

**MELROSE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Meeting and Public Hearing
Tuesday, November 27, 2018
6:15 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, City Hall, 562 Main Street**

PRESENT: Brad Hutchinson, Charlene Marinelli, Justine Sterling, Judith Sullivan, Kevin Erb, and Robin Peevey

ABSENT: Michael Coleman

Denise Gaffey, Director & City Planner, and Emma Schnur, Senior Planner, were present.

The meeting was called to order at 6:16 PM by Mr. Hutchinson.

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Mr. Hutchinson inquired whether anyone would be making a video or audio recording of the meeting. No one in attendance indicated that they would be making such a recording.

I. MINUTES

Mr. Erb MADE a MOTION to approve the minutes from September 6, 2018. Ms. Marinelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

II. APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness: Melrose Family YMCA, 497 Main Street (public hearing)

Representatives from the Melrose Family YMCA, as well as their attorney and landscape architect, were present to describe their application to modify the mini-park/courtyard at 497 Main Street. Attorney Charlie Gill explained that in July 2018, the YMCA embarked on a mini-park improvement project that lasted about four weeks. This involved removing four mature honey locust trees and a smaller tree in one of the raised beds, constructing new flower beds (one raised and three at grade), installing pavers, and replacing the passive seating area with AstroTurf. According to Mr. Gill, the YMCA was required by their insurance to remove the trees because the roots were breaking through the cement and causing structural issues and tripping incidents. The organization plans to add more benches and fill the plant beds with shrubs and flowering perennials after the winter season. The YMCA was not aware that they needed to come before the Historic District Commission, and they became aware after subsequent conversations with the Planning Director.

Mr. Hutchinson explained that situations like this put the Historic District Commission in a difficult position because the Commission can be much more helpful when an Applicant presents plans before the work is done, rather than after a significant amount of money has been invested in a project. Members and Planning Staff have heard numerous complaints from community members about the removal of the shade trees and the presence of the AstroTurf. According to Katelyn Papadopoulos, Executive Vice President of the Melrose Family YMCA, they have received a positive response about the AstroTurf from their members and other groups that use the turf. She stated that they wanted to add an active outdoor play area and thought that artificial turf would bring life to Main Street.

The Historic District Commission had a number of comments about the current state of the mini-park/courtyard and suggestions for improvements moving forward. Before the trees were removed, they provided shade for the courtyard and helped screen the windowless brick walls behind the courtyard. Now, the hardscape is very apparent and the AstroTurf is glaring and detracts from the historic quality of the downtown. Members suggested adding a fence or tree in front of the turf to help screen it from view and protect the people using the area if a car were to drive up onto the pavement.

Steve Cefalo, the landscape architect retained by the YMCA for the HDC process, had a number of ideas for improving screening and shading in the courtyard. He recommended adding trees to beds 1, 2, and 4 (all at grade) and potentially ivy along the wall that is the side of the original building. He identified sycamore and London planetrees, such as those seen on Memorial Drive in Cambridge, as good potential contenders because they are easy to manage so their root systems do not cause problems. While his preference is to not plant trees in raised beds, Mr. Cefalo feels that mission arborvitae would do well in bed 7 and would effectively screen the brick wall behind it. The YMCA will need to explore the subsurface under the mini-park/courtyard so they can determine exactly where the new trees can go.

Ms. Sterling asked if the YMCA considered using pavers instead of the AstroTurf, and suggested that they could instead use a turf mat that they lay out as needed. Ms. Papadopoulos explained that they considered pavers but it was deemed to be too expensive. Ms. Peevey suggested that the YMCA could connect with local groups to help raise funds and make the area more of a community space with sculptures or other public art.

The Historic District Commission felt that this public hearing should be continued at a later date after the YMCA has explored the subsurface and determined what is feasible for the area. When the Commission meets again, the YMCA will review an updated landscape plan to incorporate suggestions heard at the meeting. The YMCA has agreed to hold off on making any more modifications to the space until they are granted a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Sterling MADE a MOTION to continue the public hearing for 497 Main Street on Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 6:15 PM. Ms. Sullivan SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness: James Turner, 503-509 Main Street (public hearing)

The Applicant was present to explain his application to install a temporary sign for the Rising Eagle function space at 503-509 Main Street. James Turner explained that they will not be making any renovations to the second floor of the building and they intend to maintain it as a function space once the restaurant opens on the first floor. They plan to utilize the second floor while the first floor is under construction, and the Applicant was told by the Building Commissioner that they will need a sign on the building in order to do so. The sign that is proposed is temporary and will be replaced with a permanent sign, which will also undergo review by the HDC at a later date.

Mr. Turner will be constructing a sign for over the left door out of plywood painted black. Raised wood letters that are painted gold will be affixed to the sign for a historic look. The sign will be bordered by 2-¼ inch Alexandria Moulding pine primed finger-jointed casing. Mr. Turner expects the sign to remain up until March when the first floor opens. Before that point, the Applicant will return to the Historic District Commission to review the permanent sign. He plans to remove the tile from around the current Stearns & Hill sign and repurpose it for the second floor space.

Ms. Sterling MADE a MOTION to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the temporary signage for 503-509 Main Street as described in the application. Ms. Sullivan SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness: Rosineide Canestaro, 517 Main Street (public hearing)

The Applicant's husband was present to explain their application to modify the sign at 517 Main Street. Mr. Canestaro explained that they are new business owners in the city and were unaware that they needed to come before the Historic District Commission before making modifications to the sign. They used the same sign that was there, they just flipped it over, added raised lettering, and painted the sign. The Historic District Commission had no issues with the sign as modified and appreciated that the old sign was recycled and the newly modified sign was designed with similar detail to the former sign for Gerry's Pizza. Mr. Hutchinson informed Mr. Canestaro that they will need to have any exterior modifications reviewed by the Commission in the future.

Ms. Marinelli MADE a MOTION to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for signage modification at 517 Main Street as described in the application. Ms. Sullivan SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

III. OTHER

Two new members have joined the Historic District Commission: Robin Peevey and Kevin Erb. This was their first meeting as members so the group went around and did introductions. Ms. Peevey owns a small business in Downtown Melrose, Buckalew's General Store, and Mr. Erb is an attorney in the city. Due to the fact that two out of the three cases presented at the meeting were Certificate of Appropriateness applications for work that had already been done, members also discussed the need for more proactive outreach about the Historic District Commission. Members and staff will reflect further on this and discuss ideas at a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:31 PM.