

**DRAFT Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION**

**Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission**

December 2, 2021 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (833 0063 8888) - 6:00 P.M.

Members present (online): Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*

Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Liz Lyster, Jo Solet, *Members*  
Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate Members*

Members absent: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Caroline Shannon, *Member*

Staff present (online): Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*, Eric Hill, *Survey Director*

Public present (online): See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation and was closed to in-person attendance, consistent with the provisions set forth in the Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency, which was signed into law on June 16, 2021. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present (Ferrara, Harrington, Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Solet, and Tobin), Ms. Tobin, the Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. She explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, then introduced the commissioners and staff. There were no recommended cases for the Consent Agenda.

Public Hearing: Landmark Study and Alterations to Property

**Case L-136 and Case 4669 (continued): 711-727 Massachusetts Ave, by Gas Light Building LLC, owner.** Consider revised draft Standards and Guidelines for landmark report. Continue hearing relative to application to renovate the existing building and construct an addition at rear and above it.

Mr. Sullivan provided the background of the landmark study and application for certificate of appropriateness for a renovation and addition to the building. The November hearing had been continued to allow for further discussion of proposed preservation standards and design guidelines for the property, which would be a part of the landmark designation study report. He said the Cambridge Historical Commission, established in 1963, had never adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards because the Commission had begun its work prior to the introduction of the federal standards. The Commission preferred to have individual discussion of cases, based on the unique circumstances of each property and building. He further explained that it was the Commission's practice to incorporate individual standards and guidelines into the study reports for landmarks and goals and guidelines for neighborhood conservation districts. Such guidelines could never cover every future possibility and projects were not expected to satisfy every guideline. He summarized the general standards and revised draft guidelines for 711-727 Massachusetts Avenue, which would become section 7 of the landmark study report. He shared his screen and showed examples of rooftop additions to historic buildings around the country and in Cambridge.

Ms. Tobin asked if there were questions of fact from the public.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked about the length of the memo summarizing the revised draft guidelines. The document posted on the website was only four pages long, but someone got a hard copy in the office of a much longer document. Mr. Sullivan said he had circulated a cover letter

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and four pages of revised draft guidelines. Ms. Burks indicated that she had posted to the website the same material circulated to the Commission members by Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Williamson asked about a City Hall National Register Historic District and the relevant statute for the landmark study. He asked if the guidelines for the proposed siting of an addition and the relationship of the building to the surrounding architectural context be combined into one statement.

Dan Totten of 54 Bishop Allen Dr. asked what was meant by “design vocabulary.”

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission discuss the Standards first and then get into the guidelines for 711-727 Mass. Ave.

Suzanne Blier of 5 Fuller Place suggested that materials and texture of additions be nuanced in their differentiation from the historic building. Mr. Sullivan said that level of design review was better left to the hearing of an application and that design guidelines should not be too prescriptive.

Ms. Tobin opened the public comment period

Lee Farris of 269 Norfolk Street shared her screen and showed images of three local buildings with recent additions: MIT Building 2, 907 Main Street, and Harvard’s Winthrop House with connecting addition to 11 Riverview.

Mr. Williamson asked if the mural on the west wall of 727 Mass Ave should be mentioned in the guidelines. Mr. Sullivan said the adjacent property was separately owned and an addition on the building next door could obscure that mural with no jurisdiction by the Historical Commission.

Mr. Totten said the revision looked at additions more holistically than the earlier draft. He suggested the relevant National Register district be referenced in the document.

Marie Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street asked if the guidelines would be used in all future landmark reports. Mr. Sullivan said that while standards evolved over time each landmark report contained individualized guidelines with regard to the specific circumstances of the subject property.

Prof. Blier suggested that the guidelines require a Viewshed Analysis for proposals for new construction and additions so that the proposal could be viewed from the proper perspectives.

Ms. Farris suggested that applications for additions should demonstrate the need for an addition for a proposed new use. The applicants had indicated they had an as-of-right zoning option. What would they do if the addition was not approved?

Duane Callendar, of the Board of Cambridge Tenants, said the new structure would not match the historic building and would detract from it. The addition would also block sunlight into the Temple Place building next door. The buildings were placed too close together and would make it difficult for emergency responders. He noted that many of the tenants of Temple Place had special needs.

