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Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 12, 2019 MEETING
Brookline Town Hall, 5th Floor Hearing Room, 333 Washington Street

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Commissioners Present

David King, Chair
Elton Elperin, Vice Chair
Jim Batchelor
Wendy Ecker
David Jack
Richard Panciera

Commissioners Absent:

Peter Kleiner
Elizabeth Armstrong

Staff: Valerie Birmingham, Lara Kritzer

Members of the Public: See list

Mr. King called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Approval of Minutes

There were no minutes at this time.

Election of Commission Officers

Mr. Batchelor moved to nominate Mr. King to another term as Chair and Mr. Elperin for another term as Vice-Chair. Mr. Jack seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Mr. King moved to designate Ms. Birmingham as Secretary. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)

There was no public comment at this time.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

1 Mason Street (Cottage Farm LHD) – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install new basement stairwell with railing on the left façade of the house and to relocate existing a/c condenser (Stephen J. Blyth and Anita Gajdecki, applicant)

Ms. Kritzer presented the case report. Architect Frank Dill and Owner Anita Gajecki were present to answer questions on the project. Mr. Dill explained that there was one interior staircase providing access to the basement at this time. A prior bulkhead entrance had been removed when the 2005 addition was added to the building by the previous owner. A new furnace was now needed for the house but there was currently no way to get the old furnace out of the basement or a new one into it. To address these concerns, they proposed to install a new second means of egress

48 on the left façade. Mr. Dill noted that the window wells were small and did not meet code. He
49 reviewed the site plan noting that the new addition was slab on grade and did not access the
50 basement and that a second area at the center of the structure was the location of a former garage
51 that stood four feet higher than the surrounding basement and would be difficult to dig out. The left
52 façade would be the easiest location in which to install the access and allowed them to space out
53 the entrances for safety.

54
55 The Chair opened the discussion for public comment and there was none at this time.

56
57 Mr. Elperin thought that this was a reasonable proposal and agreed that access to the basement was
58 necessary. He also thought that hiding the air conditioning condenser in the staircase landing would
59 be an improvement. He preferred to see a wood door used here and liked the design of the proposed
60 metal railing. Mr. Panciera asked where the new light fixture would be located. Mr. Dill stated that
61 it would be a three inch unit installed behind the chimney and tucked in over the door. The light
62 would be on a sensor. Mr. Panciera also thought that the plan was appropriate and preferred the
63 mahogany door option. Mr. Dill noted that the lower landing of the staircase would have a gravel
64 base with stepping stones to address drainage issues. Mr. Elperin moved to accept the design as
65 submitted with a mahogany door, the proposed new light as discussed, and the location of the
66 condenser to be below grade within the stairwell. Mr. Jack seconded the motion and all voted in
67 favor.

68
69 **14 Allerton Street (Pill Hill LHD) – Application for a Retroactive Certificate of**
70 **Appropriateness and Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of a vents on the left**
71 **side of the detached garage and house; discussion about the rebuilding of the stone steps to**
72 **Allerton Street (Christopher Wilmott, applicant)**

73
74 Ms. Birmingham presented the case report. Architect Charles O’Sullivan and Owner Chris Wilmott
75 were present for the discussion. Mr. O’Sullivan stated that the garage vent location had been
76 chosen because it would be the least visible location from the street. They were also requesting to
77 install new bluestone caps of one inch or less above grade to be installed around the window wells.

78
79 The Chair opened the discussion to public comment and there was none at this time.

80
81 Mr. Elperin expressed confusion over what was intended as the areaway and Mr. O’Sullivan
82 explained that it was meant to include the window wells but not the staircase to the basement. The
83 window wells would not have a metal railing, but the staircase would. Mr. Elperin noted that the
84 Applicants were proposing to install stone veneer inside the wells, and Mr. O’Sullivan stated that
85 this had been included on the original drawing and that the only new element was the bluestone
86 cap.

