



TOWN OF WINCHESTER

Design Review Committee

Town Hall, Winchester, Massachusetts 01890

Juli Riemenschneider, RLA, ASLA, Chair
Ellen Spencer, Vice Chair
Adrian LeBuffe, LEED
Eileen Casciari, RA
Mary Grassi
Tracy Vartenigian Burhans, Artist
Jamie Devol, AIA

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 7:30 pm – Meeting by Zoom

Present: Spencer, Riemenschneider, Devol, LeBuffe, Grassi, Casciari, Burhans, Recording Secretary Nancy Upper

1. Open meeting. Vote to approve January 4, 2023, minutes -
All approved 7-0.

2. 19 Hancock Street

PETITION NO. 3988 - That of 19 HANCOCK ST., LLC concerning the property at 19 HANCOCK STREET, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 4.5 and 9.4 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to divide the existing property into two lots (Lots 15A and 15B) creating new non-conforming lots. Lot 15A will not meet the lot area, lot frontage and lot width requirements and the existing two-family dwelling will be located closer to the side property line that permitted as of right. Lot 15B will not meet the lot frontage and lot width requirements. The property is in the RG (General Residence) zoning district, Lot 15A contains 7,522 +/- square feet and Lot 15B contains 7,522 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Daniel Belknap, architect, manager of 19 Hancock St. LLC

- Belknap described the existing house and the process of dividing the property:
 - The craftsman style, two-family house was built in 1916.
 - The house is exceptionally well-preserved and retains considerable original building fabric, including siding, trim, and cornice treatment.

- The detached garage behind the house was completed circa 1921.
- The house and garage sit on a 100-foot-wide lot in a “dense residential neighborhood of small and moderately-sized lots and houses of similar scale and vintage.” (Statement by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, from Form B in the 19 Hancock proposal package.)
- Belknap proposes to divide the property in half.
 - ◆ The original two-family house and garage will remain as is on the left half of the property.
 - ◆ A new single-family house (numbered 17 Hancock), two-car garage, inground pool, and pool patio will be built on the right half of the property.
 - ◆ A shared driveway will run between the two houses. Belknap said, “The single driveway allows more space for greenery.”
 - ◆ Belknap intends to make the new parcel and dwelling “look like they have always been there.”
- Architectural drawings show the proposed house will be in character with 19 Hancock and nearby properties.

DISCUSSION

- Jamie Devol observed that the first floor of the proposed house looks close to the ground, whereas other houses in the vicinity have steps going up to their first floors.
 - Belknap gave three reasons for seating the proposed house at ground level:
 - ◆ The new house will not have a basement due to high groundwater in the area.
 - ◆ His development team does not want the house to be taller than necessary.
 - ◆ They do not want neighbors to look at too much foundation.
- Devol noted that the two proposed shed dormers on 17 Hancock (in the right and left sides of the second story) make the house look top-heavy.
- Eileen Casciari and Ellen Spencer agreed.
 - ◆ From the front, 17 Hancock looks out of proportion with 19 Hancock.
 - ◆ From the left-side elevation, the three-story-tall projecting dormer with three windows at the top, three smaller windows at second-floor level, and a single first-floor window, creates an awkward, top-heavy column.
- To ease the column, Casciari suggested turning the three-story shed-roofed dormer into a two-story gable dormer.

- Spencer inquired about the inground pool.
 - Belknap assured her they have a drainage plan.
 - He said the pool will drain into the filtration system under the driveway.
- Juli Riemenschneider encouraged Belknap to protect existing trees. She said:
 - Many of big trees along Hancock Street are aging.
 - Trenching required to build the driveway will cut roots so may kill some trees.
 - Two mature trees will be removed from the property to site the 17 Hancock house, therefore plant new trees that will grow to provide shade and canopy over the front yard and the street.
 - Plant at least one big tree in the front right corner of the 17 Hancock lot.
- Casciari asked about building materials.

Belknap replied:

 - They are proposing white PVC material for trim — unpainted at the top of the house, painted on the lower parts.
 - ◆ Ellen Spencer said, “We would prefer all trim to be painted.”
 - ◆ Jamie Devol added, “Ideally, all trim would be wood.”
 - Cedar shingle will be factory-stained.
 - Cedar shingle can be re-stained over the years, and re-stained in different tones.
- Devol asked if window light will be divided by snap-in grills or real muntins and mullions.
 - Belknap said divided light will achieved with simulated grills that look like muntins and mullions.

Ellen Spencer moved for favorable action with three conditions:

- a. Modify the three-story projecting dormer with shed roof to make it a two-story projecting dormer with a gable roof.
- b. Lower the house roof slope from 12/12 to 10/12.
- c. Plant one or more large tree(s) in the front of the property to compensate for the two mature trees being removed.