Ms. Wyman indicated that the memo had only been posted since Wednesday and there had not been enough time to review it and consider it in a careful way.

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Mr. Williamson said the lighting standard should be clearer. The context of the building's surroundings was a relevant consideration.

Ms. Tobin closed public comment about the Standards and turned to the Commission members.

Ms. Lyster questioned if "must be" would be better than "should be" in Standard #1. She noted that some of the points raised by Mr. Callendar were outside of the Historical Commission's purview and suggested that he contact staff of the Community Development or Inspectional Services department.

Ms. Paris asked for clarification of what the Commission needed to vote on at present. Mr. Sullivan indicated he is not looking for a vote but for comments and edits. He apologized that the memo was posted so close to the hearing and didn't provide more time for review.

Mr. Ferrara said the document captured the key objectives with the refinements that had been made.

Ms. Harrington agreed. She said she didn't have additions. The comments of the previous meeting had been incorporated into the latest draft.

Ms. Tobin asked for questions of fact or public comment on the design guidelines that relate specifically to 711-727 Mass. Ave.

Mr. Williamson said the mural should be referenced in the guidelines even if the property next door could be redeveloped someday. He objected to the existing architectural lighting of the building and said the guidelines should be modified. He referred to his written statement.

Ms. Farris asked that reference to the NR district be added as well as a requirement to indicate if an addition was necessary for the proposed use.

Mr. Totten requested a red-lined document for next time so that it would be easy to determine what had been revised.

Prof. Blier remarked that some designs are more problematic than others in their ability to control light spill from the building.

Ms. Tobin closed public comment.

Mr. Kleespies indicated that the one-story retail building to the west did not contribute positively to the overall character of the area, so he would suggest they not be called out in the guidelines. Mr. Sullivan said that mention of it did not imply any particular value.

Sarah Rhatigan, attorney for the applicant, stated that the applicants felt it was best to request a continuance, unless the Commission indicated it wanted to hear their case that night.

Marcel Safar, one of the applicants, said it would not be productive to make their presentation the same night. Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing, at the request of and with consent of the owners, to the January 6 meeting. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. Ms. Tobin designated alternates Paris and Kleespies to vote. (Solet, Kleespies, Ferrara, Lyster, Harrington, Tobin, Paris)

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Ms. Tobin called for a five-minute break at 8:05 and reconvened the meeting at 8:11 P.M.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-138: 68-70 Lexington Ave., by Gregory Scott Burd & Francesca Gino, owners.** Request for reconsideration of landmark designation study after withdrawal of demolition permit application.

Mr. Sullivan reported that the owners had withdrawn their demolition permit application immediately after the November 4 Commission decision to initiate a landmark designation study for the property and now requested that the landmark study be halted in light of the withdrawal.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owners, noted that when the question was raised at the last hearing about landmarking all the sister houses on the street, the Commission noted that only 68-70 was threatened with demolition. The owners had subsequently withdrawn, with prejudice, their application for demolition of 68-70 thus removing that threat. A future owner of the property would have to apply anew if they wanted to demolish the building. The owners wished to sell the property and were concerned that a landmark study would negatively impact its marketability. He requested that the Commission reconsider its decision to initiate the landmark study.

Francesca Gino, an owner, thanked the Commission for hearing her request. She described the background of their decision to build their house at 72, the growth of their family, the purchase of 68-70, and the demolition application. Time was of the essence because one of their parents was ill and they wanted to sell both properties and find a house that would work for their family. It had been a costly process, but she had a deeper appreciation for everyone in the neighborhood. She said they had been approached by developers who wanted to do a gut rehab of 68-70 and sell the units as condominiums.

Mr. Kleespies asked if there were ramifications in such a decision on possible future actions of the Commission relative to the property. Mr. Sullivan replied in the negative.

Mr. Harrington asked if the landmark study would continue if the property changed hands. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Paris asked if the Commission had ever reversed a decision to study a property for landmark designation. Mr. Sullivan answered that the Kendall Square landmark group had been under study when a protocol for review of significant buildings was accepted between MIT and the Commission.

Ms. Tobin asked if there were questions of fact by the public.

