin's motion.

270
271 Elton Elperin-yes; David King-yes; Richard Panciera-yes; Elizabeth Armstrong-yes; John Spiers-; Jim
272 Batchelor-yes; David Jack-yes

273
274 Mr. Jack stated that Mr. Elperin's motion was approved.

275
276 Mr. King, Mr. Jack and Mr. Elperin volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

277
278
279 **40 Sargent Crossway** – Request to lift the stay of partial demolition on the building (40 Sargent
280 Crossway LLC, applicants). **Precinct 5**

281
282 Ms. Pardo presented the case report.

283
284 Ms. Gilbert stated that the project will require minimal zoning relief. It will need a special permit for
285 FAR and alter a pre-existing non-conforming driveway.

286
287 Mr. Guy Grassi's son (architect) stated the footprint and basic concept is similar to the proposed 2018
288 plans. He stated one could not see the south elevation from the street. He stated he did not think the
289 size will be unusual and it is 18% above FAR which is allowed by special permit. He discussed the
290 new materials and made clear that they will match the existing materials. He mentioned that the roof
291 and bricks will be replaced in-kind and the windows and doors will be custom. One significant change
292 was to strip the paint off of the brick. He believed it was appropriate to have the front door relocated to
293 face the street.

294
295 **Public Comment-**

296
297 None

298
299 **Commissioners-**

300
301 Mr. Panciera believed the best parts of the house are being restored, and the worst part is being covered
302 up. He thought the addition should be more eclectic.

303
304 Mr. Batchelor felt the same way about the design. He suggested a bit more asymmetry on the addition.

305
306 Mr. Spiers recommended that the subcommittee could iron these ideas out, and there may be some
307 ways to modify what is presented. He thought the addition was in the best location it could be.

308
309 Mr. King stated the front is completely different than the back. He wouldn't try to make the front
310 quirrier.

311
312 Mr. Elperin made a motion to accept the proposed design.

313
314 Mr. Panciera seconded.

315
316 David King- yes; Richard Panciera –yes; David Jack –yes; Ms. Armstrong-yes;
317 John Spiers-no; Elton Elperin-yes; Jim Batchelor- yes

318
319 Mr. Jack stated the project was approved as submitted.

320
321
322 **OTHER BUSINESS**

323
324 Discussion-Support letters for designating Harvard Street as an MBTA Communities district,
325 providing resources to the Planning Department to study a form-based code approach for this area.

326
327 Ms. Maria Morelli (Brookline Planning and Community Development) explained the Harvard
328 Street Proposal for MBTA communities.

329
330 Ms. Armstrong recalled there was a lot of information in the presentation, and she believed the
331 Commission needed more time to absorb the material. She wanted to ensure that other significant
332 buildings would be saved along with Brookline Village.

333

334 Mr. Jack had no objections of the changes made to the original draft.
335
336 Mr. King stated he was fine with the letter.
337
338 Mr. Batchelor asked about the review process, and if there would be a discussion of form-based
339 zoning soon.
340
341 Ms. Morelli stated that the letter was to support the emergency funding for the study and there will
342 be a time in April where they will be going through all of the components of the form-based
343 zoning. (No more than 4 story scale, block scale, barriers and constraints.) She made it clear that
344 the Commission was not signing on to anything at this time— just the form-based zoning approach.
345
346 Ms. Morelli stated they did not want a low ground floor. She stated they would prefer a 15ft ground
347 floor, no matter what the use was, and 10-11 ft. high upper floors. She stated they wanted a cap at
348 the eave of 48 ft. maximum.
349
350 Mr. Spiers asked Ms. Morelli to speak to mobility considerations and opportunities for
351 improvement.
352
353 Ms. Morelli stated Brookline is seeing fewer and fewer stairs on the front elevations of residential
354 buildings. She believed the entrances could be on the sides of the buildings. She continued the
355 proposal will be less concerned on pedestrian circulation, because the lots are not deep. She
356 reiterated that there are standards of accessibility for new buildings.
357
358 Mr. Spiers asked Ms. Morelli to discuss how she thinks architectural review will factor into form-
359 based zoning.
360
361 Ms. Morelli stated there are several aspects to architectural review. She explained building and
362 design standards: you regulate what you want to see. If you want an active ground floor for
363 storefronts (transparency, cornice line etc.) you can do so. She mentioned architectural standards
364 are another level (fenestration, materials etc.) She added it will be helpful to integrate
365 contemporary styles on Harvard street.
366
367 The commission discussed the idea of how to understand the types of businesses coming in.
368
369 Ms. Morelli noted that the allowed uses table was very outdated and allowed horses by right. She
370 mentioned that an overlay district may be added for commercial uses in the future. She thought
371 there should be two letters as there is not much time for the Planning Board to accept the changes.
372 She recommended taking out the reference to the joint letter.
373
374 Mr. Elperin made a motion to endorse this letter after removing the reference that Planning Board
375 should approve, removing the phrase “the planning board”. Therefore, it would read: “the
376 preservation commission emphasizes...”
377
378 Ms. Armstrong seconded the motion.
379
380 David King- yes; Richard Panciera –yes; David Jack –yes; Ms. Armstrong-yes;
381 John Spiers-no; Elton Elperin-; Jim Batchelor- yes

