



**Arlington Historic District Commissions
Final & Approved Minutes**

Date: April 25, 2019
Time: 8:00pm
Location: Whittemore Robbins House, 670R Mass. Ave., Arlington MA

Commissioners Present: N. Aikenhead, D Baldwin, C. Barry, M. Bush, B. Cohen, C. Hamilton, S. Makowka, C. Tee, J. Worden

Commissioners Not Present: M. Audin, S. Lipp

Guests: S. Lundberg, P. Fennelly, A. Olszewski, P. Kraemer, J. Kuhn, P. Dalton, D. Tee, A. Simao, J. Leone, A. Pascale, E. Kostojohn, J. Burhardt

1. AHDC Meeting Opens 8:00pm
2. Appointment of alternate Commissioners
3. Approval of draft minutes from March 28, 2019. Pg.
4. Communications
 - a. See List
 - b. S. Makowka reported on the meeting document management system with the Town
 - c. Unauthorized work done at the old St John's parsonage. Building dept. has been involved and keeping us up to speed
 - d. Discussion about S. Lipp's resignation
 - e. D. Baldwin said next Monday meeting on saving AHS
5. OPEN FORUM
Ordinarily, any matter presented to the Commission under Open Forum will neither be acted upon nor a formal decision made, absent a previously noticed agenda item, but the Commission may make a decision if it deems it appropriate and necessary for the public good.
6. Other Business
 - a. Central Street and Avon Place Historic District vacant commissioner seat
 - b. Discussion on Guidelines
 - c. Report from Streetscape sub-committee
7. New Business 8:00pm
 - a. Formal Hearing for 41 Westminster Ave. (AKA Lot 1A) (Kuhn) for

construction of a new building on the lot at 41 Westminster Ave. S. Makowka began with a statement. His overview for the evening is he would provide some background; the Commission would consider a vote to rescind prior denial; if passes, the reopened hearing would then proceed with a presentation from Applicant, then questions from commissioners and public input.

S. Makowka provided a bit of background for context. This hearing arises out of Applicants Appeal of the AHDC denial at the first stage of review. The parties opted to see if there was some possibility to find common ground in an effort to resolve the Appeal itself and thus avoid the uncertainties associated with outcomes under a litigation process. In order to do that, they have agreed to stay the litigation and pursue an alternative course. In particular, an issue raised by the Commission during the hearing was a concern about the visual impact of the proposed house and walls. He noted that the November 2017 proposal already incorporated much of the feedback received from the Commission prior to the denial of its earlier proposal. Under this process, the Applicant considered additional alterations that might further address that issue. The suggested changes, as detailed in the settlement, offer improvements to the proposal. To be clear, that revised proposal has not been approved by the Commission. We have agreed to reopen the normal hearing process and move forward with consideration of additional information from the Applicant and from the Public. Nothing has been done or decided. Ultimately, any Certificate of Appropriateness is contingent on an affirmative vote of the Commission.

S. Makowka clarified that the participating members for tonight's hearing (participated in original hearing) were N Aikenhead, Baldwin, Tee, Worden Barry (at large), Bush (Mt Gilboa), and Makowka (appointed).

C. Barry made motion to rescind denial and M. Bush seconded. Five votes in favor with D. Baldwin and J. Worden abstaining, approved 5-0-2. S. Makowka noted that all prior materials received are part of the record and are before the Commission. They are at end of phase 1 of 3 step process. Would like to move on to issues of massing – decreasing massing with visual impact of structure in a way that could improve the project. J. Leone presented revised plans which lower the home 2 feet from the prior height by taking foundation and sinking it deeper into ground and taking space from first floor and lowering height wall. Wall reduced 8 ft to 7.5 ft. The roof pitch is 10 over 12. The intention on changes to the back wall is, as best we can, to recess it into the ground dependent on topographical conditions following the contour of the ground. M. Bush expressed concern about imprecise language -- said we have a plot plan with actual numbers. J. Leone agreed to withdraw "as best we can" from his statement.

J. Leone continued: Applicants have provided 3-D (isometric) drawing of the house. All of the details and spec work from November 2017 remains the

same. M. Bush said there have been numerous factual inaccuracies from the Applicant over the course of the hearings for a house on this site. For example, many iterations of size of other properties, but he states it is clear from the record that this house is above the 90th percentile of houses in the neighborhood. Question by J. Worden about what he remembers as the upper wall behind the house. J. Leone clarified that they are going for a variance to do away with the 8% grade requirement (useable area) that would require addition grading above the wall immediately behind the house. If they do need to regrade, there will not be a finished wall at the top of that graded area -- instead there will be a naturalistic "outcropping" of natural ledge.

