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Brookline Preservation Commission
MINUTES OF THE JULY 28th MEETING
Held virtually via Zoom

Commissioners Present:

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

Commissioners Absent:

Peter Kleiner

Staff: Valerie Birmingham, Tina McCarthy

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

Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)

No public comment.

PUBLIC HEARINGS- Local Historic Districts

16 Prescott Street (Cottage Farm LHD) - Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to install exterior lighting on the house and garage (Miguel and Laura De Icaza, applicants).

Ms. Birmingham presented the case report.

Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to public comment on the case; there was none.

Mr. Sheffield introduced himself as the architect for the project and stated that there were pre-existing floodlights on the house. Mr. King asked if there were patio lights; Mr. Sheffield said there were.

Mr. Elperin stated that some lights are required by code for safety: doors, front lantern. He recalled that the previous application had already permitted more lighting than is normal for a historic district and expressed aversion to allowing any more lighting, specifying the flood lights and those flanking the windows as problematic.

Ms. Ecker stated that floodlights are important in an emergency. Mr. Elperin asked how the floodlights were triggered. Mr. Sheffield stated that they were for emergency only, on motion detectors linked to the alarm system. Given these specifications, Mr. Jack had no objection to the floodlights. Mr. Elperin asked how the Commission could be sure that the use of the lights would

47 not change in the future. Mr. Sheffield explained that they are tied into the security system and
48 there is no switch to turn them on.

49
50 Mr. Elperin asked the Commissioners what they thought about the size of the lights. Mr. Jack
51 stated that he was OK with the size of the lights and the floodlights provided that they function as
52 described. He expressed reservations about the wall lights. Ms. Ecker asked if other lights lighted
53 the area. Mr. Elperin thought the interior light in the house would. Mr. Sheffield responded that
54 only the low path lights were in that area. Mr. Batchelor asked Mr. Sheffield to point out the
55 sconces on the plan, asking if they could be used to light the landscape. The placement options for
56 these lights were discussed. Commissioners agreed that low wall lights would be preferable to
57 those proposed.

58
59 Mr. King made a motion to accept the lighting plan as submitted, with the exception of the wall
60 lights. The lights should be set lower on the wall, 24" high at maximum, leaving the review of this
61 detail to staff. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

62
63 **98 Crowninshield Road (Crowninshield LHD)**— Application for a Certificate of
64 Appropriateness to construct a one story rear mudroom addition, new front gable dormer, new rear
65 shed dormer, and modifications to the basement egress (Estee Weinrib, applicant).

66
67 Ms. Birmingham presented the case.

68
69 David Boronkay spoke about the precedent for a front facing dormer on the street and
70 explained that the materials would match the existing house.

71
72 Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to public comment; there was none.

73
74 Mr. King commented that the requested change was big and could not recall a case where
75 similar changes were allowed on the façade of a house. Mr. Jack agreed that the front dormer
76 was not in keeping with the house, adding that he had no problem with the basement egress or
77 rear dormer. Mr. Batchelor agreed with these statements, noting that the other dormers on the
78 street are set back further and smaller.

79
80 Ms. Ecker objected to the pediment design of the dormer. Mr. Jack agreed that the pediment
81 made the dormer compete visually with the roof. Mr. Elperin added that the pediment looked
82 peculiar and unique, though thoughtfully done. He stated that the dormer was too large and the
83 pilasters made it dominate the façade.

84
85 The Commissioners discussed whether the gang of 4 windows in the dining room was visible
86 and should therefore have single pane construction. Mr. Elperin noted that it was obstructed by
87 vegetation, which should not be considered, but given the distance it is impossible to tell if it
88 would be visible. Mr. Jack stated that it was quite a distance from Copley Street and that there
89 could be flexibility. Mr. Panciera agreed.

90
91 Discussion returned to the dormer on the front of the house. Mr. Boronkay and the
92 Commissioners discussed design options to avoid placing a dormer on the front of the house.

93 Mr. King suggested the architect explore adding additional space at the rear. Commissioners
94 supported this idea.

95
96 Mr. Elperin made a motion to approve the addition to the rear; approve the window well
97 capped with bluestone and window; approve the chimney; approve the rear dormer and to deny
98 the construction of the dormer at the front. He invited the applicant to submit revisions to the
99 dormer at the rear if they chose in order to gain additional space on the interior. He explained
100 that these revisions, if submitted, would go to an empowered subcommittee. Mr. Jack
101 seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Mr. Panciera and Mr. Elperin volunteered to serve
102 on the subcommittee if the applicant wanted to revise the plans.

