

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

March 1, 2012, 6:00 P.M. Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave.

Members present: William B. King, Chair; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Jo Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Staff present: Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

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Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:07 PM and made introductions. He designated alternates Berg and Tobin to vote as alternates on all matters. He dispensed with the consent agenda procedure, opting for hearings on all agenda items.

### Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-107/D-1236: 11 Brookford St., by Jean E. Reynolds, owner, o/b/o Emery Homes.** Consider initiating a landmark designation study for the preferably preserved significant building.

Mr. King explained the demolition delay and landmark designation study procedures.

Ms. Burks reviewed the case and reported that the demolition delay would expire on March 8. The Planning Board had granted a special permit for a revised proposal which would include preservation of the main block of the house, but the neighbors had appealed.

Kevin Emery, an owner, explained that the Planning Board had agreed that the amended project proposal was better than the as-of-right project. The back 15' of the house and the garage would be demolished and a 1,500 square foot detached house would be built in the back yard. He asked the Commission to not initiate a landmark designation study. He and his partner, Eamon Fee, had proceeded in good faith to find a preservation solution, but they should not be prevented from moving forward with an as-of-right proposal since the special permit had been appealed. He noted that he had the property surveyed and it was above the flood plain elevation. He was petitioning FEMA to correct its flood plain memo.

Mr. King said he did not like to stretch the Commission's credibility with the City Council by sending landmark recommendations for properties of insufficient significance. [Dr. Solet arrived]. Staff would have to spend considerable time preparing a landmark report. He called for questions and testimony from the public.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue, Clerk of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, inquired why the hearing had not occurred in February. Had the staff waived the demolition delay based on the amended design proposal? Ms. Burks answered that the staff had postponed the hearing due to the lengthy February agenda. The demolition application had not been withdrawn. Mr. Brandon spoke in favor of initiating a landmark study and finding an alternative design that would satisfy everyone.

Mr. Emery said he would put in writing that he would build the design approved by special permit and not demolish the front block of the house if the appeal were dropped. He had used the six-month delay to find a preservation option, but the neighbors were trying to dictate the terms in favor of what they want.

The Commission discussed options, including continuing the hearing and initiating the study. Mr. King suggested that the study could be initiated with the clear expectation that it would be terminated at the next meeting if the demolition application for the main block of the house was withdrawn. He recommended putting the matter back on the agenda in April. The owners could use the month to speak to the appellants and the Executive Director. He closed public comment.

Dr. Solet moved to initiate a landmark study, reflecting the chair's comments. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Dr. Solet moved to schedule a hearing on April 5 to hear a status report and consider terminating the study. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 2717 (continued): 1131 Massachusetts Ave./1-5 Remington St., by Veritas at Harvard Square, LLC.** Application for Certificate of Hardship for existing transformer, installed previously in violation of Case 1956.

Ms. Burks reported that the applicants had requested a continuance to April 5 because the NSTAR representative was unable to attend.

Dr. Solet moved to grant the requested continuance. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

**Case 2826 (continued): 88 Garden St., by Michael & Eliza Anderson.** Remove fence and walkway; re-grade; reconstruct walkway; install new fence on granite base.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the 1810 Asa Gray House and the existing Colonial Revival fence, which was based on photographs of the original fence at this site (the house having been moved to the site during the Colonial Revival period).

Michael Weishan, the landscape architect, made a presentation illustrating the poor condition of the existing fence, the design precedents researched for Federal-era fences, and the 1960s photograph showing the original Colonial Revival fence. Most Federal-era fences were wood, with very long runs and a statement at the front gate. He proposed a 1' high granite base where the sloping grade was an issue. The fence would have only 8 posts, using painted stainless steel pickets every 10' for added stability. The new walkway would be 6' wide.

Mr. King and Dr. Solet noted that they had not been present at the February meeting. [Mr. Irving arrived].

Ms. Berg noted that the curved steps at the front walk might not feel comfortable, especially at night or in inclement weather. The side gate should have a simpler design. Mr. Bibbins said the design was much improved. Mr. Irving said the drama was in the long sweep of the fence. The side gate should be simplified. The building thrived on simplicity and the fence and walkway should also.

