

Approved 3/4/10

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

February 4, 2010 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Vice Chair Irving; Dr. Solet; Mss. Berg and Tobin; Messrs. Bibbins, Crocker, and Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

With a quorum present, Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M. and introduced the commissioners and staff. He designated the alternates, Ms. Berg and Ms. Tobin, to vote on all matters. Mr. Irving described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases that a member of the public, commission, or staff would recommend for approval per the consent agenda and for which it was not necessary to have a full hearing.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the following case per the consent agenda procedures.

Case 2466: 1420-1440 Massachusetts Ave., by University Common Real Estate Co. LLP. To alter rooftop telecommunications equipment.

Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Continued Cases

Case 2445 (continued): 1991 Massachusetts Ave., by Saint James Episcopal Church. Review project details.

Mr. Bibbins recused himself due to a former professional relationship with the church and left the table.

Mr. Irving reported that new information had been coming in since the last meeting. He invited the proponents to present their updates and responses to the Commission's condition. He invited public comment on the new information, but noted that the Commission would not be making a determination tonight.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the history of the case. He outlined his letter of January 21, 2010 which recorded the Commission's January 7 decision to approve the project in principle subject to a number of conditions. He described the new material received from the proponents. The material was complex and the public had not yet had a chance to review it.

Vinicius Gorgati of Sasaki Associates reviewed the garden design, which had been developed in more detail. The total site was 1.3 acres, including the carwash site. The existing garden lot was 1/3 of an acre. The proposed courtyard between the new parish hall and the church was .17 acre and was similar in scale to the courtyard at St. Paul's church. The other proposed green areas (the children's play garden and the rear buffers) were .15 acre. The combined total of proposed green spaces was .32 acre. He showed a historic view with mature elms at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Beech Street and noted the smaller scale of trees and shrubs at that corner now. He reviewed the proposed landscape plan, which included elms or oaks at the corner. That area had runoff issues that would be corrected with a storm water retention system. The captured storm water would be used to water the garden. He described a new sign and paving proposed for the entrance, making it more pedestrian friendly. He described the garden, contemplative garden by the chapel, children's play area, and street trees.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact from the public.

John Armstrong of 36 Orchard Street asked if the church would allow public access to the courtyard from the residential condos through the building. It would make the courtyard safer.

Alan Aukeman, a vestryman, said he would answer that as part of his larger presentation.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if there were perspectives from the sidewalk rather than the median so one could tell if the views of the church would be blocked.

Mr. Gorgati said the building setbacks had also been discussed at the Planning Board and Board of Zoning Appeal. The buildings were pushed back from the streets as much as possible. There would be points along the sidewalk where the view would be obscured, but that was common in a city.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment on the landscape plan.

Ms. Meyer spoke in favor of creating a passage through the site from Beech Street to Massachusetts Avenue, making the space feel more open to the public. Rev. Holly Antolini, rector of St. James's Episcopal Church, replied that the link from the church to the existing parish house blocked any passage through the site. The proposed link was the main accessible entrance to the church and could not be done away with.

Mr. Armstrong asked if a passage was impossible, whether the parking on grade could be eliminated, and whether the courtyard could be accessed from the condos through the building. These aspects would improve the project for everyone. Art Klipfel of Oaktree Development replied that the church's program required one continuous space wrapping around the garden. To interrupt the continuity of the church space would be disruptive.

Ms. Meyer asked if there was a requirement for the church to be freestanding. Mr. Sullivan replied that it never had been freestanding and there was no such requirement. The 2005 memorandum of agreement mentioned retaining open views of the church and retaining its largely freestanding nature. Rev. Antolini noted that the original church, which became a chapel, had been closer to the current church than the new building would be.

Mr. Irving asked everyone to focus on the landscape plan.

Ms. Berg noted that the labyrinth should still be green, and not overly paved. Rev. Antolini agreed that the lawn was important.

Dr. Solet asked about seating and night lighting. Mr. Gorgati said there would be seating ~~along~~ on the low wall and in the wooded area. The lighting would be low level and not enough to disturb the neighbors.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked if there had been progress on a written commitment to public access of the garden.

Mr. Aukeman stated that it was the church's goal to make the garden safer and friendlier than it was now. It was committed to maintaining public access. The fence would be gone and there would be no barrier to accessing the new gardens. A landmark designation would require Historical Commission approval if a fence or barrier was proposed in the future. Nolen's design was appropriate to that time and context but the church had different needs today. The garden would be accessed from Massachusetts Avenue, as now. All people would enter it the same way, so no special claims would be made on the garden in the future. He spoke in response to the Commission's condition about maintaining the historic church building. The vestry had not yet been able to make a formal vote on the matter because it was still negotiating the memorandum of understanding with Oaktree. He presented

the Treasurer's report, which described the capital needs and anticipated budgeting. The proceeds from the sale of condominiums would go toward some critical issues right away and to create an endowment for future maintenance. The new parish house would have an energizing effect on the church's fundraising in general. He spoke about the financial arrangements and ownership issues. He described an upfront payment to the church which would ~~find~~ fund other parish house space during construction, a performance bond protecting the church if the job was not completed by Oaktree, and 35% of the net overall proceeds. He described the complex ownership arrangements proposed for both during and post construction. There would be two tiers of condominium units. The church itself would never be subject to a mortgage owned by a bank.

