



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts  
Department of Planning and Development  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone  
(617) 796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
www.newtonma.gov

James Freas  
Acting Director

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## PUBLIC HEARING/WORKING SESSION MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 27, 2015  
**MEETING DATE** March 3, 2015  
**TO:** Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen  
**FROM:** James Freas, Acting Director of Planning and Development  
Alexandra Ananth, Chief Planner for Current Planning  
Stephen Pantalone, Senior Planner  
**CC:** Petitioner

In response to questions raised at the Land Use Committee public hearings, and/or staff technical reviews, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing.

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### PETITION #18-15

17 Cushing Street

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Request for Special Permit/Site Plan Approval to extend a nonconforming structure, and to exceed the maximum allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

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The Land Use Committee (Committee) held a public hearing on February 10, 2015, which was held open so that the petitioner could respond to questions/concerns that were raised in the Planning Department Memorandum and at the public hearing by the Committee.

The petitioner submitted revised plans (Attachment A) which reduced the proposed additions by a total of 103 square feet, and the proposed the FAR from .57 to .56. The reductions include the pulling back of the addition on the northwest side of the property by approximately two feet and reducing the height so that it is lower than the peak height of the existing structure. The petitioner has also agreed to provide additional landscaping along the northwest property line to further mitigate views from the public way.

The Planning Department believes that while the proposed floor area (4,899 sf) continues to significantly exceed the allowed floor area (3,456 sf), the reductions to the proposed addition sufficiently mitigate its mass and bulk, such that the project meets the special permit criteria for site plan review and the criteria for exceeding FAR. The proposed addition will be subordinate to the

existing structure and respectful of its architectural features, and mostly screened from the public way.

**Recommendation**

Based on the supplemental information provided by the petitioner, the Planning Department believes that the petition is complete, and that the concerns raised by the Committee regarding bulk and mass have been mitigated. The Planning Department therefore recommends approval with conditions.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**ATTACHMENT A:** Letter from the Petitioner and Revised Plans

## 17 Cushing St. Revisions

It is the homeowners' intentions to restore and maintain this home as the Historic Home it is. The plans originally presented and now modified have been created by a concerted effort to make sure the massing and look of the original house is maintained and paramount.

In consideration of the Land Use Planners' recommendations, we are proposing the following changes/updates to the existing plan submitted:

### LOWER ROOF LINES

The roofs of the addition and the garage have all been lowered so that they even better complement the main house form and are subordinate to the main house form. First the main house roof will be the highest point and will not change. At the rear of the existing house the roof currently steps down towards the back. This stepped down roof will be continued over the addition.

- a) The view of the right side of the house, both existing and proposed, can be seen in the attached sketch overlay. On the left side of the house, the roof of the addition is at the lowered roof height (referred to above). This, in conjunction with the fact that it is set at the back of the existing house, will ensure that the roof of the addition is subordinate to the main house mass.
- b) The garage roof has been lowered by one foot, bringing scale and massing down, and is commensurate with the lowered roofs of the addition, further ensuring that the original house is the primary form and mass on the property. Another advantage to lowering the garage roof is that it decreases the FAR by 62 SF.

### REDUCTION IN "Stair Bump-out"

The design of the stair bump-out at the right rear has been changed so that it hugs the house more closely while at the same time giving that side some relief from a very long wall plane. The stair bump-out has been reduced to approximately 7' (from originally nearly 9') from the body of the house. (NOTE: The roof of the stair bump-out has an even lower roof than the rear roof referenced above.) The reduction in FAR of this element is approximately 41 SF.

### VEGETATION/VISUAL

Consideration has been given and the proposed addition will be partially screened from property abutters by significant vegetation and all but entirely screened from the public way. To further mitigate the right side addition, we will consult the City Tree Warden for recommendations for evergreen trees/shrubs to be planted in that area to provide additional relief and visual.

**From:** [Harriet Christina Chu](#)  
**To:** [Stephen Pantalone](#); [Daniel Sexton](#)  
**Cc:** [Laura Kay Hughes](#); [Hughes Bob](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Additional materials  
**Date:** Thursday, February 26, 2015 9:17:27 AM  
**Attachments:** [HUGHES - REVISED PLANS.pdf](#)  
[17 Cushing Forrest.pdf](#)  
[HUGHES- FRONT ELEVATION.pdf](#)

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Good morning, Stephen and Dan,

Here are some of the the supplemental materials that we discussed for 17 Cushing St.