Ms. Burks asked about the precedent for the profiles of the top and bottom rails. Mr. Weishan replied that it was based on HABS drawings of a Federal era fence. Ms. Burks recommended delegating approval of construction details to the Executive Director.

Dr. Solet, Mr. King and Mr. Irving agreed that it would be all right to use Azek at the bottom rail. Mr. Bibbins pointed out that Azek was difficult to use because of the shrinkage inherent to the material.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the revised fence design, on the condition that the balls be removed from the side gate posts, that the steps at the front walk be rectilinear, not curved, and that the construction details be approved by the Executive Director. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

**Case 2828 (amendment): 6 Longfellow Pk., by Jonathan & Maggie Seelig.** Amend certificate to include amendments to northeast shed roofed structure and northwest side entry porch.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the 1901 Colonial Revival house. She noted that the Commission had granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for requested changes at its February meeting.

Mr. Irving assumed the chair because Mr. King had been absent in February.

Steve Hart, the architect, described the proposed amendments to the proposal, displaying each of the elevations. The changes included a larger side porch and a change to the railing design on the side porch. The other changes were largely at the rear of the property.

Mr. Bibbins asked if zoning relief had been granted for the revised design. Mr. Hart answered in the affirmative.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to grant an amendment to the Certificate of Appropriateness to reflect the revised design. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Mr. King abstained.

**Case 2829 (continued): 40 Norris St., by La Court Family LLC, c/o Sean D. Hope, Esq.** Consider design details on project approved in principle at February meeting including doors, transformer, signs, fencing, roof vents, snow fence and roof cleats, lighting, and scope of envelope repairs.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reported that the Commission had voted to approve the project in principle at the February 2 meeting, subject to review and approval of certain design details.

Jai Khalsa, the architect, noted that the Planning Board had approved a special permit for the project. He described the details requested on the doors, exterior repairs, snow fences and cleats, masonry specifications, chimneys, vents, lights, transformer location, and fences. The doors were based on the doors at the Carr School in Somerville by the same original architect. The decorative metalwork shown in photographs would be replicated. The pressed metal cornice would be repaired or replaced in kind where missing. He referred to catalog cut sheets specifying the proposed snow fence and cleats. He referred to the printed masonry specifications. He described in detail the proposed venting through the top and inside face of the existing chimneys. He noted that Young Kim had prepared a revised photometric plan for the parking lot, which the Planning Board liked better than the one proposed by the applicant, so Mr. Kim's photometric levels would be adopted. He described the traditional-style bollard lights proposed for the front and the shoebox-type fixtures proposed for the parking lot in the rear. The staff had recommended that the parking lot fixtures at the rear of the site need not be styled to look historic. He said they would also provide greater control of the direction of the light and would last longer. The transformer location at the end of the driveway in the parking lot would be proposed to the electric company. The fences would be wood along the sides and rear of the property. He said the owner would like to return to the Commission at a later date to present a design for signage.

Blair Hines, the landscape architect, showed a photo of the proposed 6' board fence with a 2' lattice top. The cedar fence would be allowed to weather to gray.

Young Kim of 17 Norris Street represented a group of interested neighbors. He made a presentation that reviewed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties. He said the standards do not recommend skylights. He asked for a reduction in the number of skylights so as to preserve the appearance of the slate roof. He proposed saving the innovative roof framing and keeping it visible on the inside of the building, including the iron tension rods. He suggested that the snow cleats be moved higher up on the roof. He suggested a historical style light fixture by HADCO for the parking lot. He objected to the replacement of the basement windows in the back of the building with glass block. He remarked on the section of missing cornice, the leaking gutters and downspouts. He recommended that a slate roofer or restoration architect make a report on the roof and safe staging methods to ensure its protection during construction.

Lilla Johnson of 23 Rice Street asked about potential conflict between the snow buildup and the skylights and the location of skylights near the chimney vents. She questioned the need for so many skylights. Mr. Khalsa said the skylights near the chimneys would not be operable. Even when covered by snow, skylights allow light into the interior. The snow would melt faster on top of the skylights than on the slate roof.

