

**MELROSE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Meeting and Public Hearing
Monday, June 24, 2019
6:15 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, City Hall, 562 Main Street**

PRESENT: Brad Hutchinson, Justine Sterling, Robin Peevey, Judith Sullivan, Charlene Marinelli, and Michael Coleman

ABSENT: Kevin Erb

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:18 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

Ms. Sullivan MADE a MOTION to approve the minutes from June 3, 2019. Ms. Marinelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

II. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

Application for Certificate of Appropriateness: Austin Frakt and others, 647 Main Street (public hearing)

Building co-owners Kris Rodolico, Mike McCormack, Frank Bochero, and Nancy Bochero, along with architect Janis Mamayek, were present to describe the ADA-accessible ramp proposed for the Follow Your Art – Community Art Center at 647 Main Street. The hearing was continued from June 3, 2019.

At the first public hearing, HDC members expressed concerns about the large size of the proposed ramp and its close proximity to the sidewalk on Main Street. Ms. Mamayek explained the work that has been done since the first hearing to study other options for the ramp. According to the Architectural Access Board (AAB), a lift is not compliant for this application so that was not explored in more detail. They looked into a sloped walkway but there is not enough real estate since the walkway requires a slope of 1:20. It would be impossible to have a walkway or ramp go down the left side of the building to the back because the space between the building and fence is so narrow and has a difficult topography. Another configuration was explored that would include a seven-foot ramp between the bays on the right side of the building, but there are constructability concerns about building the ramp so close to the wall.

HDC members encouraged the Applicants at the last hearing to talk to the condo association that represents this building and the First United Methodist Church and the Grace and Faith Christian Church about slightly encroaching on the driveway so that the ramp could be pushed back a few feet from Main Street. According to Ms. Bochero, the condo association feels that the driveway is already too tight and there is not support for any intrusion into the driveway space. They are concerned about access to the back of the church, especially for trucks and snowplows.

The Applicants presented the building materials proposed for the ramp. It will have a concrete base with a stone veneer. The 4" by 4" posts will have flat caps, which members preferred to the pyramid caps, and will be a brown color. Between the posts will be rails in a dark brown/black color. The posts and rails will be made out of a PVC or composite wood material and will be either Aztec or Trex brands. An aluminum ADA-compliant handrail will be affixed to the posts. A member asked if just the aluminum handrail could be utilized, but the architect explained that the ramp is too high and it would be a safety hazard without the posts and rails.

The group talked more about the options that members asked the Applicants to explore at the first hearing. Installing a lift would require going through a variance process with the Architectural Access Board. The AAB does not like the use of lifts outdoors because they can be damaged by the elements. Even if there were enough run to have the ramp go past the left side of the building, you would then have to create a new entrance in the back and redesign the interior space to make that work. Approximately 75 feet would be needed to construct a sloped walkway to the back of the building and there are concerns about safety and a lack of lighting through this narrow space. The Applicants and architect were adamant that the only option at this point is to construct a ramp to the front entrance.

Mr. Coleman said he was impressed with all the options studied by the architect. He suggested an alternative configuration of the ramp that had much more support from the HDC members, and that the Applicants were agreeable to. He sketched out a design that showed the ramp parallel, rather than perpendicular, to the building, which would require pulling out the stairs slightly to allow the stairs and ramp to come up to the same landing. With this configuration, the ramp direction only has to pivot once and it will likely be easier to construct this way. The stairs may need to be a bit narrower but hopefully this will not be the case. Plantings would still go around the ramp. Mr. Coleman stated that he would prefer to see a ramp that looks more similar to the building, but ultimately members agreed that darker colors which contrast with the building would make more sense.

Ms. Mamayek said that she thought it would be less historically sensitive to have the ramp crisscrossing in front of the building, as opposed to the perpendicular design initially proposed. She also thought the HDC would want to preserve the original stairs. HDC members explained that they would prefer to see a ramp that follows the contours of the building and is further back from the sidewalk. They do not have a problem with the stairs being modified and extended as a result. Ms. Mamayek will submit an updated version of the plans and Mr. Coleman will assist Planning Staff in reviewing them. The Applicants will return to the Historic District Commission if they are unable to make this design work.

There was a brief conversation about the sign proposed for the Follow Your Art – Community Art Center, but the group agreed to table the discussion until later when they apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness specifically for the sign. Mr. Hutchinson reminded the group that the legal notice for this case did not mention the sign, it only included the ramp. Ms. Gaffey explained that the sign design should also be submitted to the Building Commissioner so he can assess it and include it in the Building Permit Denial Letter. That being said, HDC members like the logo and colors proposed for the sign.

Ms. Sullivan MADE a MOTION to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness for the ramp as described and revised to run in front of the building and setback further from the sidewalk than the original design. Ms. Marinelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 PM.