MELROSE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Meeting and Public Hearing
Tuesday, August 10, 2021
7:00 PM
Remote

PRESENT: Brad Hutchinson, Michael Coleman, Justine Sterling, Richard Curl, Kevin Erb, Liz Ryan

ABSENT: None

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Curl MADE a MOTION to approve the minutes from April 20, 2021 and May 11, 2021. Ms. Sterling SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

II. APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Jeff Carbone Insurance Agency Inc., 504 Main Street (public hearing)

Jeff Carbone appeared to discuss the proposed reinstallation of the manual "crank" awning that was over the storefront for a prior tenant. The awning will have a black background with off-white lettering that will spell out "Jeff Carbone Insurance" in capital letters. The awning is 17 ft. wide and 66 in. high, including a 10-inch valance and the letters shall be approximately 10 inches.

Mr. Hutchinson inquired about the height of the letters and the space above and below the letters. Mr. Carbone responded that the space above and below the letters is about 2 inches on each side. Mr. Carbone noted that the awning will be the same size as the one next door.

Mr. Curl MADE a MOTION to approve the reinstallation of the awning as described in the application. Mr. Coleman SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

Karen Burke, City of Melrose, 585 Main Street (public hearing)

Karen Burke from the City of Melrose, and Jeremy Campbell, Contractor, appeared to discuss the Melrose Honor Roll Memorial restoration. Ms. Burke described the deteriorating condition of the honor roll over the past year and her desire to make restorations before the glass panels with the names of those who have fallen sustain further damage. Mr. Campbell continued by speaking about the scope of work. He described the proposed contract, which will replace in kind to the exact dimensions of the original monument. There will not be changes to size or color. There will be some masonry work but the memorial will be brought back to its original state with better materials and finishes. Mr. Campbell mentioned his qualifications siting that he has worked on over 100 nationally registered historic buildings.

Mr. Erb MADE a MOTION to approve the Melrose Honor Roll Memorial restoration. Mr. Curl SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

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

Kris Rodolico and Michael McCormack appeared to discuss the remodeling of an existing 3-season side porch into a ceramics studio. Mr. McCormack explained that the proposed materials will be very similar to existing materials on the building. The most significant difference to the porch will be the change in the direction of the stairs, which will be parallel rather than perpendicular to the building to increase safety.

The Board asked questions about the trim of the windows and the materials of the windows and handrails. Mr. McCormack explained the plan is match the existing window trim throughout the building although the window trim may be reduced from 6 to 5 inches. PVC trim may be used in certain areas to prevent future rot. The proposed railings will match the ramp on the front of the building, which has a black and brown PVC handrail system.

Mr. McCormack also mentioned that the decking will match the existing front porch decking which is 3.5 inch mahogany. The stair treads will be mahogany or a composite mahogany decking. No construction will be done to the existing roof over the porch, which will remain. A mix of cedar clapboard and shingle siding will be used that matches the existing siding. The skirting underneath will be replaced and a storage component potentially added with an access door on the rear of the building. Mr. McCormack stressed that they want to change as little as possible to the building.

The Board asked about the location of a structural post by the stairs. Mr. McCormack explained that there is a post there and that they want to build a landing with a vestibule and add a new pier, which will be hidden. Additionally, Mr. McCormack clarified that there will be lighting on the outside of the building.

The Board mentioned that the drawings were confusing and missing details. The Board suggested issuing a Certificate of Appropriateness contingent on the Applicant updating the drawings to reflect their plans for the record with a Commissioner reviewing those drawings. Mr. McCormack will work with Mr. Curl or Mr. Coleman if Mr. Curl is unavailable.

Mr. Coleman MADE a MOTION to approve the remodeling of an existing 3-season side porch conditional on some additional drawings and verification that the project proceeds as discussed. Mr. Erb SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

City of Melrose OPCD, Central Terrace/497 Main Street (public hearing)

Emma Schnur Battaglia from OPCD appeared to discuss a mural proposed for the placement in Central Terrace and wall on the north elevation of the YMCA building. Ms. Battaglia explained that OPCD received a grant from the Shared Streets program through MassDOT to repave Central Terrace, close the curb cut and activate the space with string lights and seating. Additionally, a local artist will paint a mural on the wall of the YMCA. Ms. Battaglia explained that they have reviewed sketches with neighbors and abutters, all of whom have agreed on the final art piece. This mural is related to the Wayfinding Creative Place Making Initiative, which was funded through a different grant program that enabled OPCD to install public art around the City. Ms. Battaglia noted that the space was originally used for cars but over a year ago the traffic commission voted to make Central Terrace pedestrian only.

Commissioners asked about the idea behind the art piece. Ms. Battaglia explained that based on the City's 2017 Master Plan, one of the goals has been to figure out ways to activate alleyways. Due, in part, to COVID-19 and the push for finding ways to recreate outside spaces, grant funding became available to start to realize these objectives. The City sees this as an enhancement to the existing conditions and wants to recreate this space as a place where people will want to spend some time. Ms. Battaglia stressed the tremendous number of positive responses and support this project has received. She explained that the color scheme was chosen by the abutters and emphasized that the alleyway would continue to be public space, not just an area for restaurant patrons.

There was general support from the Commissioners around the idea for re-using and remodeling the space. However, Commissioners expressed concern over the upkeep and eventual expiration of the mural, as well as the impact of the materials used on the brick of the historic building. Additionally, there was some pushback to painting the ground, specifically around the appearance of the piece after a few months, although some Commissioners were in support of creating just a pavement mural, so long as the materials were appropriate for asphalt.

Ms. Battaglia explained that the materials used will be very similar to those used for the mural on the high school but she will ask the artist to be sure. She noted that while this mural is long lasting, it will not be permanent and as it starts to fade overtime, the City will take steps to power wash and remove lasting remnants, as fit. As a part of the beautification of Central Terrace, the City will also be applying a fresh coat of asphalt in order to repair walkway damage and close the curb cut at the end so that it will be continuous sidewalk. When asked who will be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the mural, Ms. Battaglia noted that it will most likely be a combination of DPW and the YMCA. However, if it were to be just a pavement mural, the upkeep would strictly be done by DPW. Commissioners were concerned that there was no way to enforce the maintenance of the mural.

When asked when the artist would like to start, Ms. Battaglia explained that they would like to start the process right away. She mentioned that if the artist was going to paint the wall, she would need a lift so she would probably do that first so as not to ruin the pavement. However, if the mural will be strictly a pavement mural, then DNR will have to come and pave and then the artist can start painting.

Commissioners ultimately felt that they needed more details and would like to speak with the artist to have their questions answered. A meeting was scheduled for August 25 at 7 PM.

Mr. Curl MADE a MOTION to continue the meeting on Wednesday, August 25th at 7 PM. Ms. Sterling SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor. None were opposed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.