Michael Smith of 86 Lexington Avenue asked if a developer could change the historic character of the building if the landmark study was not in effect. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Rafferty said the house shouldn't be treated differently from any of the other fifteen houses on the street. It was no longer under threat of demolition, and it was already a three-family residence.

Ms. Tobin asked for public comment.

Prof. Blier said it was a stunning building and urged the Commission retain the landmark study. The city needed a design review board, not just when demolition is proposed.

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Ms. Tobin closed the public comment period.

Ms. Lyster said she understood Mr. Rafferty's position that it would be an unfair burden to these owners to have this one house on the street subject to a landmark study. She said in her experience as a realtor that developers were unlikely to want to make drastic changes to the exterior of a building like this. She said she supported stopping the landmark study.

Dr. Solet agreed, saying that the house would not be in a different situation to another building on the street that gets sold.

Mr. Kleespies said the Commission had not started the landmark study to prevent all alterations to the building but to protect it against demolition. He said he saw no harm in ending the study in light of the withdrawal of the demolition application.

Dr. Solet moved to end the landmark designation study in the context of the removal of the demolition threat. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0. Ms. Tobin designated Messrs. Sheffield and Kleespies to vote as alternates. (Solet, Kleespies, Ferrara, Lyster, Harrington, Solet, Tobin, Sheffield)

Public Hearing: Demolition Review and Landmark Study Petition

**Case D-1595 and Case L-141: 2161 Massachusetts Ave. ND Development, LLC, owner.** Application to move building on lot and demolish rear and side sections. Consider petition by ten or more registered voters to initiate a landmark designation study.

Mr. Sullivan introduced the cases. One was a request for a demolition permit to relocate the building on the lot with removal of select portions of the building. The other related to a landmark study petition for the same property.

Mr. Hill showed slides and presented the staff memo about the history and architecture of the building. The combination house and dental office was designed by architect William Galvin in the Art Moderne style. The American Friends Service Committee purchased the property in 1976. The staff recommended that the building be found significant for its architecture as a rare example of the style and for its important associations with Galvin.

Ms. Lyster asked about other Art Moderne buildings in Cambridge. Mr. Hill answered that there were not many extant examples. Mr. Sullivan noted an apartment building on Forest Street, also by Galvin that would be the closest example to this one. There was not a lot of construction of any sort during the Depression years.

Ms. Tobin asked for questions of fact.

Mr. Williamson asked if there was a family connection between William Galvin and the Secretary of State, William Galvin. Mr. Hill said he was unaware of any relation.

Roberta Rubin of 17 Day Street asked the age of the magnolia tree at the front corner. She said it was mature when she moved to the neighborhood in 1984. Mr. Hill said he did not know the age of the

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tree. It was not included in the rendering, but that may have been for clarity of the drawing.

Mr. Williamson noted that the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) had won a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 and that added to the building's significance. He described some of the programs that were organized through the AFSC there.

Prof. Blier expressed support for preservation of the building and was glad the tree had been mentioned because the landscape elements were important as well.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant for the reasons in the report and for the additional reasons stated in public testimony. Ms. Paris seconded the motion. Ms. Tobin designated alternates Paris and Sheffield to vote. The motion passed 7-0 (Solet, Paris, Ferrara, Lyster, Harrington, Tobin, Sheffield).

Mr. Rafferty, attorney for the Nelson Group, stated that the request for a demolition permit was to relocate the building on the lot but that there was very little actual demolition proposed. The reason for relocating the building was to provide room on the lot for the required parking. He noted that the property was located within the North Massachusetts Avenue zoning overlay district, which required that commercial space be provided on the ground floor. The commercial space would be located in the addition. The applicant had met with the neighborhood group on Monday and heard concerns for the magnolia tree. The tree could be retained and protected.

Architect Nerijus Bubnelis of Khalsa Design presented the proposed design. He said the tree could be saved and the developers would retain an arborist to advise them on its protection. He noted another tree on the right side of the building would be removed. Only seven or eight feet at the back of the building would be removed. The new side addition would be recessed behind the front wall of the historic building. He indicated the 1959 addition at the rear of the building. The portion to be demolished was part of that addition, not part of the original building.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the carved detailing near the front entrance would be retained. It was not indicated in the renderings. Mr. Bubnelis replied that it would be retained.