Mr. Brandon said the proposal was incongruous with the historic building. He recommended that the Architects Committee or the staff be delegated the task of determining if the number of skylights could be reduced. He complimented the architect for the design of the doors and ironwork. The light fixtures in the parking lot were too modern looking.

Mr. Khalsa noted that the roof had many planes. There were not many skylights proposed for any one plane of the roof, making it so that the pedestrian would not see many skylights from any one viewpoint.

Dr. Solet asked if there were alternatives to parking close to the building and needing the glass block. Mr. Khalsa replied that the affected windows were not visible from a public way.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. King noted that he had not been present at the last meeting. He thanked Mr. Kim for pointing out the Secretary's Guidelines. He noted, however, that those Guidelines were written to apply to properties across the country. The Commission's job was to interpret its own guidelines in a practical way in light of the local context and situation. He said the lack of visibility of the rear basement windows was an important consideration. He recognized the residential character of Norris Street and said the community's input had been important in the evolution of the project design. The aspects of the project that were subject to Commission review had come out well.

Dr. Solet asked for assurance that the missing cornice would be restored and that a slate roofing specialist would be consulted. Mr. Khalsa assured her that the cornice would be repaired and that Tremont Preservation Partners would assist the owner in selecting qualified contractors and in applying for the state tax credit.

Ms. Berg moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded Ms. Berg's motion. The motion passed 5-0, with Mr. King abstaining.

Mr. King resumed the chair and called for a brief recess. He reconvened the meeting at 8:30 P.M.

**Case 2838: 153 Brattle St., by Tom & Jeanne Hagerty.** Demolish existing garage; construct new garage at rear; extend driveway; alter retaining walls at side yard; path and paving details; relocate bench.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the Lee House of 1803. She noted the history of the existing garage near the street, which had been allowed with a Certificate of Hardship for a previous owner. She pointed out that parking was not allowed on the pavement between the existing garage and the street.

Guy Grassi, the architect, said the present one-car garage was very small and difficult to park in. He proposed a new two-story garage, in a carriage house design, which was not uncommon in the neighborhood.

John Grove, the landscape architect, reviewed the existing and proposed site plans. He described the proposed driveway, which would cut through the side yard with 2-3' high retaining walls. The existing granite from the rear steps would be reused. He pointed out a proposed parking pad for two cars on the side of the driveway. The rear yard would be leveled for better play space. He described a yellowwood and a dogwood in poor condition that would be removed. The large yews at the front foundation would also be removed. He described the proposed paving material, a gray asphalt block. The large garden bench would be relocated to the front.

Mr. Bibbins asked the proposed grade of the garage. Matt Langan, of John Grove's office, said that the existing grade was 6' and the finish floor of the garage would be 6.5'.

Ms. Berg asked what was known about the Fletcher Steele design. Mr. Langan replied that the front terraces, the balustrade, and the fence were all part of Steele's design. None of Steele's original plantings remained at the side yard. The English ivy and vinca near the front of the property were part of Steele's design, but the foundation plantings were added later. The bench was Steele's. The side terrace was thought to predate Steele.

Dr. Solet noted that if the existing garage were removed, the side of the garage next door would be more prominently visible. The long driveway would also be quite prominent. She asked how the new carriage house would relate to the abutting buildings.

Mr. Grassi noted that the garage next door had been clapboarded, so the concrete block surface was no longer visible. Much of the original garden design would remain, including the front fence. The inappropriate existing garage would be removed and the view to the back of the property would open up. He described the design of the proposed carriage house, which would accommodate two cars with a guest bedroom above. The building would have clapboard walls, gray slate roof, copper trim, and a cupola. There were nine properties within five blocks that had two-story garages. It would be a vast improvement over having a garage at the front of the lot.

Mr. Bibbins remarked that Fletcher Steele had written *Urban Garden*, in which he recommended getting the parking arrangements taken care of as quickly as possible on a site, reserving more space for gardens. The existing garage accomplished that objective.

Ms. Berg noted that the proposed parking pad in the front yard was highly inappropriate. Mr. Grassi said that portion of the application could be withdrawn.

Ms. Burks asked about the height and if it could be reduced to the level of the lower gable. Mr. Grassi replied that it was 22-23' high and it could not easily be made lower without losing a lot of square footage upstairs.