S. Makowka asked about wall across the front of the property. His understanding is that it is to be built out of natural stone from the site to match existing walls as close as possible to make it blend in. Also, the top of the wall will follow the slope of the street so the idea would be the street facing wall would have a natural decline with the grade of the street with perforations for stair and garage consistent with other walls in the neighborhood. J. Leone and Applicant confirmed that was intention with the slight clarification that they might to procure additional stone if not enough is available on site. They agreed that stone should match nearby existing conditions as much as possible and agreed to do full scale sample of wall construction for monitor review and approval. M. Bush said other thing that was very much an open question was the detailing on the stairs going up from street. He feels that there is a substantial amount of uncertainty about what that will look like and the process to determine what that would be – particularly south elevation on package. He also noted that the wall to right of garage and immediately adjacent to garage are shown as level which is not correct and should follow grade of street. Also, looking to east elevation, he noted a technical error where the plot plan says the rear stair landing falls at 133' or so and that stair landing should be visible in this elevation and it is not, thus there appears to be a discrepancy of roughly 3 feet on this elevation. He wanted to make this statement for the record.

S. Makowka questioned the south elevation showing a planter with plantings in the back patio which doesn't show up in the 3D rendering. Has it been removed with curvature of wall or not? The Applicant noted that there is an inconsistency with the 2 drawings and that the 3-D was not quite correct. He confirmed that with the curved wall in the back (as shown on the 3D drawing) the installed planter will still exist even though it does not show on all the plans. This will help break the vertical aspect. S. Makowka clarified that there is a planter in that corner for the record. He also clarified for the record that while the south elevation shows a square wall, it is actually the curved wall as shown in the 3D rendering that is now being proposed and is what will be rendered in the end. S. Makowka noted that the planter is shown in the plot plan of 10/24/18 and drawings of 10/21/2018 (South Elevation).

D. Baldwin asked how much was the massing changed – has it considerably decreased the size? M. Bush said between 11/2017 and now the vertical height has diminished 2 feet, the floor area has remained unchanged. Prior to

that time it had been decreased since 2016. M. Bush said in Jan. 2017 the footprint of the main portion of the house was 40 x 28 and that had changed in the current plan to 38 x 26 – i.e., it has come in 2 feet in both directions and 2 feet down. It was also pointed out that the original plan had additional walls to left and right and in front of the structure and that this proposal diminishes the massing of the wall to right of house by following the existing contours and shrinking the passage way by several feet. Per the plans, the footprint of the proposed structure is 1080 ft so full size is that times two (2 floors) plus the finished attic – so a total of approx. 2600-2700sf.

John Burkhardt, 51 Westminster read a statement for the record dated 4/25/19. (Full copy attached). S. Makowka proposed we move on to Phase 3 to broaden the discussion to include design details to more fully inform the commission's discussions.

M. Bush commented it was too bad M. Audin wasn't here tonight to discuss his prior concerns about house details. J. Leone said they had incorporated everything related to design details that M. Audin had asked for on the exterior products specification packet and complied with his requests as part of their submission for the November 2017 hearing. Question asked about window trim – flat with back band, all wood. M. Bush asked about porch railings and railings above garage. Applicant noted that they have proposed Santini iron works #20 wrought iron railings for the garage and lower stairs. There was an additional question about the railings from front porch down to 1st landing and about railings on porch itself. The Applicant noted that pg. 15 of the materials packet has porch material details. M. Bush pointed out that there are no detailed construction drawings included. He stated that it is typically Commission policy to have a traditional tighter baluster spacing. The applicant agreed to a 3" on center spacing. M. Bush said the Commission typically goes to great lengths to specify the lattice work under porches and that the plans do not include trim detail for the capitals and area where capitals meet porch roof. The Applicant pointed out that the drawings show vertical wood slats on porch and underneath stairways. Per Commission question, Applicant agreed that the skirt boards will come down to grade and that none of underlying concrete footings or foundation will be exposed. The Applicant clarified that the roofing material for porch to be asphalt shingle to match main roof. Per the decorative brackets under bay window as seen in east elevation, the Applicant clarified that the material is all wood and further clarified that there will be zero composite material on the house.

Regarding the veneer stonework on the foundation, the Applicant agreed to the Commission's request that there be a full scale masonry mock up for both the wall at the street and the veneer of stone wall and that they both be approved by the monitor prior to installation. Regarding the materials for the steps up from the street, the Applicant wants to use stone steps and there are a huge variety of options. For front stairs and stairs up – they are thinking risers will be either brown or blue stone tread – granite or blue stone—as recommended by commissioners to match the stone. Risers would be same as well – true stone.