87
88 Mr. King asked about the changes to the stairs and risers. Mr. O’Sullivan stated that the stairs to the
89 street were old and set at an angle. They proposed to replace the existing bluestone with new
90 bluestone for both the stairs and risers. Mr. Jack asked about the condition of the stones. Mr.
91 Panciera suggested that if the stairs were worn that they could be flipped to get the same effect as
92 replacing them.

93
94 Mr. King asked about the proposed changes to the generator enclosure and asked if they could
95 build a box around it to screen it from view. Mr. O’Sullivan was not sure whether this could be

96 done and meet clearance requirements. Mr. King asked about the height of the proposed fencing.
97 Mr. O'Sullivan anticipated that it would be 3'-4' as needed to screen the generator.

98 Concerning the vents, Mr. King thought that their location and size was reasonable, particularly
99 when viewed from high Street. Mr. Wilmott explained that one would be less obtrusive as it would
100 be flat while the other would hook down so that it did not need the canopy. Mr. Batchelor moved to
101 approve the bathroom vents as proposed to be clad in copper. Mr. King seconded the motion and
102 all voted in favor.

103
104 Mr. King asked if the Applicant was open to turning over the stone steps rather than replacing
105 them. Mr. Wilmott stated that he did not need to do this work at the moment and Mr. O'Sullivan
106 suggested that they could work this issue out with a subcommittee in the future. Mr. Panciera did
107 not think that replacing the stones was a deal breaker but thought reusing them was worth trying.
108 Mr. Elperin noted that the existing steps were not original to the house and would weather soon.
109 Mr. Batchelor thought that the existing steps had a nice dimension to them and suggested that a
110 good quality stone be used and the depth replicated. Mr. Elperin moved to accept the in-kind
111 replacement of the stone steps with the suggestion that the owner consider reusing the existing
112 steps if possible. Mr. King seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

113
114 For the cladding of the areaways, Mr. Elperin stated that he generally preferred concrete over
115 veneer and that he would rather not see a mix of the two. Mr. King thought that if a veneer was
116 used, that it should be dimensional and not thin. It was agreed that the Owner had latitude to do
117 whatever he chose inside the areaways. Commission Members preferred to see the concrete
118 areaways sheared off at grade. Mr. Wilmott asked if the stairwell could be finished in a stone
119 veneer. Mr. Batchelor noted that stone veneers looked their worst at outside corners. He thought
120 that the thinness would be less visible on a flat wall with only inside corners. It was also suggested
121 that any stone veneer should be at least three to four inches thick.

122
123 Mr. King asked if the foundation of the addition was concrete and Mr. Wilmott answered yes. Mr.
124 King thought that it would look strange if the areaways were veneer and the rest of the foundation
125 was concrete. Mr. O'Sullivan summarized that the areaways could have a bluestone cap with a
126 stone veneer of at least three to four inches thick and stated that a sample would be shown to staff
127 before installation. It was clarified that real and not cultured stone had to be used. A question was
128 raised about the range of stone color to be used. Commission Members agreed that it should match
129 the existing stone foundation of the house as closely as possible. Mr. Batchelor moved to find that
130 the areaways which are visible to the street can be finished in concrete or stone veneer to match the
131 foundation of the house so long as the stone is three to four inches thick with a sample to be
132 approved by staff, that the interior of the areaways can be finished in a stone veneer of lesser
133 dimension, and that a bluestone cap can be installed on all of the areaways. Mr. Jack seconded the
134 motion and all voted in favor.

135
136 It was noted that the railing on the front porch was on a separate application which staff was
137 reviewing. A subcommittee would be called to review this element if necessary.