Attached are the following:

1. PDF of revised plans, showing changed setbacks at rear and side lot lines with. reduced stair bump out at west (left) side to 7 feet, which is even smaller than when we had met on Monday.
2. PDF of additional letter of support from neighbors at 154 Allerton (the Forrests). There may be a couple more coming in later.
3. PDF of revised front elevation showing changed roofs and bump out reduced to 7' with roof lowered so eave line is below the main house.

The revised FAR is as follows:

1st Fl reduced by 20  
2nd Fl reduced by 21 (total 41 but I split it this way)  
Area above detached garage reduced by 62

Total reduction in FAR: 103 SF  
Previous FAR: .57  
New FAR: .56

I will forward the following:

1. Sketch overlay of west side of house (existing and proposed) as seen from directly in front of the side lot line (lightly penciled in). Please note that future tree plantings are not shown here but would create further buffer.
2. Sketches of revised elevations with lowered roof, reduced bump out and roof plan,
3. Diagram showing the sight line from the house across the street.

Laura Kay Hughes has asked the neighbor across the street to take a photo from their upstairs bedroom, as you had suggested. We may get that later today. In any case, the "line of sight" diagram showing serves this purpose.

If there is anything else that we need to do, please let me know.

Thank you,

Chris Chu

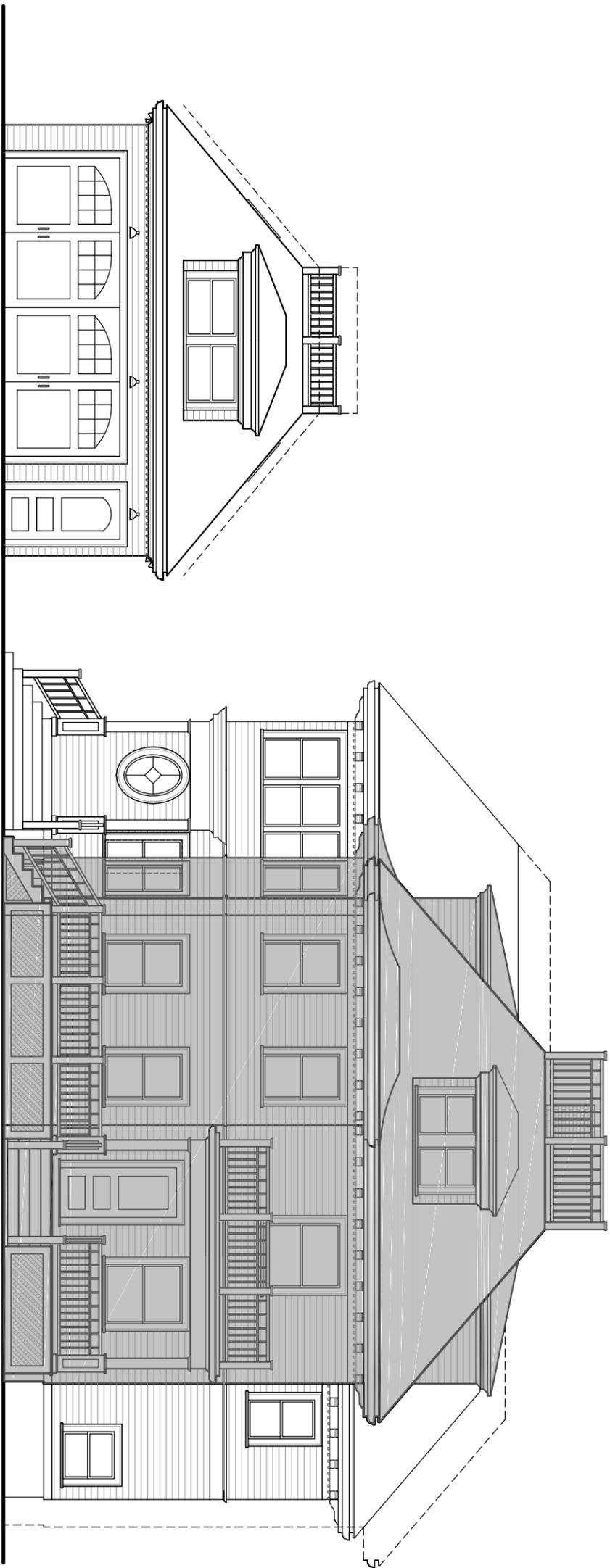
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Chris Chu, AIA  
Specializing in Residential Design

*Ask the Architect, Boston Globe*  
*This Old House Auburndale 2010*  
*Historic Newton Historic Preservation Award 2011*  
*Not So Big Remodeling, Taunton Press, 2009*