Ms. Lyster noted the use of black windows in the design. Would that have been the original paint color? Mr. Sullivan said a color image from 1983 showed the original metal windows had been painted off white, similar in color to the buff brick.

Mr. Sheffield noted that the existing windows were incongruous replacement units.

Mr. Bubnelis indicated that the original steel sash would not meet today's energy codes. Mr. Sullivan recommended delegated review of windows and other construction and landscape details to staff.

Ms. Paris asked about the porthole window at the side of the front door. Was that the only location of a window of that type? Mr. Bubnelis noted that the round opening was proposed to be repeated in the new doors.

Ms. Tobin asked for questions from the public.

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Prof. Blier asked about the addition of parking. Mr. Rafferty answered that parking was a zoning requirement. They would seek relief from the Planning Board to have less than one space per unit. They proposed 9 units and seven parking spaces.

Mr. Williamson asked if the light fixtures at the front entrance would be retained. Mr. Bubnelis answered in the affirmative. Mr. Williamson noted the opportunity to return to a flat roof over the entry vestibule. He asked about the existing and proposed square footage. Mr. Bubnelis said the existing gross square footage was 10,000 sf with the basement and the proposed would be less (9,626 sf) and would conform to the zoning. Mr. Williamson asked about the programmatic needs. Mr. Rafferty said the unit mix had been studied. Zoning allowed for 11 units on the site and 9 units were proposed with a mix of 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, and studio units within the allowed FAR.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue asked if there had been a garage at the back of the property and if there was also parking on grade. Mr. Rafferty replied in the affirmative to both questions about the existing conditions. Mr. Brandon said he'd like to see a landscape inventory plan and noted the large coniferous tree on the right side of the building. He said the presentation slides were different from the plans posted online. Mr. Rafferty said the materials prepared for the Planning Board would include a more detailed landscape plan. Mr. Brandon asked if a brick building could be safely moved. Mr. Rafferty said it was not unique and could be done safely. The methods would be reviewed with CHC staff.

Ms. Rubin asked if there were alternatives to moving the building. It would be very close to the tree. Was underground parking feasible? Mr. Rafferty answered that underground parking was prohibitively expensive. Mr. Rafferty said the tree could be protected during construction. Some pruning might be recommended.

Graham Jones of 2153 Massachusetts Avenue, the lead petitioner, said the magnolia tree was larger than it appeared in the photograph. He asked if moving the building would negatively impact design of the building on the site or in relation to the tree.

Mr. Hill noted that the building had been constructed at a time when Massachusetts Avenue was shifting from residential to commercial projects. He said it would not be detrimental to the building's significance to move it closer to the street.

Ms. Tobin asked for public comment.

Mr. Williamson said he was not opposed to the current suburban setting with a setback from the street. Another Moderne building had glass block in the window openings. Had glass block been used here also? He suggested the applicants reduce the proposal to eight units and

further reduce the parking.

Mr. Brandon asked about signs for the commercial space. He asked for more detail such as the color for the windows. He remarked that the proposed bicycle lockers along Milton Street would block views of the building. He recommended making the vestibule roof flat again. The project needed more public and CHC oversight.

Ms. Tobin closed the public comment period. She noted that Dr. Solet had left the meeting. She designated all alternates to vote.

Ms. Lyster said a lighter color on the windows would be appropriate to the style. There should be more differentiation between the old and new parts of the building. She noted that in Galvin's rendering, it appeared that a deck over the entry vestibule was intended. Plants were drawn hanging over the parapet of the deck. She asked if excavation for a basement could be kept away from the magnolia tree. Mr. Bubnelis said a slab could be used there.

Mr. Kleespies commented favorably on the design. It was a reasonable project that would preserve the architecture of the building and create new housing units. He recommended re-thinking the paint colors. The trim did not need to be black. The porthole in the addition was a nice touch.

Mr. Ferrara said the design looked reasonable. The dark colors made the building look too brooding. The colors should be lighter. He agreed about the flat roof over the entry vestibule. He said he was hearing general support for the project but a lot of suggestions for the details. He recommended careful review of the details by the staff.