138
139 Mr. O'Sullivan explained why the side façade was better than the rear roof slope for the new
140 garage vent. Mr. Elperin thought that if the vent could not go through the roof, then it should go
141 through the right side of the garage rather than negatively impact the neighbors on the left side. Mr.
142 King agreed that another location would be preferred. Mr. Batchelor asked if the Applicant had
143 investigated other types of vents and Mr. Elperin noted that the specifications allowed for an up to
144 thirty foot vent which could accommodate other locations on the building. Mr. Panciera asked if it

145 could be installed on the rear façade and was told that that façade was too low. Mr. O’Sullivan
146 asked if it could be approved in its current location as a shorter vent. Mr. King stated that the vent
147 was not acceptable in its current location and asked the Applicant to consider other options
148 including different types of heating systems. Mr. King moved to continue the discussion of the
149 garage vent to a future hearing. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion and all voted in favor.
150

151 **16 Prescott Street (Cottage Farm LHD) – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to**
152 **remove an existing mid-twentieth century addition to the house, construct a new addition to**
153 **the rear façade, construct a new addition and side entrance in place of the existing entrance**
154 **porch on the left façade, replace existing steel windows, install new windows and window**
155 **openings in the existing masonry, and remove existing skylights and a corner chimney**
156 **(Miquel and Laura de Icaza, applicant)**
157

158 Ms. Kritzer presented the case report. Architect Kyle Sheffield, LDA Architects, and Owner
159 Miquel de Icaza were present for the discussion. Mr. Sheffield stated that the Owners currently
160 lived in the Cottage Farm District and planned to do a complete restoration of the building. The
161 previous owners had lived at 16 Prescott Street for fifty years and had never used the chimneys.
162 The windows had all been caulked shut and the casement arms removed and discarded. They were
163 putting together a team of specialists to restore the house and address the deferred maintenance.
164 Mr. Sheffield stated that they were just beginning to develop their plans for the site but anticipated
165 that they would need to repoint the house. They were hoping to keep the existing slate roof and
166 were having it evaluated. Tar had been installed over the copper flashing in some locations, and
167 they were working to unearth the original elements.
168

169 The only operable window in the building was located on the third floor. Mr. Sheffield explained
170 that condensation on the interior had caused dripping that had damaged the sills and jambs of the
171 windows. He stated that they planned to restore the stained glass window in the main staircase and
172 stay true to the building’s original character by removing later changes to the left side of the house
173 which had been previously gutted and altered. This included reconfiguring some interior elements
174 and the relocation of the back staircase. Mr. Sheffield explained how the interior changes were
175 leading to the new window configurations on each façade. At the rear of the house, a ca. 1955
176 addition and several Koi ponds would be removed to improve the yard and make the garage a
177 freestanding structure again.
178

179 Members asked if the house had existing window wells. Mr. Sheffield stated that they planned to
180 infill the existing ones, many of which were already covered. It was noted that the new side entry
181 porch would have a cast stone cap but that it had to stay in the same location as the existing porch
182 to meet zoning requirements. The design of the new porch was drawn from the design of the front
183 bay and intended to draw the side entrance into the building.
184

185 A copper clad glass addition is proposed for the rear (east) elevation which is intended to pick up
186 on elements from the existing house and take advantage of the rear yard. Mr. Sheffield explained
187 that the Prescott and Euston facades of the building were highly composed but the north and east
188 facades felt like afterthoughts and the 1950s rear addition already obscured part of that façade.
189 Other changes to the rear façade would include reworking the existing window plan and second
190 floor. On the Euston Street façade, they were also proposing to install a new staircase and retaining
191 walls to allow access to the basement from the yard. They were hoping to use landscaping rather
192 than a railing around the edge of the opening.
193

194 Mr. Sheffield stated that the existing windows were by far the biggest issue that the project is
195 dealing with due to deferred maintenance and inappropriate repairs. He stated that he had wanted to
196 introduce the project to the Commission tonight and hoped that an empowered subcommittee could
197 be formed to work with the Applicant and their consultants on the project.
198