Vote: All in favor 7-0

3. 1 Winter Street

PETITION NO. 3990 - That of CHRISTOPHER and KERRY DOWNEY concerning the property at 1 WINTER STREET, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 3.5.5 of the

Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws so as to be permitted to construct an addition that will be located closer to front property lines than permitted as of right. The property is located in the RG (General Residence) zoning district and contains 6,505 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Chris Downey, homeowner

- Homeowners Christopher and Kerry Downey propose to extend the existing open front porch on each side so it:
 - Spans the entire front of the original house.
 - Better ties together the original house and the recently completed addition.
- The existing porch roof will remain unaltered.
- Each proposed extension will:
 - Have a perimeter railing.
 - Be approximately 60 sq. ft.
 - Be structurally detached from the house.
- The proposed porch extensions will add visual appeal to the front of the house but will not change the style of the house.
- The extended porch will match the style of farmer's porches on nearby properties.

Juli Riemenschneider recommended favorable action with no conditions. Vote: All in favor 7-0

4. 19 Verplast Avenue

PETITION NO. 3989 - That of CATHERINE FROTTEN and SCOTT HATHAWAY concerning the property at 19 VERPLAST AVENUE, WINCHESTER, MA. The petitioners are seeking a Special Permit under Section 4.5 and 9.4 of the Winchester Zoning By-Law in accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws to be permitted to divide the existing property into two lots (Lots 1 and 2) creating a new non-conforming lot (Lot 1) that will not meet the lot area, lot frontage and lot width requirements. The property is in the RG (General Residence) zoning district, Lot 1 contains 3,288 +/- square feet and Lot 2 contains 11,118 +/- square feet.

Guest presenter: Annie Chow, architect with an unspecified design/build company

- Annie Chow explained that:
 - The existing house, constructed circa 1909, belonged to the grandparents of the dwelling's current owner, Catherine Frotten.
 - Frotten aspires to rehabilitate the structural integrity the house and restore its historical beauty.

- Extensive renovations are needed to complete the restoration. To fund these renovations, the applicants request to divide the property into two lots (Lots 1 and 2). Frotten will sell Lot 2 as a buildable parcel.
- Chow said, “We are still in the planning stages.” She added:
 - We will renovate and restore mostly the interior.
 - We will do exploratory removal of several clapboards to see the extent of exterior refurbishing needed.
 - Renovations will stay within the footprint and volume of the existing house.
 - Mechanical equipment will be located at the rear of the house.

Eileen Casciari moved for favorable action on the lot division, with one condition:

That a preservation restriction be put on the existing house.

Vote: All in favor 7-0

5. Sign Permit – 26 Mt. Vernon Street

Guest presenter: Carol Fournier, representative of American/Interstate Signcrafters

- Proposed Cambridge Trust signage to replace existing Northmark Bank signage.
- Historical notes:
 - [Winchester Archive Record BUS 1100.09](#) states: “The Winchester Savings Bank was the first bank in Winchester, chartered in 1871. Its building on Mt. Vernon Street survives as the Northmark Bank.”
 - [Wikipedia reference \(section titled Building, plus sidebar\)](#): Built in 1892, the [Richardson Romanesque](#) structure at 26 Mt. Vernon was designed by architects William E. Blaikie (c.1860s-1920s) and his brother Edwin K. Blaikie (1861-1928).
- Ellen Spencer called the building “a Richardsonian gem.”
- The proposed ground sign, located to the left of entrance stairs in a planting bed surrounded by rusticated paving blocks, will:
 - Be of the same dimensions as the existing Northmark sign.
 - Will feature official Cambridge Trust lettering and text on a cream-white field.
- The Cambridge Trust words proposed to curve in the entrance arch:
 - Will match the cream-white color of the ground sign.
 - Will match the serified typeface of the ground sign. Fournier said, “I believe serif is better than sans serif on historical buildings.”

DISCUSSION

- The typeface of the existing Northmark Bank words is sans serif. Ellen Spencer said, "I think the unadorned lettering looks better on this building."
- Eileen Casciari observed that the "C" and "T" in the arch words "Cambridge Trust" are taller than the rest of the letters, and that they look too tall for the space. She pointed out that the existing Northmark Bank letters are all the same size.
- Ellen spencer and Jamie Devol agreed that all letters should be the same size — and should be smaller.
- Devol said that the Cambridge Trust logo — with taller C and T — is readily visible in the ground sign, so all letters in the arch could be the same height.
- Juli Riemenschneider: If Cambridge Trust wants the C and T taller, because that is their logo, then make these and all letters in the arch smaller.
- The proposed light color of the arch letters and ground sign is intended to match the near-white marble columns supporting the arch.
 - DRC members agreed that the arch letters look too "white" and starkly contrast with the building.
 - In comparison, the muted rose color of the existing Northmark letters harmonizes with the building's stone and brick.
 - DRC members suggested a similar muted rose, stone white, or warmer cream color for the arch letters.
- Fournier said she will take all our suggestions to Cambridge Trust and email final decisions to DRC Chair Ellen Spencer.

6. Sign Permit – 802 Main Street

Guest presenter: No spokesperson for 802 Main Street was present.