Mr. Bibbins commented that the carriage house's design competed with the main house. It should be subservient. The eave line could be lowered. Mr. Grassi said he could eliminate the cupola and lower the eave line about 1'. He noted that it was a difficult design problem to design something plain that would not look cheap, and not compete with the house. He noted that some carriage houses were designed as follies. While the Secretary's Standards would recommend a contemporary design, he doubted that would really be appropriate in this context.

Mr. King recalled advice that additions should be sympathetic but subservient to the original.

Dr. Solet pointed out that not every house in the historic district had a garage.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. King read a letter sent by Annette LaMond opposing the application. He asked if the carriage house would require zoning relief. Mr. Grassi replied in the affirmative. Relief for FAR and setbacks would be required as well as for exceeding the 15' height limit.

Mr. Irving said he was not opposed to the idea of a driveway and carriage house. The Fletcher Steele landscape, though significant, did not override the 1803 character and significance of the house. The proposed design was a bit competitive with the house. The shutters and cupola were frills. He recommended that the design be quieted down and that the parking pad on the side of the driveway be eliminated.

Mr. King agreed with those recommendations. The obviousness of the structure from Brewster and Appleton streets would be diminished if the cupola were eliminated. With a house this large, it was probably appropriate to have an accessory structure for cars that wouldn't be attached to the house. Removal of the existing garage would benefit the district.

Ms. Berg requested that any research materials on the Steele landscape be submitted for the survey files.

Mr. Bibbins said the side terrace was a structure, though part of the landscape. It should not be thrown away without respect. He made a distinction between the proportions of a barn and a carriage house, which was generally a low-slung mass. The proposed structure was more like a barn in its proportions. There were plenty of barns in the area as well.

Mr. Grassi agreed, on his client's behalf, to continue the hearing.

Mr. Irving moved to continue the hearing to April 5. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

**Case 2840: 52 Brattle St., by Brattle Street 52, LLC, owner o/b/o DFD Management LLC, tenant.** Alter storefront glazing and surround; install signs, awnings and lighting.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the 1958 commercial building. She commented on its horizontal emphasis and simplicity of design. The proposed signs were determined to conform to zoning regulations, but the proposed awnings and trim applied to the building needed the approval of the Commission.

Wendy Prellwitz of Prellwitz Chilinski Architects showed a photo of the building from 1958 and pointed out the variety of awnings and signs then. She explained that the Café India and Clothware spaces would be combined into one restaurant space. The building was located at the end of the Brattle Street retail area, where the street becomes more institutional and residential. The door on Story Street would enter the private dining room. The masonry openings would not be changed in size or location. The corner opening would have windows that would open and a metal railing. She described the proposed metal canopy at the entry, a retractable awning, and

the curved sign band at the corner. The metal band above the tenant spaces had been removed or covered over at the Café India space. What was left was in poor condition. It would be covered with wood trim. The stone cladding of the Café India door surround would be replaced with wood trim.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet recommended upgrading the kitchen fan so that it would not be so noisy. Mr. Cacciagrani indicated that the noisy equipment was from the dishwasher. It would be replaced and would not be as noisy. The HVAC would be located behind the new elevator tower. Richard Cohen pointed out that the ventilation equipment was not changing but the dishwasher fan would be replaced.

Ms. Berg moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

**Case 2841: 1388 Massachusetts Ave., by 1834 Realty Inc., owner o/b/o Pinkberry, tenant.** Install internally illuminated blade sign.

Mr. King and Mr. Bibbins recused themselves from the case because they were incorporators of the applicant's parent company, the Cambridge Savings Bank. Mr. Irving assumed the chair.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reported that Pinkberry had received a Certificate of Nonapplicability from the staff in 2010 for signs that conformed to the zoning regulations. The proposed internally illuminated blade sign was allowed in the overlay district if approved by the Historical Commission.

Trippe Lonian, owner of Pinkberry, displayed the sign drawing. It would be 30½" high. The edge would be wrapped with metal or a white material.

