

Minutes

Historic District Commission

October 26, 2005

6:30p.m.

Lower Hearing Room

Members Present: Steiner

Sternberg

Martocchia

Petrie

Pasulka

Childs

Members Absent: Carter

Staff Present: Hayward, Collins

Public Present: See Attached Sign –In Form

1. 39 Marshall Street – HDO-04-02

The AC units are to be relocated. Hayward is to write a letter to Orchanian to move the units establishing a timeline for the move. Hayward is to identify the penalty of \$10 day in this letter.

2. 247 Mount Auburn – CH

Hayward is to write a letter requesting when they will be coming before the HDC with the sign design.

3. 91 Mount Auburn – CA

HDC inquired about the status of this kitchen improvement/addition project.

Martocchia suggested that a list of all the projects be created to review each meeting.

Petrie suggested that the Preservation Agent stroll by each project each month to update the status for each meeting.

Childs suggested that the MHC be conferred with about the closure of projects. Hayward is to check on outstanding Certificates each month.

4. Public Hearing Continued – 120 Mount Auburn Street, CASCAP, Certificate of Applicability – HDO-05-08

Kimberly O'Brien, CASCAP, apologized for the oversight in the installation of the exterior lighting, and fence without HDC approval.

O'Brien reported that the fence was placed after the tree and overgrown plant material was removed. It was a last minute response to vegetation removal. She noted that it was a cedar fence and that the color will change as it ages. The fence matches the railing details of the structure and period photographs of the building.

O'Brien stated that it was brought to her attention that the exterior lighting was too bright and too large and that it did not meet HDC members taste. The lighting fixtures were changed and the brightness was decreased by 75%.

Lighting:

Sternberg noted that the cording to the lamps was too visible. She wondered whether the cord could be made less visible and whether a less industrial fixture could be used.

Robert Meyer, architect for CASCAP, reported that he had selected a contemporary fixture for the contemporary usage. He selected it for its durability.

Petrie suggested taking the fixture off and placing it on the junction point. He also suggested taking the cage off.

Sternberg thought the fixture was too industrial for residential usage. She wanted the lighting to be in keeping with the neighborhood. She wanted the cage removed.

Childs did not like the fixture or the cage, but she wanted to consider the needs of the elderly residents. She suggested that they look at other elderly housing for lighting. She wanted the cage removed.

Steiner wanted to see different lights.

Petrie inquired whether a dimmer could be installed. Meyer thought it was possible.

Meyer suggested painting the street side of the bulb or the glass to decrease the street lighting. Petrie suggested that a mock-up be made to view. Petrie and Sternberg to review the lighting mock up.

The HDC concurred that the lighting fixtures in the front of the building was satisfactory.

Fence:

The fence options to be discussed were to reverse the fence; change the color; or have CASCAP remove the fence.

Petrie felt the fence was satisfactory and wanted it to remain. He suggested staining it white and to place a cap on the post to dress it up.

Steiner recommended that the item be continued for the next month meeting on November 16th.

5. Proposed Historic District – Update, Review and Discussion

Bob Shay presented the Preliminary Study Report for the Proposed Brigham Historic District. He reported that the Watertown Historic District was used as the model in creating the new district in consultation with Roberta Lane, Chairman of the Historical Commission and Chris Skelly at MHC. He proposed that the inventory of properties become part of the Watertown Historic Inventory.

Martocchia inquired whether before voting on accepting the Preliminary Study Report for the Proposed Historic District there should be comments from the public. Steiner responded that there was no need for public discussion to accept the Study and submit it to MHC.

Vote: Petrie moved to accept the Preliminary Study Report for the Proposed Brigham Historic District and submit it to the MHC. Sternberg seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Rick LaPierre, 86 Lovell Road, was concerned about the increase of time and money to a project.

Edward Viola, 136 Russell Avenue, did not want additional property controls, and was concerned about the lack of possible reasonableness by oversight members.

Ruth Plaut Weinreb, 119 Russell Avenue, was concerned about the weight of the survey. She was concerned about the exclusion of future residential projects which she felt would be unfair. She was concerned about the process. She wanted to know about the procedure to adopt a HD. She wanted to know who votes on the establishment of the HD. Steiner responded that the Town Council needed a 2/3rds vote and that the survey was a requirement of the process.

John Cuskos, 158 Russell Avenue, wanted to know if he did an enclosed screen-in porch would he need an application.

Christian Knowland, 57 Knowland Avenue, wondered why the district was paired back. Shay responded that the district was too large by MHC standards. MHC recommended that the district concentrate where there was the highest concentration of architecturally significant structures. Knowland questioned why the top of Russell Avenue was excluded. Shay responded that consistency of architecture was the guideline for boundary delineations.

Thomas Melone, 115 Russell Avenue, thinks that the homes from the 1920 are very different from the homes built in the 1880 and wondered why certain streets were excluded. Russo responded that the streets were selected because of cohesiveness of architectural history.

Beth Parsons, 32 Garfield Street, felt that Barnard Street was more consistent with Russell Avenue than others selected. Russo noted that the delineation was based on MHC's suggested guidelines and there was some arbitrariness. Shay suggested that Barnard Avenue and Belleview Road may be excellent candidates for a HDC after the proposed one. He felt there were more likely to be approved if the area had a precedent.

Ken Leitner was concerned that there weren't enough town resources to fill another board.

Stephanie Hodal, 32 Garfield, was concerned about the cost and controls that would be imposed by an HD. She wanted information about the next step in the process and the pros and cons of a HD. She wanted more information, in particular, from communities that have HD. Shay responded that more informational meetings would be set up.

Edward Viola was concerned about the power of the future HDC. He was concerned that the vote to submit the Preliminary Study was done without discussion, in particular, when Martocchia questioned whether there should be discussion before a vote.

Ruth Weinreb questioned whether the group voted against submission would the process stop. Shay noted that the document would be taken to Town Council for a vote and they had the power to adopt the HD or not.

George Cuskos was not satisfied without a discussion on the submittal.

Christian Knowland noted that a case for a historic district could be made for any street in Watertown.

Rick LaPierre, 45 Bringham, questioned why roofs, walks or fences were excluded.

Christian Knowland questioned whether the final decision of a HD rests with Town Council. Shay responded that it did by a 2/3rds vote.

Steiner noted that he would be willing to meet with the group each week but he demanded that they be there and that they read the Design Review Guidelines.

Martocchia said he valued hearing the comments from the neighborhood.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50pm.