

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

February 6, 2014 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: Chandra Harrington, *Member*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*; Samantha Paull, *Preservation Administrator*

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King convened the meeting at 6:05, made introductions, and explained hearing procedures.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 3165 (continued): 13 Brattle St., by Trinity Property Management, owner, o/b/o Beat Hotel, tenant.** Install illuminated blade sign for Beat Hotel. *Request to continue hearing to March 6.*

Dr. Solet moved to grant the requested continuance. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. Mr. King designated alternate members Mr. Ferrara and Ms. Berg to vote. The motion passed 7-0.

[Mr. Barry arrived].

### Consent Agenda

Mr. King explained the consent agenda procedure. He reviewed the rest of the cases on the agenda and recommended Cases 3192, 3193 and 3155 be considered for approval per the procedure. He asked if any members of the Commission, staff, or public wanted to have a hearing on any of the three cases. Dr. Solet indicated that she would like to have discussion on Case 3192. There being no further requests, Dr. Solet moved to approve the following cases per the consent agenda procedures and subject to approval of construction details by the Executive Director,

**Case 3193: Agassiz House, 5 James St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Exterior envelope repairs and restoration.

**Case 3155 (Amendment): 92 Brattle St., by Conifer LLC c/o Gerald Chan.** Add new first floor window on northwest elevation.

Mr. King noted the arrival of Mr. Barry and designated Ms. Berg to vote on the motion. The alternates would thereafter take turns voting. The motion passed 7-0.

**Case 3181: 96 Winthrop St./57 JFK St., by Crimson Galeria LP.** Construct 3-story residential addition over existing 2-story commercial building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1974 Galeria. He summarized the application to construct three floors above the existing two story commercial building. He explained that the Galeria was situated next to a landmarked building, 96 Winthrop Street, which was under the same ownership.

Mr. King explained the order of the hearing and cited the three minute rule for public comment.

Raj Dhanda, the owner, read a statement and submitted a copy for the record. His project would create 40 micro-unit rental apartments.

Peter Quinn, the architect, displayed a PowerPoint presentation that he also submitted for the record. The height of the proposed addition was similar to that of the DuBois Institute on the other side of

Winthrop Street and lower than the Harvard Square Garage's stair tower. The project did not include any work at 96 Winthrop Street. He described the design, with a minimalist glass base, sawtooth bays on the added stories, and windows that expressed one unit each. He noted that he had pulled the new stair tower back 5' from the northwest corner (near 96 Winthrop Street). He described the materials, including high-density fiber cement panels, polymer and stone composite material with illumination between the panels, aluminum windows, and structural glazing. He showed two renderings, one with an alternate lighter color scheme. He displayed computer-modeled shadow studies at March 21, June 21, and Dec 21.

Dr. Solet asked if the project required any zoning relief. Mr. Quinn said they would be applying for a Special Permit from the Planning Board for a parking exemption and would pay into the Harvard Square Parking Fund. Mr. King noted that the Commission did not govern traffic matters, except tangentially to encourage a vibrant Harvard Square environment.

Mr. Ferrara asked about the mechanical equipment. Mr. Quinn replied that the first residential level would have a mechanical room in the center of the building, leaving only minimal equipment to be located on the roof. The rooftop equipment would be set back from the walls and screened.

Ms. Berg asked what protections from shadows, air quality, and construction impacts would be provided to 96 Winthrop Street. Mr. Quinn said the load bearing for the added floors would be located below the foundation of 96 Winthrop Street's foundation.

Mr. King asked about the space at the southwest corner of the addition. Mr. Quinn explained that the plan was L-shaped and the area would accommodate a roof deck with a pergola for the residents.

