



**MISSION HILL TRIANGLE ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

Held virtually via Zoom

March 7, 2024

Commissioners Present: Patricia Tongue Edraos, Kirsten Hoffman, Katie Genovese

Commissioners Absent: Cindy Gura Walling, Ellen Moore

Staff Present: Murray Miller, Director of the Office of Historic Preservation; Joseph Cornish, Director of Design Review; Rachel Ericksen, Preservation Planner

A full recording of the hearing is available at:

<https://www.boston.gov/historic-district/mission-hill-triangle-architectural-conservation-district>

6:00 PM: Meeting started.

I. DESIGN REVIEW

APP # 24.0746 MHT

1615-1617 TREMONT STREET

Applicant: Joshua Sydney

Proposed Work: At the combined parcel of 1615-1617 Tremont Street: demolition of existing structure at 1617 Tremont Street; build new structure with full basement and four stories of new construction above grade. Repair and restore facade of 1615 Tremont Street; demo rear facade and connect to new 1617 Tremont street building with new contiguous floors at each level.

Project Representatives: Jason Jewhurst, Karen Greene and Joshua Sydney were the project representatives.

Documents Presented: Photos of existing conditions and plans of the proposed work.

Discussion Topics: Commissioner Edraos discussed that it still looks very large but loved the change in exterior colors and the efforts made to have it fit in. Commissioner Hoffman had no comments. Commissioner Genovese was still concerned about the scale of the project and that it still feels too large and looming over the brownstones. Commissioner Genovese couldn't think of another example where a brownstone is directly abutting a four story building, that there are some larger builds in the district on corners but none that directly connect to the rowhouse. Commissioner Genovese was also concerned about some



of the views that show that the roofline is one straight row inline with the existing brownstones but than in other views you can see that it is a substantially larger build with a substantially higher top - not factoring in the head house - well, well above the brownstones. Commissioner Genovese felt that the setbacks only take you so far and that when it comes to scale, this goes all the way out to the edge of the property and so large compared to the scale of everything around it and that the Commissioner continues to feel concerned about this.

Public Comment:

Sharon Durkan, City Councilor, District 8: Supports the project and its many uses, and that Council President Ruthzee Louijeune and Councilors Edward Flynn, Julia Mejia and Erin Murphy have previously expressed their support for the project as well as her past three predecessors. She believes that the project has paid deference to the district while at the same time meeting modern building needs. Thank you to the attention paid to the materiality and textures of the building, maintaining a line on the site as well as proportionality, scale and detail to be inline with the neighborhood.

Joe McGreckin, Community Liaison for City Councilor Erin Murphy: Expressing absolute support of the project and the Councilor is thrilled with the project and wishes them the best and echo Durkan's comments. In strong support.

Kelila Kahane: Resident physician in the Longwood area. Ability to house families that come to Boston for care would be outstanding.

Ohad Oren: At Mass General and a graduate student at the Harvard School of Public Health. He says that the Rabbi and Harvard Chabad have been instrumental to the spiritual growth and academic success to so many students. The impact of Harvard Chabad is huge. Such an institution is essential and the importance of expanding this institution to Longwood Avenue for students and medical care professionals.

Annie Gleiberman: Is a current medical student at Harvard Medical school and live about 300 feet from the Mission Park line Green Stop. It is hard to get up to the Chabad in Cambridge. Would be nice to have a space by campus to come together where she lives.

Ariella Hellman: Director of Government Affairs for Agudath Israel, New England. Speaking on behalf of the larger orthodox community in Boston. Strong support for the Chabad. Rabi has done great things for the jewish community. Feels the design is appropriate and fits into the architecture of the community.



Ira Stoll: Boston tax payer, homeowner, voter and strongly supports the project. Cares about historic preservation, comes to the area for appointments. I think the design looks terrific. The Rabbi and the chabad do wonderful things for the community. Looks great.

Kiran Lang: Knows the Rabi and family, works with Harvard students. Thinks it's really important for the size, shape and function of the building. Her daughter has spent so much time in the nearby hospitals and knows the Mission Hill area well. If she could have had a home it would have been wonderful. Chabbad could not be doing all that it does If it didn't have all of the small and large spaces that the design has. Makes it look seamless. It's a gift to the community, and the Jewish community.

Maria Weinograd: Believes that the building fits just right. Own's Mike's Doughnut Shop at 1524 A Tremont Street.

Ari Jacobwitz: Left the neighborhood because it was too difficult to have access to places of Jewish worship. This center will impact the lives of people, beyond Longwood, beyond Harvard. Feels like this is needed. In terms of the design he thinks it looks great especially compared to what is currently there. I don't think we need to go back and forth forever with design concepts. Just want to get this done.

Alison Pultinas: Wondering about the plan for the demo of the existing building. Will the green space be maintained in front of 1615? Would like to see the oak tree come back.

Staff Note: 26 written public comments in favor of the project.

Public Comment Closed at 6:53 PM.

Commissioner Genovese was in support of staff reading their staff comment.

Staff read the staff comment.

Commissioner Edraos discussed accepting the staff report and requested that the designers and folks come back with a smaller footprint.

Staff suggested a continuance and more study and a reduction in scale of 1617 Tremont Street. Explore refinements in reducing the scale of 1617.

Commissioner P. Edraos made a motion that although they have clearly listened to many of the comments from from our previous meeting we the Commissioners request that they consider and come back with a smaller scale to the project.



At the request of the applicant, Commissioner Genovese permitted the applicant to speak.

Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi stated that he would like it clarified that the Commission can vote to approve the project despite staff comment. Further stated that absolutely cannot remove a floor or reduce it any further for it to be buildable. Noted that there was no voice of opposition on the call.

Commissioner Hoffman had two questions. The first was to staff - is it possible to ask for data or demonstration showing the financial reason why this building has to be this size? Staff said this would be part of a continuance and noted that use is out of our purview. Commissioner Hoffman wanted to understand the rationalization for the size and why the building cannot be smaller. Second question, do you have a rendering of the prior proposal?

Jason Jewhurst asked to answer the question.

Commissioner Hoffman asked "Is the building design more or less the same size just in a different color or does the additional step back on top..."

Jason Jewhurst discussed the street elevation, that while the building does take up more of the footprint of the site and why it does look bigger and you cannot see the row house from the corner, it is the same height as the adjacent structure. The row house has pitched roofs and we are holding the same datums. Asked to show the Wigglesworth elevations and while the building does have an additional fourth floor, we have stepped back the third floor to reflect the mansard level. Also discussed the artificial views in terms of the width of the street and the removal of the trees from drawings/renderings.

Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi discussed the programming and use of the space and that none of the spaces can be reduced.

Murray Miller, Director of the Office of Historic Preservation stated to be mindful that there is a motion on the floor, and would like the Commission to be mindful of what the motion says - to act on it or dismiss it. There shouldn't be all the discussion on the floor until the motion has been dealt with.

Staff clarified.

Commissioner Hoffman asked if the project was continued when it would come back to the Commission



Staff responded generally that it could be the next hearing.

Commissioner Edraos reminded the Commission that her motion was to accept the staff report which referenced the possible inappropriateness of the scale of the project.

Commissioner Genovese seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 (Y: KG, PE, KH) (N:None) (Abs: None).

II. RATIFICATION OF MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner P. Edraos motioned to approve. Commissioner K. Genovese seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 (Y: KG, PE, KH) (N: None) (Abs: None).

III. STAFF UPDATES

Adjourn – 7:20 PM

Commissioner P. Edraos motioned to adjourn. Commissioner K. Hoffman seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 (Y: KG, PE, KH) (N: None) (Abs: None).