

MELROSE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Meeting and Public Hearing
Tuesday, June 9, 2020
7:00 PM
Remote

PRESENT: Brad Hutchinson, Kevin Erb, Charlene Marinelli, and Robin Peevey

ABSENT: Justine Sterling, Michael Coleman, and Judith Sullivan

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 PM by Mr. Hutchinson.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Melrose Historic District Commission was conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting was found on the City of Melrose's website. No in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted, but every effort was made to ensure that the public could adequately access the proceedings in real time. An audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings was posted on the mmtv3.org website as soon as possible after the meeting. Meeting access information was found at the following link and the plans could be requested by emailing the Senior Planner: www.cityofmelrose.org/remote-meetings.

I. APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

Mass Electric Co. DBA National Grid, 5 Upham Street (public hearing)

David Waterfall, Daniel Healy, Andrew Hruby, and Daniel Cameron were present from Mass Electric Co. DBA National Grid to describe the roof and façade upgrades proposed for the electrical substation at 5 Upham Street. National Grid has decided to retire this building from service as a part of a much larger project. A precursor to this has been distribution line work which will finish next month. After this work concludes, the substation can be decommissioned. The representatives from National Grid are not sure at the moment what they are going to do with the building but they will likely use it as storage. There are no plans at this time to sell the property.

The substation must be decommissioned because as it was built in 1924 and is dangerous to go into. While they are making interior modifications, they have decided to take the opportunity to restore the outside of the building, which has experienced wear and tear over the years. The work proposed is minor and mostly in-kind. Most of what they are doing is cosmetic but they also need it to be structurally sound. Roof structures will be removed from beyond the parapet and a few roof anchors will be installed where the brick and concrete meet on the front façade in order to stop it from fully caving in.

There will be six roof anchors spaced ten feet apart from one another. The representatives from National Grid initially proposed a star shape, but then provided the Commission with a number of examples of different roof anchors for them to select which they like most. Members did not really care what the roof anchors look like. Since the downspouts will be copper, they preferred that they be copper to match.

Members discussed how the property not have much street presence and they strongly recommended that National Grid incorporate landscaping on the front lawn into the proposal. The Commission agreed that the Certificate of Appropriateness should include a condition that they will incorporate plantings and landscaping into the project.

Mr. Erb MADE a MOTION to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness for the roof and façade upgrades proposed for 5 Upham Street as described in the application and modified by the discussion at the public hearing. Ms. Marinelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Cambridge Savings Bank, 638 Main Street (public hearing)

Mark Conserva from Metro Sign & Awning was present to describe the signage proposed for Cambridge Savings Bank at 638 Main Street. The bank has changed ownership from MelroseBank and they are looking to replace the wall-hanging entry sign and the freestanding monument sign. The Commission had no problems with the proposed monument sign but felt like the sign over the entry would look better if it contained more white space. Mr. Conserva said that he could make the word “Cambridge” a bit smaller so there is a two-inch border above and below the lettering/logo but that he would need to confirm with that bank if that is okay. If they cannot accommodate that change, he will come back to the Historic District Commission to modify the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mr. Erb MADE a MOTION to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness for the signage proposed for 5 Upham Street as described in the application and modified by the discussion at the public hearing. Ms. Marinelli SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Follow Your Art Community Studios, 647 Main Street (public hearing)

Kristina Rodolico was present to describe the signage proposed for Follow Your Art Community Studios at 647 Main Street. The front of the ramp approved by the Commission is now finished and they want to take the banner off and install a free-standing sign. The sign will be two-sided and perpendicular to Main Street in a yellow color that is slightly lighter than the historic yellow of the house. The Applicant explained that they have adopted the “big yellow house” vibe and they want to echo that. The trim around the sign and the caps on the posts will match the red color on the house and the posts will match those on the ramp. Two small lights that will be obscured by landscaping will light the sign from below. Relief from the Zoning Board of Appeals from the frontage requirement of the Melrose Zoning Ordinance will be required.

Ms. Peevey MADE a MOTION to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness for the signage proposed for 647 Main Street as described in the application. Mr. Erb SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.