Dr. Solet asked how it compared to the Starbucks sign. Mr. Lonian said it was intended to match.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the application, subject to staff approval of attachment details and on the condition that it not exceed 30½" or the size of the Starbucks sign, whichever was smaller. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

#### Public Hearing: Demolition Review

**Case D-1258: 99 Kinnaird St., by John Washiek & Jeanette Wackro.** Demolish house (1859).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff report on the small side-hall workers cottage. She showed a slide of 571 Franklin Street, a similar cottage nearby that had been recently renovated. She described the originally Italian-American population on that end of Kinnaird Street and the changes that occurred when the school was built and expanded. The house originally at 97 Kinnaird was demolished in 1903.

Campbell Ellsworth, the architect, corrected the stated dimension of the width of the house. It was 15.5' wide, not 20'. He said the house was in rough condition on the exterior. The corner boards and water table were not original. The entry porch did not meet code and was non-conforming to setbacks. The floor to ceiling height on the second floor was only 6' 10". The floor joists did not meet code. He displayed photographs of the interior. The stairs were very narrow. There was water damage. He displayed a rendering of the proposed new structure, a double house, which would be 30' high. The neighbor at 95 Kinnaird was about 27' high and 91 Kinnaird was higher than that. The location next to the school was very busy with lots of drop-off activity. The house was only about 2' away from the school's driveway, which posed safety concerns. The proposed new building would be

centered on the lot. The design was compliant with zoning. He had studied a different plan with an addition and a detached structure, but it would result in unequal distribution of yard space.

Dr. Solet asked if other properties in the neighborhood had parking in the front yard. Mr. Ellsworth said he had not studied that. The front setback per zoning was 10'

Diana Goldfarb, the abutter at 95 Kinnaird Street, said her concern was the size of the new structure and loss of light and air to her house. Most of the houses on that side of the street were smaller in scale than the proposed new building. The design was bulky and different from the neighborhood context.

Ara Barsoumian, the future owner, said he had met with Ms. Goldfarb and was willing to work with her on design issues. He noted that there were taller buildings nearby.

A member of the public remarked that the existing building was very close to the corner. It would be an improvement to not have the house so close to the driveway.

Mr. Irving said he did not have a problem with the mass of the proposed new building being different from others on the street, because it was the last lot before the very large school building.

Mr. King said the house had been altered and was only unique due to its small size. He was prepared to find it not significant. The proposed replacement building was not bad. There were other flat-roofed buildings ~~in~~ on the street.

Ms. Burks said she had been struck by how little had been altered on the house. It retained its original windows and wood siding.

Dr. Solet moved to find the house significant, but her motion was not seconded.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house not ~~significance~~-significant in the context of the ordinance. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 5-1. Dr. Solet voted in opposition.

#### Minutes

Ms. Berg moved to approve the December 2011 minutes as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

#### New Business: Preservation Awards Nominations

Ms. Burks showed slides of the preservation nominations. She answered questions and recommended that no vote be taken until next month.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0 at 11:07 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 3/1/12**

Kevin Emery	9 Gregory Lane, Reading 01867
Eamon Fee	6 Richardson St, Winchester 01890
Kevin Crane	27 Norris St
Robert Casey	1 Drummond Pl #2
Young Kim	17 Norris St
Lilla Johnson	23 Rice St
Diana Goldfarb	95 Kinnaird St
Andrew D'Alessandro	47 Charles St, Boston 02114
Jessica Friend	221 Hampshire St
Edward Crane	139 West Sixth St, Boston 02127
Wendy Prellwitz	221 Hampshire St
Richard Cacciagiani	47 Charles St, Boston 02114
Mike Anderson	88 Garden St
Eliza Anderson	88 Garden St
Michael Weishan	189 Cordaville Rd, Southborough 01772
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Terry Maitland	100 Martin St, Acton 01720
John Hixson	41 Norris St
Stephen Hart	50 Church St, Belmont 02473
David Chilinski	3-1/2 Wendell St
Campbell Ellsworth	267 Norfolk St
Guy Grassi	46 Waltham St, Boston 02118
Thomas Hagerty	124 Charles St, Boston 02109
Trippe Lonian	129 Franklin St #314
John Grove	741 Mt Auburn St, Watertown 02472
Matt Langan	741 Mt Auburn St, Watertown 02472
Ara Barsoumian	152 Bellevue Rd, Watertown 02472

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.