103
104 Mr. Panciera made a motion to approve the windows on the rear of the first floor, which was
105 not included in the original application, via 10-Day letter with review by staff; Mr. Elperin
106 seconded the motion. As part of further discussion, Mr. King stated that the approval of
107 insulated glass windows goes against the guidelines. Mr. King requested that a disclaimer
108 about the distance making these windows highly minimally visible, if at all, be added to the
109 motion. The motion was amended to include that double pane windows were allowed due to
110 the distance from a public way, as well as the shadow under the rear porch. All voted in favor.

111
112 Ms. Birmingham asked if the shed dormer windows could be double pane. Mr. King stated
113 that they were on the main body of the house and therefore must be single pane. Mr. Elperin
114 stated that they had already been determined that this elevation was minimally visible due to
115 the distance and argued that they could be insulated glass. Mr. Jack and Mr. Panciera agreed
116 with Mr. Elperin. Mr. King maintained that he was less in favor of insulated glass in the
117 dormer, as he felt it was more visible in this location. Mr. Batchelor asked to have an
118 amendment to the previous motion, as he also felt the roof location was more visible. Mr.
119 Elperin made a motion to amend the previous motion to require single pane glass in the rear
120 dormer. Mr. King seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

121
122 Ms. Armstrong asked about possible changes to the approved rear dormer. Mr. Elperin stated
123 that he felt that any possible revisions could be handled with the subcommittee. Mr. Boronkay
124 stated that he would like to have the option to work with a subcommittee if they have difficulty
125 with the redesign of the plan on the interior of the top floor as they were denied the front
126 dormer.

127
128 **228 Pleasant Street (Crowninshield LHD)** - Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness
129 to modify existing dormers, modify an existing window to a door, remove one kitchen window,
130 build new entry steps for the side porch and install new basement window with window well
131 (Chadi Kawkabani, applicant)

132
133 Ms. McCarthy presented the case.

134
135 Mr. Kawkabani, owner, stated that he saw many large buildings in the immediate
136 neighborhood and argued that the setting of his house is not coherent.

137
138 Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to public comment; there was none.

139
140 Mr. Elperin suggested centering the window well on the windows above; Mr. Jack and Mr.
141 Panciera agreed. Mr. Elperin noted that the kitchen window was off center in the plans. The
142 Commissioners discussed the placement of interior kitchen items to make room for the
143 centered window and recommended that the applicant make this change.
144

145 The discussion turned to the porch steps on the Adam's Street side of the house. Mr. Jack
146 commented that the steps were fine but that it was a shame to lose the entire railing at the back
147 of the porch. Mr. Elperin noted that the stair rail in the plans required reworking to meet code.
148 The Commissioners and the applicant discussed code requirements and the applicant agreed to
149 find an answer to this problem.
150

151 The modifications to the second floor of the porch were discussed next. Mr. Elperin asked
152 about code compliance for the occupied space, given that the applicant was requesting a new
153 door to the second floor deck. Mr. Kawkabani responded that he may raise or replicate the
154 porch rail. Mr. Elperin and Mr. Jack agreed that they would need to see all of the details
155 together in order to understand the request. Mr. Panciera added that the door would be
156 acceptable at the width of the current window but also agreed that the door and the rail needed
157 to be looked at holistically. Mr. King agreed, noting that it would be tricky to balance all of
158 the changes on this elevation.
159

160 The next item of discussion was the proposed dormer. Mr. Elperin stated that option 1 should
161 not be allowed. Mr. Panciera agreed, adding that it was foreign to the house. Mr. Jack stated
162 that he questioned any dormers on this house given the high visibility of all sides from the
163 street. Mr. Panciera and Mr. Elperin agreed with this, adding that the skylights should be
164 discouraged where visible as they are not appropriate. Mr. Elperin noted that the tile roof was
165 a very prominent feature of this house and key to its character.

166 Mr. Batchelor offered that he was not discouraged about the potential for a dormer on the rear
167 of the building, given the asymmetry existing on that elevation. He added that the 2nd floor
168 porch rail should be kept, with a code compliant rail behind it if necessary. Mr. King agreed
169 that the rear dormer could work and that the skylights were inappropriate. Ms. Armstrong
170 agreed with the previous consensus about not allowing the front dormer but also thought that a
171 rear dormer could work. Ms. Ecker suggested that possibly there could be two dormers at the
172 rear (one exists already).
173

174 Mr. Elperin motioned to approve the proposed window well, centered; approve the removal of
175 one of the kitchen window sash, aligning the remaining one with the 2nd floor window above.
176 Mr. Jack seconded the motion, all voted in favor.
177

178 The Adams Street façade changes were discussed further. Mr. King moved to send the steps,
179 railings, door on second floor to an empowered subcommittee. Mr. Jack seconded the motion.
180 All voted in favor. Mr. King and Mr. Jack volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.
181

182 Mr. Jack made a motion to deny dormer option 1. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion, all voted
183 in favor. Mr. King made a motion to accept dormer option 2. Mr. Jack seconded the motion;
184 all voted in favor.