113 Chestnut Street  
West Newton, MA 02465  
[hcchu@verizon.net](mailto:hcchu@verizon.net)  
Cell [617-834-4892](tel:617-834-4892)  
[www.chrischuarchitect.com](http://www.chrischuarchitect.com)





FRONT

SHEET:

DATE: 02/25/2015

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

DRAWING TITLE:

PROPOSED  
FRONT ELEVATION (NORTH)

PROGRESS  
SET

PROJECT:

**HUGHES RESIDENCE**  
17 CUSHING STREET  
NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461

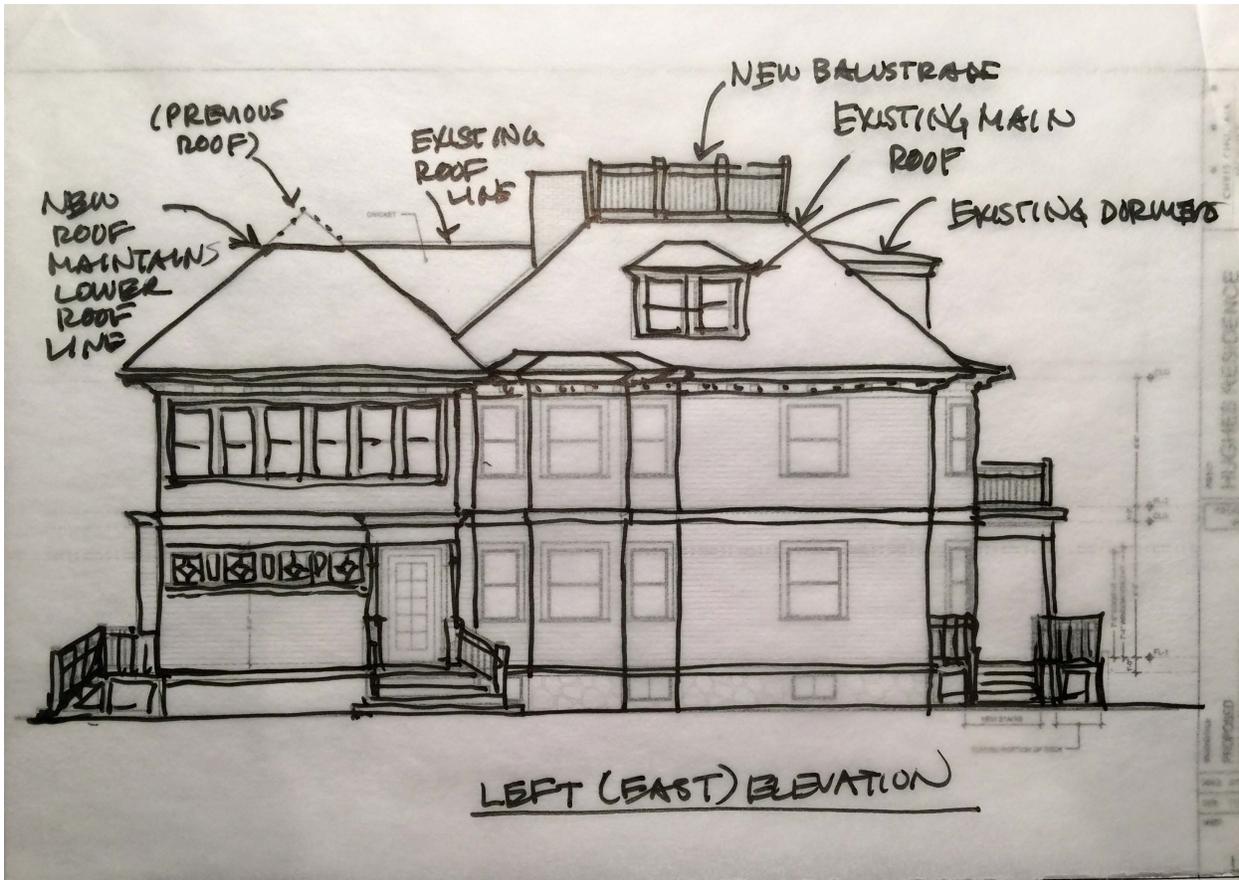
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**CHRIS CHU, AIA**  
ARCHITECT  
113 CHESTNUT ST., W. NEWTON, MA 02465  
(617) 965-8094 / (617) 965-5431 fax  
hcchu@verizon.net  
www.chrischuar architect.com