382
383 Mr. Jack stated the motion passed with Mr. Elperin’s revisions.
384

385
386 Update-Preservation Priorities for CPA Subcommittee
387

388 Mr. Spiers stated that the letter will be shared with the CPA, and that the commission would field
389 any questions on how they see preservation priorities within the town. He stated the subcommittee
390 settled on 4 goals based on the funding mechanism:

- 391 1. Support preservation of archival resources
- 392 2. Support adaptive reuse of significant historic buildings for affordable housing
- 393 3. Support preservation of historic low- & middle-income neighborhoods
- 394 4. Support protection of historical and environmental resources

395
396 Ms. McCarthy stated that the town has buildings that have been neglected over the years. Some,
397 like the Brookline Arts Center, maintain the building in return for lower rents. She continued that
398 knowing where those needs are in any town owned buildings is necessary.
399

400 The Commission discussed the existence of a list of town-owned buildings, and that this list would
401 be helpful moving forward.
402

403 Mr. Elperin mentioned the Brookline Strategic Asset plan, which includes information on town
404 owned buildings. He thought there was a list of town owned buildings in this document.
405

406 Mr. Batchelor was interested in goal #3: Preserving low income neighborhoods. He has been
407 involved in the Brookline Housing Authority properties and mentioned some historic housing
408 facilities in Brookline. He encouraged the Commission to look at them in regards to the CPA goal.
409

410
411 Discussion-Proposed demolition of Pierce School
412

413 Mr. King stated the energy committee had proposed the project to the selectman, and they were in
414 favor because they wanted a new net zero school. He believed the idea of reuse was not explored
415 and stated the schoolboard was unanimously for the new building and that it has state funding. He
416 noted that the school will be expensive to demolish and rebuild partly because of the parking lot
417 and that it is on a sloping site.
418

419 Ms. Armstrong asked if the commission wanted to put the work in and if they prioritized this, could
420 it could be saved?
421

422 Mr. King thought there could be a town override vote to fund it. He thought it would come up in
423 town meeting in the spring.
424

425 Ms. McCarthy stated the commission has the opportunity to submit letters to reports. She stated
426 that this commission could be active in reaching out to town meeting measures and let them know
427 the concerns. She stated the commission needs to find a coalition of town meeting members to post
428 things to the list serve.

429 Discussion amongst the commissioners ensued. (Where does demolition debris go? Ask for
430 adaptive reuse plan, studies etc. How much embodied carbon would be involved? Get examples on
431 previous case studies regarding this).

432

433 Ms. Armstrong believed that the commission should finish up the Local Historic District
434 guidelines. She stated it is difficult to have a stance on Pierce, when the commission does not have
435 guidelines to relate the Commission's ideas.

436

437 Mr. Spiers agreed to formalize the guidelines and use that as a launching point to determine how
438 we might approach other projects that come up.

439

440 Mr. Elperin stated he will attempt to flush out a letter with examples and circulate it. David King
441 stated he would assist Mr. Elperin with the letter. They stated they will find out times for town
442 override and town meeting.

443

444 Ms. McCarthy suggested to discuss the Pierce School on other business at a following meeting.

445

446 Mr. Jack stated that if Mr. Elperin and Mr. King are willing to exchange drafts with the
447 commissioners, they would have time to make additional comments to revisit this at the next
448 meeting.

449

450 Ms. McCarthy asked the commission if they could make the meeting for Local Historic District
451 guidelines on Jan. 31 at 8:15 am.

452

453 Meeting adjourned at approximately: 10:15 pm.