

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2004

On site at 585 Pleasant Street

Attending: Co-chairs Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby, Paul Bell, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Absent: Lisa Harrington, Linn Hobbs, Arleyn Levee, Rick Pichette, Nancy Richards. Property Owners: Glenn and Karen Herosian. Architect: Norman Kherlop. Builder: Robert Phelan. Abutter: Jim Graves.

Commission members gathered at 585 Pleasant Street, a working construction site, to view revised drawings for a previously approved addition to the back of this 1950s ranch house. Glenn Herosian requested the Commission's approval of the following changes.

- 1) A flat roof in the center of the house, where the addition meets the original construction, was originally designed to be sunken, in order to disguise two large skylights. Under the revised plan, this roof would be raised so it is flush with the top of the adjoining hip roof, covered with a rubber membrane, and edged with lead-coated copper flashing at the joint. Instead of two skylights in this flat roof, there would now be one: a four-foot by nine-foot curved skylight that rises 14 inches above the roof line and is rotated 90 degrees from what was shown on the previously approved plan. Also, a boiler flue would be relocated.
- 2) Two smaller skylights would be installed on the north and west sides of the hip roof over the addition.
- 3) The entire roof, except for the flat section in the center, would be covered with GAF 20-year, 3-tab, asphalt shingles in a pale charcoal color called "Silver Lining."
- 4) On the west side of the addition, two windows (one on the first floor and one on the basement floor) would be widened by one foot and the brick facing would be extended to the bottom of the basement window. These windows would be gliding (as opposed to casement) windows.
- 5) On the north side of the addition, two previously approved doors would be replaced with double-hung windows. A previously approved picture window would be replaced with three sliding glass doors, and a new closet window measuring 18 inches by 42 inches would be added.
- 6) The house originally had wooden gutters. These would be replaced with copper gutters and the existing rectangular copper downspouts would be replaced in kind. Any new downspouts would match old.

Commission members reviewed the new drawings and also walked up Somerset Street to see whether the builder's mock-up of the proposed kitchen skylight could be seen from the public way. (It could not—at least through September vegetation). Members made the following comments.

Skylight. Paul Bell raised concerns about the size of the center skylight, which would be directly above a kitchen. He said it could result in significant heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer. It also would be prone to condensation when warm air from the kitchen

risers and meets the cold glass, causing water to drip down onto the floor. “You could have a rainforest in there,” he said. He recommended replacing this skylight with a smaller one, which he said would admit nearly as much light during the day. Michael Smith suggested that a skylight of the proposed size should be insulating and thermally broken. Paul Bell, Michael Smith, and Sharon Vanderslice each raised concerns about light pollution from such a large skylight. Mr. Herosian said that the glass could be coated to eliminate more than half of the light that would otherwise be emitted at night. He said it would not “glow” at night unless the light was reflecting off something else.

Windows. Sharon Vanderslice said she thought the new first-floor window on the west side was too wide and she would like to see that window remain the size shown on the previously approved plan, a size that matched the other first-floor window on that side of the house. Paul Bell said that the detailing on any new windows is important. New windows on the west side, for example, should have muntins and jams that match the old casement windows on that side. Michael Smith said that the Commission needed to see a sample window or drawings of window details before any new windows are ordered. Bob Phelan said that since these windows would be custom-made, he would provide a window schedule rather than an actual window sample for review.

Gutters. Michael Smith suggested that using lead-coated copper gutters, downspouts, and leader boxes that matched the flashing and the roof shingles would visually tie together all the metal detailing on the house. Paul Bell said that an added benefit of using lead-coated copper is that it does not stain the way that untreated copper does. Mr. Kherlop and Mr. Herosian agreed that lead-coated copper could be an improvement; however, it was agreed that either lead-coated or natural copper would be acceptable. The existing downspouts are natural copper.

Landscaping. Sharon Vanderslice said she would like to see a landscaping plan showing any hardscape that would be added to the property, such as retaining walls, steps, or patios. Mr. Herosian and Mr. Phelan said that a landscape architect would be hired to draw up a plan. Mr. Herosian said that that plan would show restoration of the previously existing grade in the back yard, a lower grade in the west side yard, one bluestone patio in the back, possibly some retaining walls on the west side, and no new steps. Existing stone walls, steps, and railings on the south and east sides of the house would be repaired and kept. There would be no wood decking anywhere. When asked about dry wells to improve drainage, Mr. Herosian said that there would be no dry wells on the back of the property. All water from the roofs on the back of the house would drain from downspouts into underground tubing, which would subsequently drain into the front yard.

Exhaust vents/fans. Michael Smith asked about ventilation plans. Mr. Phelan said there would be a thermostatically controlled exhaust fan on the rear roof. All bath vents would be mushroom-type, low-profile vents that would match the color of the roof shingles. Mr. Smith suggested that exhaust vents be kept away from the edges of the roof.

Documentation. Richard Cheek said that the proposed changes were not major enough to require the submittal of a new Certificate of Appropriateness, but that the Commission

would need to see updated elevation plans showing the exact size and configuration of all new windows and doors, the position of roof vents, and a drawing of the roof ridge detail. The Commission also needed to see and approve samples of the gutters and downspouts and samples or detailed, cutaway drawings of the proposed new windows.

Jim Graves, an abutter on the west side of the property, said that he was dismayed that the builder proceeded with changes to the approved design of the addition without asking for approval from the Commission first. He said that the plans approved by the Commission in January reflected a carefully considered compromise from what had been a much larger previous proposal and that that compromise should be respected.

Both Mr. Cheek and Mr. Smith remarked that it would have been helpful if more detailed drawings of the requested changes had been submitted before any changes were initiated, as the Commission's regulations require. Mr. Phelan noted that detailed construction drawings would make it clear to all parties what has been agreed upon.

Michael Smith made a motion to approve the revised plans submitted by the Herosians with the conditions listed on the next page. This motion was seconded by Paul Bell and approved by a vote of 4-0. Ms. Vanderslice abstained from voting because she is an abutter to the property and had a personal interest in the outcome.

Mr. Cheek reminded the owners that they needed to submit accurate, updated elevation drawings, which are drawn to scale and show all roof cuts. The Commission would then submit these drawings to the town's building department.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.

MOVED: That the revised plans for the addition at 585 Pleasant Street be approved with the following conditions:

- 1) The new first-floor window on the west side must remain as shown on the plans originally approved by the Commission.
- 2) Drawings of the intersection between the flat and hip roofs must be submitted for approval by the Commission.
- 3) Samples of the proposed copper gutters must be submitted by the owner and approved by the Commission.
- 4) Detailed cutaway drawings of all new windows must be submitted by the owner and approved by the Commission.
- 5) Designs for soffits must be submitted to the Commission for approval.
- 6) A landscape plan must be submitted to the Commission for approval.