185
186 Mr. King motioned to deny the proposed skylights. Mr. Jack seconded the motion, all voted in
187 favor.

188
189

190 **PUBLIC HEARINGS – Demolition**

191

192 **41 University Road** – Application for the full demolition of the house (University Road Realty,
193 LLC applicant).

194

195 Ms. Birmingham presented the case report.

196

197 Mr. Allen spoke as the lawyer representing the case. He conceded to the building’s significance.

198

199 Mr. Elperin asked for public comment on the case. R. Caminos, neighbor, noted that this was the
200 first they had heard of the plans for this house. They stated that the home is a mirror of their own
201 and it would be a shame to lose it. Michael Stone, neighbor, stated that his home was of a similar
202 vintage as this property and should be preserved.

203

204 Mr. Jack moved to uphold the determination of significance. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion and
205 all voted in favor.

206

207 **106 Sargent Road** - Application for the full demolition of the building. (Sargent Road 106 Realty
208 LLC, applicant)

209

210 The applicant was having technical difficulties so the next case was heard to allow time for the
211 problems to be fixed.

212

213 **45 Stearns Road** – Request to lift the stay of demolition of the house (Access Development,
214 applicant).

215

216 Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.

217

218 Dan Adelson speaks on behalf of the case and explained his company’s history working with
219 historic properties. Amir noted that the scale would remain consistent with the neighborhood and
220 there would be no change in use (4 units total, existing and proposed).

221

222 Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to public comment but there was none at this time.

223

224 Mr. Jack expressed appreciation for the design, noting that the neighborhood has been transitioning
225 with a lot of development.

226

227 Ms. Ecker asked what materials were proposed. Amir responded that the cladding would be a
228 cementitious shingle product with mitered corners, with the lower section a darker color than the
229 upper and a concrete base.

230

231 Mr. King asked the applicant to explain why they could not save the old building. Amir cited
232 damage and previous alterations, noting that it was not worth it because it was not a significant
233 building. Mr. Allen added that the structural engineer said the foundation was bad and gave
234 anecdotal evidence about his experience working on the building in the past. Mr. Adelson agreed
235 that the additions were DIY creations and that the foundation was cracked and falling apart.
236

237 Mr. Elperin expressed regret about losing the building but noted that he also appreciated the new
238 design. The Commissioners discussed what evidence would be necessary to determine the building
239 cannot be saved and what mitigation might be expected. Mr. Batchelor recalled that engineer's
240 assessments have been required in the past. Ms. Ecker mentioned the possibility of obtaining
241 photographic documentation of the existing home. Mr. Panciera asked the applicant what other
242 approvals they needed to obtain. Mr. Allen indicated that zoning relief was also required.
243

244 Mr. Batchelor motioned to create a subcommittee to engage in design review in conjunction with
245 Planning Board; in addition the applicant should submit a structural conditions report, prepare a
246 history of the building including where it was moved from and submit a photographic record of the
247 existing building. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion, all voted in favor.
248

249 **106 Sargent Road** - Application to lift the stay of full demolition of the building. (Sargent Road
250 106 Realty LLC, applicant)
251

252 Ms. McCarthy presented the case report.
253

254 Mr. Russ, architect for the case, explained the reasoning behind the current design. The proposed
255 house would be located where the driveway is currently.
256

257 Mr. Elperin opened the discussion to public comment; there was none.
258

259 Mr. Elperin stated that the siting and architecture of the new building is very different from the
260 existing. He highlighted the location of the building, 50' closer to the road and noted that the
261 existing building cannot be seen from the road. Mr. King agreed about the differences between the
262 buildings. He asked if the new building should be expected to be as discrete as the original, given
263 that discretion was not the intention of the current design. Ms. Ecker added that the building was
264 large but not out of place in the neighborhood. Ms. Armstrong agreed.
265

266 Mr. Elperin expressed interest in reviewing the site layout and added that the existing building
267 would be interesting to document.
268

269 Ms. Armstrong made a motion to accept the applicant's invitation to engage in design review, to be
270 completed in a subcommittee and returned to the full Commission for approval. The subcommittee
271 was also tasked with reviewing the applicant's submission of photographic documentation and
272 floorplans of the existing building. Mr. Elperin seconded the motion; all voted in favor. Ms.
273 Armstrong and Mr. Elperin volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.
274

275 Mr. Jack made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:18 PM.
276
277