Mr. Irving closed public comment.

Dr. Solet asked for clarification as to why there could not be a passage through the site. Mr. Gorgati explained that it would sever the circulation in the parish hall.

Mr. Sullivan recommended softening the area at the front corner with more green space and less paving.

Mr. Irving asked the church for its consent to continue the hearing to March or April or May.

Rev. Antolini granted consent, but the exact date of the continued hearing was not then selected.

Ms. Tobin moved to continue to a future public hearing at a regular meeting of the Commission, pending confirmation by the proponents. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Irving called for a brief recess at 8:06 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 8:15 P.M.

Case D-1182 (continued): 136 Fayerweather St./56 Saville St., by 136 Fayerweather LLC, Merek Franklin, Tr. Demolish house (1926).

Mr. Bibbins returned to the Commission table.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the case. The house had been found to be significant and preferably preserved in December. A revised design was presented in January and received a favorable response, but the Commission had asked for further revisions on a few specific aspects.

Scott Kenton, the designer, reviewed the site plan and further revisions to the dormers and front entrance porch. The dormer would start below the ridge height and would conform to the dormer design guidelines.

Dr. Solet asked about the placement of the side door and Mr. Kenton explained why it was off center due to the interior plan and the desire to keep the penetrations on that non-conforming wall the same as existing.

William Cobham of 131 Fayerweather Street said he had no objections to the proposed demolition. He was, however, concerned about construction impacts on his own house. He did not want vibrations or shaking to damage his house, which had been recently renovated. Mr. Kenton explained the options for foundation systems. Piers would cause the least disturbance to the soil and the neighbors. Mr. Irving recommended that the two parties have outside discussions about construction mitigation measures.

Ms. Meyer said the design had improved but it wasn't quite there.

Mr. Shirley said the fireplace vent would be obvious on the bay facing Fayerweather Street. He recommended pushing the dormers back from the outside wall.

Ms. Berg moved to find that the building was no longer preferably preserved in relation to the amended design presented and with the strong recommendations about the dormers and vent. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2465: 44 Follen St., by Lincoln's Inn Society. Exterior repairs and renovations, replace windows, doors, alter entry porches, rebuild dormers, remove addition on north side and replace with bay window, landscaping.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the house, which had originally been located on Waterhouse Street but was moved when the Christian Science Church was built. He explained how the house had changed over time. The sale of the property had closed since the application was submitted.

Vincent Panico, attorney for new owner Doug Yoffe, stated that the proposed alterations would not expand the building. The 1960s vestibule on the side would be removed and replaced with a window. The brick steps would be rebuilt in bluestone.

Amy Nastasi, the architect, reviewed the elevations and described the proposed alterations and building materials. The fire escape door would be removed. One chimney would be removed. The side entrance, which was no longer in its original state, would be replaced with a window. Basement windows and a rear stair would be added. The only original windows were in the third floor.

Mr. Irving asked if single glazed windows with new storms could be used. Mr. Yoffe agreed.

Henry Lelaurain of 50 Follen Street said he was happy to see the former club become a private residence. The club had been noisy and the building had become an eyesore.

Mr. Sullivan read a letter from Sheila Cook of 34 Follen Street. She expressed admiration for Mr. Yoffe taking on the project. She suggested that he make it a two-family house and urged caution during construction.

Mr. Shirley asked questions about the chimney and its potential for preservation but noted that it was less prominent than some and he was not overly concerned about its removal. He recommended other details be reviewed and approved by the Architects Committee. He expressed strong support for the project overall.

Mr. Sullivan asked about fencing and A/C. Mr. Yoffe replied there would be fencing in the back by the alley but none in front. The condenser would be in the rear under the new stair.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness on the condition that construction drawings and details including materials, windows, fencing, parking, etc. be approved by staff. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1190: 181 Walden St., by Cambridge Housing Authority. Raze Lincoln Way public housing complex.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the layout of the housing complex with shared courtyards and private drying yards. Each apartment had a front door and back door. It was designed by prolific local architect William Galvin after World War II for the Cambridge Housing Authority. He described other public housing developments in the city as context for this design. It was very different from the more urban and dense developments like Roosevelt Towers. It was an experimental design by CHA and had a unique site plan, nice exterior ma-

terials, and a Georgian Revival style. He described the site, originally a clay pit for the New England Brick Co., subdivided for a residential development that was never fully realized. The North Cambridge Community Church had built a basement level facility on the site, but sold the property to CHA by 1948. Lincoln Way was significant for its architecture, site planning, housing type, and relationship to a minority population in the neighborhood.

