

MELROSE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 5, 2024
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room
City Hall, 562 Main Street

PRESENT: Michael Coleman, Richard Curl, Kevin Erb, Lindsay Toghill & Robert Tullis

ABSENT: None

Lori Massa, Senior Planner, was present.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mr. Coleman, Acting Chair.

I. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Curl made a motion to approve the November 14, 2023 meeting minutes. Ms. Toghill seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

II. Applications for Certificate of Appropriateness

486 Main Street, Sachem Signworks Inc for Exquisite Dentistry (Public Hearing)

Corey Berkowitch of Sachem Signworks appeared to present the case for the installation of a wall sign for Exquisite Dentistry.

A Commissioner mentioned how the sign board on the building was not in great shape. Some of the boards are popping up. Members felt that it would be helpful to involve the property owners in the cases so maintenance issues could be discussed along with tenants' requests for signage.

Members noted that the background color of the sign is very similar to the color of the signboard. The carved gold leaf letters will be the only contract, which will make them prominent. They had no issues with the proposed sign.

No one from the public appeared to speak about the case.

Mr. Erb made a motion to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the signage at 486 Main Street as described in the application materials. Mr. Curl seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

531 Main Street, Big Fin Melrose, LLC (Public Hearing)

Jimmy Liang of Big Fin Melrose, LLC appeared to present the case for the installation of a wall sign and light fixtures for his restaurant.

Mr. Liang said that the sign will be held by brackets that can hold the weight of 15 to 20 pounds. There are existing brackets on the building but if those cannot be reused, he showed a picture of a typical L-shaped metal bracket that he would use. He said that the building owner was hiring a mason to repair the mortar on the storefront. The mortar is not a standard color.

The Commission was glad to hear that a mason was going to repair the brick and they asked that the replace mortar color, type and tooling matches the existing.

For the gooseneck lighting the Commission asked that a fixture that has a similar profile or scale as the nearby fixtures above the Ana Donohue's sign is used instead of what is proposed, which look smaller. The light fixtures were otherwise acceptable.

Members wanted to see more relief in the sign since it looked too flat. They requested more depth in the frame and letters for a 3-dimensional effect with the following dimensions: frame 1.5 inches wide with at least a ½ in projection from the sign board; letters project at least ½ inch. They determined that it is acceptable if the bowl image and the word Poke were flat.

No one from the public appeared to speak about the case.

Mr. Tullis made a motion to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the signage and light fixtures at 531 Main Street as described in the application materials with a condition regarding the depth of the sign frame and letters and light fixture size as specified above and offered to review the revised sign and fixture to assure compliance with the condition. Mr. Curl seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

647 Main Street, Follow Your Art Community Studios (Public Hearing)

Mr. Coleman recused himself for this case and left the room.

Jessica Mitchell appeared to explain the application for basement level replacement windows. The pottery studio is in the basement of the building. She said that the existing windows are very drafty, which was confirmed by a blower test that was done for the building. The minisplit units are not working efficiently because of the inefficient windows. The application materials changed from proposing Harvey brand windows to Anderson windows. The Anderson windows come in a bronze color. The awning style window is the first choice; however, they did not choose this. The gliding window was selected because the screens are on the outside and can be hosed down when clay builds up on them which happens often.

Members felt that the window choice was not appropriate. The existing basement windows; which are a typical style, have just one plane and the proposed windows have two. This creates a

different appearance with the depth to the masonry and shadows. The paint will come off of the vinyl windows if they are painted.

Members recommended a hopper style window that tilts in with a screen on the outside. They specified that the windows should have one plane, and preferred that they would have two muntins and be dark in color. There is a Brosco brand wood window that has an energy panel that could work and meet these criteria.

No one from the public appeared to speak about the case.

Ms. Toghill made a motion to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the basement window replacement at 647 Main Street with a condition regarding the specifications of the window as described above and Mr. Curl would review the revised window to assure compliance with the condition. Mr. Tullis seconded the motion. All voted in favor, except for Mr. Coleman who was not present for the vote. None were opposed.

Documents: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

585 Main Street, Coolidge at Melrose Apartments (Public Hearing)

Nicholas Liucci of Tradesmen of New England and Jeff Ewing, the owner's representative, appeared to present the case for the installation of VRF (heating and cooling) system upgrades at the building.

Members asked about the height of the units that would be in the rear yard and the answer was six to seven feet tall with the eight-inch pad that they sit upon. The units closest to the building would be six inches from it. The rear yard landscaping will be reconfigured.

Members asked if the line sets could be inside of the building in the stairways so that they were not visible and did not disturb the brick. Mr. Liucci did not think that it was possible per building code but he was going to check. They can paint the line set covers. There will be a fence to screen the condensing units in the courtyard.

The Commission felt that this was a huge improvement from the last application for this property which included a much greater number of exterior units that were all around the building. That case was withdrawn.

They requested that the line sets are inside if possible, grouped together, put on the inside corner in nooks and not on pilasters so that they are not as visible, go up to the roof so that they appear intentional like downspouts, and centered so that they fit with the pattern and symmetry of the building of the vertical fenestration. The labels on the condensing units should be removed. The exterior screening can be done with vegetation and the interior can be fenced to buffer the sound from the residences.

No one from the public appeared to speak about the case.

Mr. Curl made a motion to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the mechanical equipment installation at 585 Main Street with the conditions as described above and Mr. Tullis would review the revised line set placement to assure compliance with the condition. Mr. Erb seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

Documents: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

III. Other

a. Election of Chair of the Commission

Mr. Erb made a motion to elect Mr. Coleman as Chair of the Commission, who had been acting as Chair since Mr. Hutchinson resigned. Mr. Curl seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

b. City Hall generator project update

Members agreed that a bollard color global industrial black would be appropriate in place of the yellow covers that were temporarily placed on the bollards. Mr. Tullis requested that the stickers on the Essex Street side of the generator are removed.

c. The City is applying for grant money to renovate the GAR room of Memorial Hall and is requesting that the HDC sign a letter of support for the application. Members were in support of this project.

d. They reviewed the 2024 anticipated meeting dates and did not have any changes. Mr. Tullis mentioned that he is not available for the May and August meetings.

Mr. Tullis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Curl seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None were opposed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.