Mr. Sheffield commented on the rear elevation and details of the old building with the new addition. Two distinct materials were being merged. He recommended stepping the rear volume back for a better construction detail. The building should be about 5-10 feet away from the tree. The hip roof of the old building meets the brick of the addition, which is a tricky intersection. He recommended lowering the overall height of the addition.

Mr. Sullivan observed that the project would be going to the Planning Board as well where parking and the site plan would get due consideration. He noted that the Commission had not yet discussed the landmark petition.

Ms. Lyster said she was confident that the overall design was good and would support delegating review of design details to staff.

Mr. Sheffield moved to find the existing building not preferably preserved in the context of this proposal on the condition that the design refinements and construction and moving details be delegated to the Executive Director with consideration of the design comments made by the Commission members that would be part of the record.



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Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0 (Sheffield, Ferrara, Lyster, Harrington, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris, Sheffield).

Mr. Sullivan said the decision made a landmark study unnecessary but asked if the landmark petitioners would like to speak about why they submitted the petition and how they felt about the project.

Mr. Jones said he could speak only for himself, but he was reasonably satisfied with the design decisions that the Commission negotiated.

Ms. Tobin called for public questions or comments.

Mr. Williamson asked if there would be another hearing in January on the landmark question. Mr. Sullivan replied in the negative.

Mr. Jones asked if a development plan could be approved if the property was under landmark study. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Lyster moved to decline to accept the petition to initiate a landmark study given the previous motion that would delegate ongoing design review to staff. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 (Lyster, Harrington, Ferrara, Kleespies, Tobin, Paris, Sheffield).

Preservation Grants

**Case IPG 22-6: 130 Magazine St., by Cambridgeport Baptist Church. (#2)** Requested grant of \$50,000 for roof replacement.

**Case IPG 21-2: 874 Main St., by Union Baptist Church (#2)** Requested grant increase of \$5,500 for unexpected conditions in the restoration of the portico.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the two grant requests. He recommended approval for both grants with a supplementary amount of \$5,500 for the Union Baptist Church and \$50,000 grant with a required match for the Cambridgeport Baptist Church.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve the grants as described. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. (Kleespies, Harrington, Lyster, Ferrara, Tobin, Paris, Sheffield)

Minutes

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the November 10 minutes as submitted. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 (Kleespies, Harrington, Lyster, Ferrara, Tobin, Paris, Sheffield).

Director's Report

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed unanimously (Kleespies, Harrington, Lyster, Ferrara, Tobin, Paris, Sheffield).

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, December 2, 2021**

Dennis Clair	1066 Commonwealth Ave, Boston
Sarah Rhatigan	12 Marshall St, Boston
Marcel Safar	100 Summer St, Boston
James Rafferty	907 Massachusetts Ave.
Tony Hsiao	Finegold Alexander Architects
Graham Jones	2153 Massachusetts Ave.
Nerijus Bubnelis	17 Ivaloo St, Somerville
Gavin Mullan	100 Summer St, Boston
Francesca Gino	72 Lexington St
William Young	Re: 727 Massachusetts Ave
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Judy Cazeau	5 Milton St
Marie Elena Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Glenna Wyman	55 Essex St
Anne Randolph	10 Milton St
Phyllis Pownall	17 Rindgefield
Charles Fineman	75 Winter St
Sherry Tucker	854 Massachusetts Ave., #2
Emmet Sheehan	237 Franklin St, 1801
Bill Cunningham	6 Newtowne Ct #166
Kathy Watkins	90 Fawcett St, Apt 511
Pebble Gifford	15 Hilliard St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St
Bill Baker	2165 Massachusetts Ave
Lucy Patton	333 Walden St.
Dan Totten	54 Bishop Allen Dr #2
Nicola Williams	8 Brewer St
Lee Farris	269 Norfolk St
Lisa Horvitz	215 Norfolk St, Unit 4
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com
Daniel Sullivan	12 Milton St
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl, Jefferson Park
Timothy Mansfield	108 Lexington Ave
Michael Smith	86 Lexington Ave #1
Alexandra Fallon	2145 Massachusetts Ave
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl
Melanie Abrams	1539 Cambridge St, #2
Timothy Keefe	2175 Mass Ave
Roberta Rubin	17 Day St
Kit Haines	10 Hazel St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.