199 The Chair opened the discussion to public comment and there was none at this time.
200

201 Mr. King noted that they were happy to see that the skylights would be removed and thanked the
202 Applicants for taking on the building. Mr. Elperin expressed concern with losing the asymmetry of
203 the facades with the new window openings and replacement windows. He asked if they had any
204 proof that the entrance on the north façade was a later addition. Mr. Sheffield pointed out that the
205 bricks were not woven into the masonry of the façade and that the wooden entablature was the only
206 one like it on the building. Mr. Elperin thought that the door interaction was unusual and that the
207 existing entrance lent a human scale to a large and imposing façade. He was not sure that he
208 proposed new side entrance was a successful solution. Mr. Sheffield explained that they were
209 restricted by zoning on the location of the porch and were working within those constraints.
210

211 Mr. Elperin respected the idea of the glass addition on the rear façade but thought that the massive
212 gable above looked unsupported. He also thought that the north elevation was handsome as it was.
213 He did not mind the loss of the chimney as there were still three other major chimneys on the
214 house.
215

216 Mr. Batchelor thought that the ratio of glass to masonry was important on the historic facades and
217 would like to see the project remain closer to the existing ratio. Mr. Sheffield noted that they were
218 working with Hope Windows on potential steel replacement windows. He presented photos of the
219 damaged headers and window jamb and lead caning. He explained that the windows and their
220 installation was typical of university buildings and were custom made with thin edges that would
221 be complicated to restore. Mr. Sheffield added that they also hoped to bring the building up to Leed
222 certification and that the windows were a crucial part of that plan. Mr. Panciera stated that he had
223 dealt with similar issues at Yale and Harvard and understood the struggle but leaned towards the
224 restoration of the windows as it would be a shame to lose that historic fabric. Mr. Jack noted that
225 this was an extremely involved project and thought the comments were a good start.
226

227 Mr. King was sorry to see the fourth chimney removed and would prefer it if there was some way
228 to save it. He wondered if the basement stairs could be pushed to the other side of the house and
229 agreed that the ratio of windows to façade was important and would like to see more of the
230 openings retained. Mr. Sheffield stated that they had had an initial discussion about the windows
231 with staff and agreed that it would be a shame to lose the decorative old glass. They were trying to
232 balance this, though, with making the house meet LEED requirements. Mr. King also thought that
233 the modern spirit of the addition was fine.
234

235 Mr. King moved to continue the discussion to an unempowered subcommittee to further review of
236 the project and its design details in order to make a recommendation to the full Commission. Mr.
237 Elperin seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Mr. Elperin, Ms. Ecker, and Mr. Panciera were
238 appointed to the subcommittee.
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243 **PUBLIC HEARINGS – DEMOLITION**

244

245 **95 Welland Road – Continuation of a request to lift the stay of partial demolition of the house**
246 **(Stephen Whalen, applicant)**

247

248 Mr. Birmingham presented the case report. Attorney Shayna Duff was present along with Owner
249 Stephen Whalen and Embarc Architect Ryan Spragg. Ms. Duff stated that the house had been
250 reduced in size since the Commission’s last review and had received a unanimous approval from
251 the Planning Board. Mr. Spragg explained that the design had been altered to include the
252 suggestions made at the last meeting by the Commission and abutters. They had pared down the
253 materials and eliminated the shed dormer on the third floor and felt the addition was now at a more
254 appropriate scale to the existing house. The abutter to the rear of the house was now very happy
255 with the scaled down plan.

256

257 Mr. King opened the discussion to public comment and there was none at this time.

258

259 Mr. Elperin thought that the design was a huge improvement. Mr. Panciera agreed that the addition
260 was now more sympathetic to the existing house. He stated that he would prefer to see less
261 symmetry in the rear facing gable ends but did not think that a change was essential. Mr. Batchelor
262 asked whether the stucco to be used on the addition would meet the brick at a knife edge. Mr. Stagg
263 answered yes as that is the existing condition. Mr. Batchelor asked if there was a way for the
264 stucco to wrap around the side of the façade. Several options were discussed but member agreed
265 that no change was required. Mr. Panciera thought that the proposed treatment was very typical for
266 this type of house.