- D1 Automotive Services proposes to replace existing signage with a new sign around the curved end of the building and three smaller rectangular signs on the left garage door.
- The curved panel over the curved glass-block end of the building will feature the business's "Dealer One" name, and beneath the name, the business's phone number.
- The Sign Book, revised and approved by the Winchester Design Review Committee March 16, 2018, section 4 Sign Design Recommendations, subsection [Simplicity](#) states:

A sign's success is generally a measure of its readability. A sign that incorporates a simple and direct message will be far more understandable than a cluttered sign that tries to communicate too much information. Items such as phone numbers and store

hours are more appropriate for placement at eye level near the entrance.

- This is the only reference in The Sign Book to phone numbers.
- Ellen Spencer suggested removing the phone number from D1's curved sign.
- Eileen Casciari further suggested, after removing the phone number from the curved sign, to vertically center the rest of the lettering.

7. Old Business - 14 Thompson Street (Proposed Karma Restaurant)

For previous DRC discussions of 14 Thompson, see:

[Design Review Committee October 5, 2022, meeting minutes, Item 2.](#)

[Design Review Committee December 7, 2022, meeting minutes, Item 5.](#)

[Design Review Committee January 4, 2023, meeting minutes, Item 4.](#)

Guest presenter: Iverson Guo, Founder & CEO of the Karma Restaurant Group

- Guo submitted architectural plans and illustrations of two design options (A1 and A2) for the proposed 14 Thompson Street facade:
 - Option 2 — Illustration dated 1.19.23, architectural sketch A2:
 - ◆ The left side of the A2 facade design features, on each side of the recessed walnut entry door, windows with glass panes divided by black steel muntins.
 - ◆ The door with the half-round transom window between 6 and 14 Thompson remains visible.
 - ◆ The right side of the facade retains the existing window, but replaces the clear plate glass with a window of four panes over three divided by black steel muntins.
 - ◆ A red awning over the left windows and entry door, and a matching red awning over the right storefront window, protect customers from sun and weather.
 - ◆ Between the left and right windows, a round "cartouche" enclosing what look to be Asian characters spelling "Karma" adds interest.
 - ◆ Two lights over the left awning, two lights over the right awning, and the illuminated blade sign, brighten the area.

The Design Review Committee discussed the A1 and A2 options at length. Committee members unanimously prefer option A2 (illustration dated 1.19.23) over option A1 (illustration dated 6.12.22), for the following reasons: :

1. The large A1 decorative doors crowd the shop to the left of them.
2. The decorative entrance in A1 is out of proportion with the window to the right of it and overpowers the building.
3. Design A2 is simple, elegant, and in scale with the building.

4. A2 hides less of the existing brick so retains the character of the building, the street, and Winchester Center.
5. The A2 entrance adds a five-foot wider expanse of glass to the right of the entry door, increasing light into the space and breaking up the stretch of exterior brick wall.
6. Design A2 keeps the existing window-topped door between 6 and 14 Thompson Street visible.
7. The round cartouche in A2 coordinates with the round window in the building's smaller gable, and at street level, coordinates with the half-round window transoms.
8. The A2 cartouche will make brick infill less noticeable.
Note: Both A1 and A2 will require new brick infills, especially where an existing door is removed. Foley and Guo stress in their email the importance of matching and blending brick and mortar "as best as possible."
9. The cartouche creates a feeling and a statement of what the restaurant reflects sensitively and in scale with the original building.

8. New Business – Discussion of DRC Vice Chair position

- In the DRC's January 7, 2023, meeting, Ellen Spencer was elected new Chair of the Committee.
- DRC member Mary Grassi was next up in the rotation to serve as Vice Chair. Grassi was absent from the January 7 meeting, so the vote on Vice Chair was tabled until the February 8, 2023, meeting.
- Between the January and February meetings, Spencer and Grassi discussed the Vice Chair position at length.
- At the February meeting, Grassi made known that she could not accept the role of Vice Chair, for her schedule is too full to take on more responsibilities.
- At the end of the meeting, the Vice Chair position remained unfilled.

9. Discussion of in-person vs. Zoom meetings

- Spencer said that since the treat of Covid-19 has diminished, many other Town boards and committees have reverted to meeting in person.
- DRC members agreed to meet by remote participation (Zoom) for their March 2023 meeting, but for the April 2023 meeting and thereafter, to meet in person as long as Covid numbers remain low.

10. Adjourn.

SUMMARY of Design Review Committee VOTES – December 07, 2022			
Minutes #	Item	Address	Vote
2.	Petition 3988	19 Hancock Street	Favorable action 7-0 with three conditions
3.	Petition 3990	1 Winter Street	Favorable action 7-0 with no conditions
4.	Petition 3989	19 Verplast Avenue	Favorable action 7-0 with one condition
7.		14 Thompson Street	Members unanimously favored 7-0, the design dated 1.19.23 (architectural plan A2).

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 1, 2023. Meeting by Zoom.

Respectfully submitted by Recording Secretary Nancy Upper.