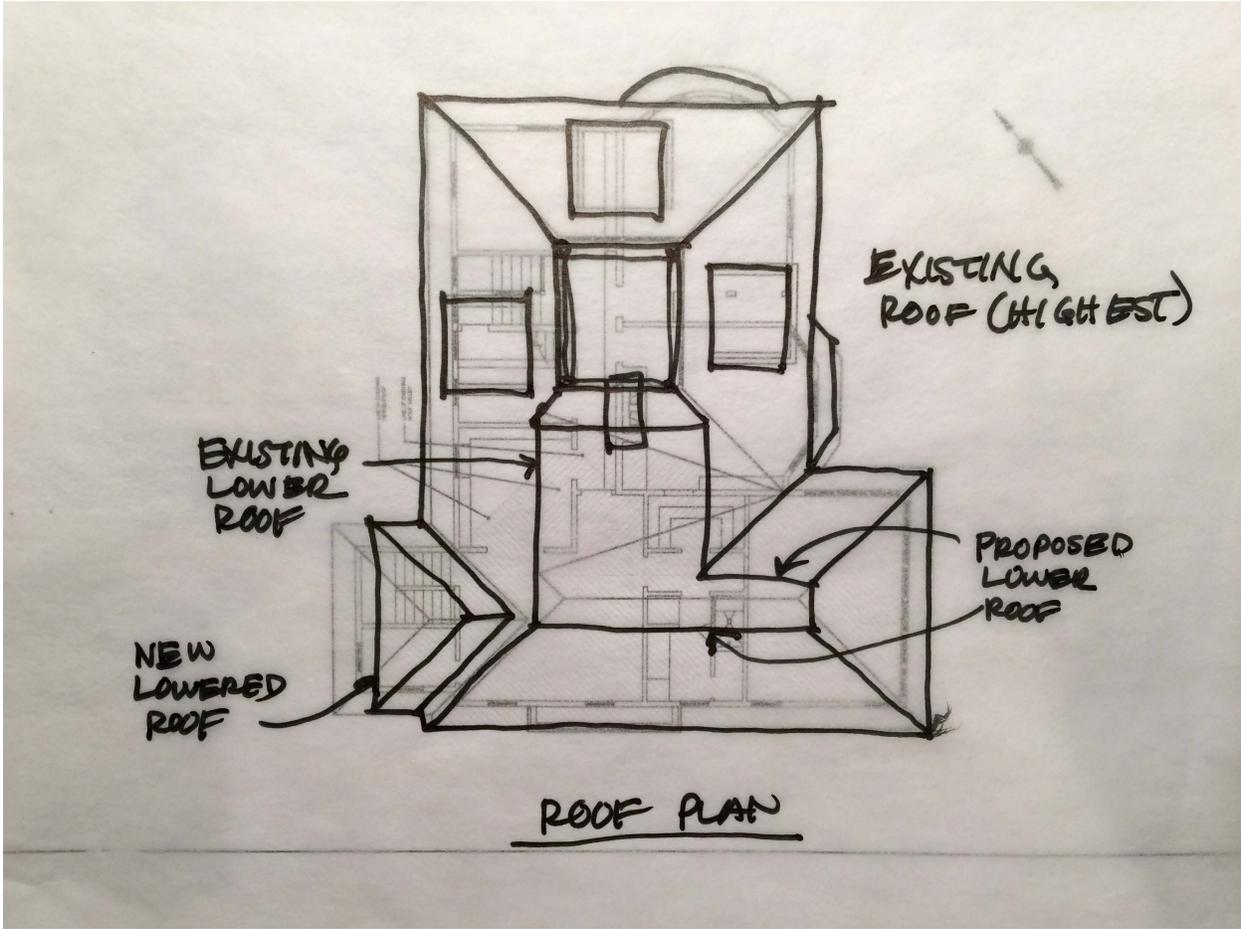
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Project: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rear elevation  
 High level elevation  
 Richard Wolf Fine



ARCHITECT  
 CHRIS CHU, AIA  
 113 CUSHING ST. #2 NEWTON, MA 02459  
 (617) 552-1000  
 PROJECT  
 HUGHES RESIDENCE  
 17 CUSHING STREET  
 NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461  
 DRAWING TITLE  
 PROPOSED  
 REAR ELEVATION (SOUTH)  
 PROGRESS SET  
 SCALE 3/16"=1'-4"  
 DATE 11/30/20  
 SHEET:  
 REAR





Chris Cho, AIA  
Specializing in Residential Design  
All the Architect, Boston Globe  
The Old House Authority, 2010  
Honor: Boston Globe's Preservation Award 2011  
Not So Big Remodeling, Taunton Press, 2009

111 Franklin Street  
West Newton, MA 02459  
Boston, MA 02118  
617.552.8800  
[www.chrischo.com](http://www.chrischo.com)