267

268 Mr. Elperin moved to accept the design as submitted with staff to review the final details and
269 construction drawings. Ms. Ecker seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

270

271 **76 Verndale Street – Request to lift the stay of partial demolition of the house (76 Verndale**
272 **LLC, applicant)**

273

274 Ms. Birmingham presented the case report. Attorney Scot Gladstone reviewed the proposed
275 changes to the existing house. The Applicants wanted to match the design of other houses and were
276 proposing to alter the design of the front façade, install a new roof with dormers, and move the
277 garage from the rear façade to the front façade to provide more backyard area. Mr. Gladstone noted
278 that the neighborhood had an eclectic collection of styles and roof types and thought that
279 everything that was proposed was typical of the neighborhood. They also needed to repair the
280 foundation, and removing and replacing the roof would help with that cost.

281

282 Mr. King opened the discussion to public comment and there was none at this time.

283

284 Mr. Elperin suggested that they draw more directly from the surrounding homes for their design. If
285 they wanted a gable-end façade similar to the one on Kenmore, then they should consider the taller
286 pitches and stronger form of that structure as well. He suggested that they pull the gable-end
287 forward slightly and add a full band of trim along the bottom edge. Mr. Panciera agreed that the
288 stronger details would make the building more interesting. Mr. King suggested that they pull the
289 dormers back at the center of the side facades to create a break. Members had no objections to
290 adding the garage in the front façade as this would not be the first example on the street.

291

292 Mr. Elperin moved to accept the plans with the exception that the front façade gable-end be moved
293 to project farther forward and create a stronger form at the ridge, with the suggestion that the owner
294 consider raising the pitch of the roof if possible and indent the center of the shed dormer with
295 balconies to break up the long form, and with the final design to be approved by staff in order to lift
296 the stay of demolition. Mr. Batchelor seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

297

298 **85 Dean Road – Request to lift the stay of partial demolition of the house and garage (Alan**
299 **Kurd and Katharine Esselen, applicant)**

300

301 Ms. Kritzer presented the case report. Owner Alan Kurd explained that they loved the design of
302 the existing house but needed to add storage. They had drawn from the existing building to
303 create the new addition. There were no proposed changes to the existing interior and the
304 materials of the addition would match those of the existing house. He stated that they did not
305 want the addition to be a prominent part of the house.

306

307 Mr. King asked for public comment and there was none at this time.

308

309 Mr. Elperin thought that the gambrel roof over the garage was reasonable but that the
310 connection was awkward and needed a simpler roof form. Mr. King asked if the intent of the
311 connector design was to avoid the existing bay window and the owner stated that it was. Mr.
312 Panciera agreed that the shed roof of the connector was problematic and suggested that it either
313 pitch down or match the pitch of the gambrel. Mr. Kurd explained how the roof and addition
314 had been stepped back in the rear to meet the zoning requirements. Mr. Panciera suggested
315 installing a low pitched shed roof on the stairs. Mr. Batchelor agreed that this would be a good
316 solution if the change did not impact the interior headroom. Mr. Kurd was asked to try and
317 resolve this design issue and to work with staff plus one Commission Member to develop a
318 plan which lowered the connector's roof.

319

320 Mr. Batchelor moved to approve the addition in concept subject to the Applicant and his
321 Architect meeting with an empowered subcommittee of one Commission Member plus staff to
322 look at the resolution of the connecting roof between the two buildings. It was also suggested
323 that Polly Selkoe be invited to the meeting or asked to review the plans to make sure that any
324 changes do not impact the Zoning Board of Appeals decision for the property. Mr. Jack
325 seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Mr. Panciera volunteered to serve on the
326 subcommittee of one.

327

328 **NEW BUSINESS AND UPDATES**

329

330 There was no new business at this time.

331

332 The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.