Discussion about stairs in neighborhood. After discussion, Applicant agreed to specify granite treads with natural stone risers.

The Commission asked about the detail for the area above the garage doors on the front face – there is presumably going to be a steel structure – what are the proposed details? The Applicant replied that, in an earlier hearing, M. Audin had proposed to match other garages in neighborhood by using a stucco lentil which they were attempting to show here. The Commission clarified that the final construction details shall match neighborhood with the details to be approved by monitor prior to installation. Applicant agreed.

The applicant further agreed that if a handrail is required (probably is) on the stone wall above the rear patio, it will match other wrought iron railings and that no utilities will be located on the front of the house – they will probably be putting them on the left side. C. Hamilton asked why no chimney. D. Baldwin agreed but consensus among commissioners was that it was not a big deal in this particular situation. M. Bush indicated a preference for putting any through-roof vents on the back of house to the extent possible and applicant agreed.

A neighbor commented that she finds it frustrating that drawings are inconsistent. Architectural interpretation and not engineering drawings cause problems for her and must cause it for Commissioners in her opinion. S. Makowka said the monitor will check on the engineered drawings prior to building. Owner of 109 Westminster said they built a garage and the engineered plans were different from the architectural plans. D. Baldwin said he has heard from neighbors they have always enjoyed “trespassing” on the property – has there ever been any thought of an easement. S. Makowka said that the issue of an easement was beyond the prevue of the HDC. S. Makowka asked an additional question about the trim on the windows – the applicant agreed that they were installing historical full-sized wood sills.

C. Barry moved approval of applicant’s approval of house subject to all of the various stipulations and sundry comments that have been agreed to by the Applicant in this hearing. Seconded by S. Makowka. M. Bush would like to hear that list:

Per the minutes, these include:

- Front wall detail;
- Planter as reflected in some site plan drawing;
- Stone veneer details;
- Wrought iron railings above garage & on lower stairs (if needed);
- No use of composite materials;
- Window trim details;
- Porch detail review with balusters 3 inches on center and vertical slat skirt boards at grade covering concrete footing;
- On site mockup of masonry to be given to monitor for approval

- prior to installation;
- Granite tread with natural stone risers;
- Garage lintel details;
- No utilities located on front façade or through-roof vents on front facing roof; and
- Final engineered drawings to be provided to monitor for approval prior to construction.

S. Makowka asked and J. Leone confirmed that he was okay with stipulating the certificate details could reference additional details from hearing minutes as needed.

J. Worden said he hopes neighborhood will understand that their displeasure is heard and we must determine whether the proposal is totally inappropriate for the district and the HDC is between a rock and a hard place on making this decision.

Voting in favor – S. Makowka, C. Barry, M. Bush, N. Aikenhead
Abstaining – J. Worden, C. Tee, D. Baldwin.
Certificate approved 4-0-3.

Monitors appointed C. Barry and M. Audin.

- b. Informal Hearing re: 7 Jason Street (Jason Russell House) re: door replacement on museum. Sara Lundberg, Dir. For Historical Society said they want to change the entry door to the Smith Museum to something with windows to signal that this is the main entrance to the museum. Optics, safety of staff and volunteers and difficulty maintaining the wood doors were given as reasons for replacement. P. Kraemer added that all of the historical organizations are in business to get people to come and museum has a great connection to public but the current doors are more of a barrier and it's not inviting to the public. They feel that it hinders their invitation to the community. They have numerous complaints from people saying they don't know where they should enter for the museum. M. Bush asked if they have put signage on the other doors to direct people to the correct entrance.

D. Baldwin spoke about his beloved history with the museum, exterior lights don't look colonial, the statement that building is making is that it is a more modern building. Doors have always been a problem. They did have signs he believes in the past telling people to come around to the correct entrance door. He feels modern doors could work, maybe not the ones shown, but that he feels other doors could work on the building.

S. Makowka said the Senior Center doors are of a traditional material with mahogany wood and glass windows. Not a metal or aluminum clad door. They have some state funding for the doors and lighting and they would welcome the HDC guidance. Discussion about the handicap ramp access and

prohibitive cost to move ramp to incorporate into the changes. Additional feedback, make sure any door mimics a wooden door as much as possible.

They will come in for a formal hearing next month.

8. REVIEW OF PROJECTS

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION – To discuss ongoing litigation not necessary

10. MEETING ADJOURNS 10:23pm