Steven Baker of Baker Wohl Architects noted that his firm had been hired to renovate Lincoln Way, but they found it would be economically infeasible. There were significant soil problems, flooding in the basements, broken gas and sewer pipes, roof leaks, and cracked foundation walls. Existing units were very small for families today. The state had not maintained the buildings. The kitchens and baths had never been renovated. Demolition and new construction was the last option considered, but made the best sense. There was mold between the brick veneer and the cinder block backup, which could not be addressed without taking all the brick off. He reported that CHA had done considerable public process in consulting the residents and neighbors about their needs. The new units would be primarily townhouses with shared courtyard spaces and vehicular access around the perimeter of the site. This was part of a \$10 million stimulus grant from HUD, and the schedule was tight.

Ed Shea of 35 Wood Street asked about the criteria for approval, and Mr. Sullivan described the process.

Martha Scanlon of 41 Sheridan Street observed that the garden setting of the current project was important. Mr. Irving replied that the Commission would consider the entire context.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked if the CHA had considered keeping one of the original buildings. Mr. Baker replied that they had not – the goal now was redevelopment.

Eva Capo, a Lincoln Way resident, said she wanted to stay but the units were small, there were structural cracks, and plentiful mold.

Victoria Pergland, another resident, testified that the bedrooms were too small for a queen size bed, and the units could not accommodate families.

Mr. Baker said the new units would have mostly three bedrooms and contain up to 1,300 square feet. They would be built with green materials and incorporate photovoltaics and ground water recharge.

Mr. Williamson complimented the CHA on their community outreach efforts.

Mr. Bibbins asked about visitor parking. Mr. Baker replied that there would not be any; they would provide one space per unit, but many residents did not own cars.

Julian Bonder of Sheridan Street was supportive of the project, but regretted the loss of the Garden City model and the green spaces.

Carol Bundy of 190 Walden Street was sympathetic with the goals but would have liked to have more involvement with the design. She would like to soften the edges and have a gentler transition to the neighborhood. The uniform height was monotonous.

Brooksany Coe of 35 Wood Street objected to losing the green spaces and increasing the number of units.

Martha Scanlon of 41 Sheridan Street objected to the perimeter roadway and the loss of trees. Ms. Capo replied that the road would eliminate dead ends where kids hang out and get into trouble.

Mr. Sullivan observed that the issues mentioned fell under the purview of the Planning Board and Board of Zoning Appeal.

Dr. Solet moved that Lincoln Way be found significant for the reasons mentioned in the staff report. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed with Mr. Shirley voting in opposition.

Mr. Bibbins said that the varied height of the buildings was pleasing. Mr. Shirley noted that the materials were diverse and used in an interesting way. The loss of open space was regrettable, but not a reason to reject the design.

Mr. Shirley moved to find Lincoln Way not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed project. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed unanimously

Preservation Grants

IPG 10-6: 60 Gore St., Cambridge Family & Children Services. Review request for grant of \$100,000 for ramp, roof, etc.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the former St. Francis Elementary School of 1957 and summarized the request to fix the roof, rebuild the access ramp, and address masonry repairs. The building was significant because of its distinctive Modern architecture and its associations with the East Cambridge community. The Commission's highest priority was roofing, but in this case accessibility was an immediate need. The entire project was budgeted for \$169,000; CFCS had requested \$100,000. He recommended a grant of \$50,000 outright to rebuild the ramp; CFCS could return next year for a matching grant to repair the roof, which was not threatening the structure.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the grant as recommended by Mr. Sullivan. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting as an alternate.

Minutes

Mr. Irving deferred consideration of the minutes until the next meeting.

Mr. Ferrara moved to adjourn, Ms. Harrington-Berg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously at 11:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 2/4/10**

Gwen Noyes	175 Richdale Ave
Karen Klinger	20 Beech St
Mark Yoder	21 Haskell St, Allston 02134
Alan Aukeman	90 Inman St #2
Marta Figueiredo	2 Lincoln Way
John Armstrong	36 Orchard St
Stefanie Le	80 Boylston St, Boston, 02116
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Maria Mossaides	60 Gore St
Russell Hansen	60 Gore St
Henry Lelaurain	50 Follen St #412
Douglas Yoffe	50 Follen St
Terry Dumas	CHA, 675 Mass Ave
Kyle Sullivan	CHA, 675 Mass Ave
William Cobham	131 Fayerweather St
Brooksany Coe	35 Wood St
Julian Bonder	Sheridan St
Carol Bundy	190 Walden St
Ed Shea	35 Wood St
Holly Antolini	1991 Massachusetts Ave
Vinicius Gorgati	16 Dartmouth Pl, Boston 02116
Martha Scanlon	41 Sheridan St
Phil Terza	129 Mt Auburn St
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.