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

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked about the height of the building and mechanicals compared to other buildings around Winthrop Square. Mr. Quinn replied that the zone allowed 60' by right and 80' with a special permit. The rooftop mechanicals were anticipated to be only 4-5' high. He estimated that nearby buildings were between 40-52' high and the DuBois Institute was 60'+ high. Mr. Williamson asked if the studies showed shadows at 6:00 P.M., when people would be dining in the park. Mr. Quinn said he could prepare that study for the Planning Board hearing. Mr. Williamson asked about rents and affordable units. Mr. Dhanda answered that rents would be about \$2000 per month and there would be 5 affordable units.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if consideration had been given to breaking up the mass of the building so that it would not be one big box. Mr. Quinn explained the logic of the design. The existing stores would serve as a base for the larger building. The entry on JFK Street for the commercial units would be maintained via the present ramp, although the stairs would be demolished. Long term leases required that the building remain functional. It could not just be cut in half. A quieter residential entry was located on the smaller Winthrop Street. Ms. Meyer asked about the illuminated material. Mr. Quinn noted that the Dhandas owned Nina's Lighting and lighting was a design theme in the project.

Michael Janes of 58 JFK Street said that his family had 7 micro units across the street. The proposed building was beautiful but very bulky. The shadows would negatively impact his property. The lighting was also a concern.

Kenneth Taylor of 22 Berkeley Street said the site next to Winthrop Square was very important. He asked for confirmation of the shadow on Dec 21, 3:00 P.M. view. He asked if consideration had been given to setting back the upper floors. Doing so would allow for terraces overlooking the park.

Mr. King opened the discussion to public comment.

Carrie Colter of Grendel's Den discussed the importance of sunlight. The shadow impacts were scary. She noted that Grendel's had outdoor seating in the park. She also raised the question of how the added shadows would affect the trees and grass. The site was at the top of a hill and could not be compared to a 60' high building at the bottom of a hill.

Ms. Meyer agreed. She noted the view looking up Winthrop Street toward the steeple of Harvard's Lowell House. The materials looked cheap and were insensitive to the historic context.

Steve Perry of 24 Cambridge Terrace noted that Harvard Square would continue to develop and become more dense. The public would have to learn to embrace that. He referenced the artfulness of the step-backs in the design of Holyoke Center. It never looked looming. The relationship to the other buildings around Winthrop Square needed to be symbiotic. The Pete's Coffee and Grendel's buildings were foils to the larger building on the other side of the park. The people living in the new building would also like to have the park be sunny, and not cold, windy, and shady.

Elizabeth Stern of 20 Cambridge Terrace said three added stories would overwhelm the surroundings, leading to the total erosion of Harvard Square.

Pebble Gifford of Hilliard Street discussed the significance of Winthrop Square Park, the town's original market place, and of the time and effort that went into restoring it. The shadow studies should be larger and more detailed. She disliked 1075 Massachusetts Avenue, also designed by Mr. Quinn for Mr. Dhanda. 57 JFK Street should not be monolithic. The lighting at night would have a negative impact.

Mr. Williamson said the building was two stories too tall. It was massive and looked like an office building. The park was used by more and more people and they should be able to enjoy the sun.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan explained the Commission's jurisdiction and summarized the goals and guidelines of the Harvard Square Conservation District.

Mr. Bibbins said the park was the most important factor in the equation. The Pete's Coffee building had been relocated because its low scale offset the impact of the taller building behind it.

Mr. Irving said the park was a volume, not just an area. The addition should not be so tall on a narrow street like Winthrop Street. The mass should be pushed back, and not located at the front of the building. He did not object to an addition but the design needed revision.

Mr. King noted that setbacks did not always make a great design, giving One Brattle Square as an example. The addition could be helpful in ameliorating the current view looking south down JFK Street of the two story commercial building and the blank brick wall of the garage. He was impressed to see a diversity of materials and styles, saying that he was not averse to new materials.

Mr. Barry agreed that complementary new materials should be encouraged. New development was inevitable, but the proposal did not respond well to its context.

Dr. Solet said there would be negative impacts on the park and businesses during construction. The design of the upper stories did not relate to the lower stories.

Ms. Berg cautioned against compaction of soil in the park as well as the effects of air handlers and changes to air movement.

Mr. Ferrara said the massing needed revision. Getting the massing right would influence the choice of materials. Mr. King asked for additional shadow studies.

Mr. Dhanda agreed to waive the 45-day decision period and to continue the hearing.

Mr. Irving moved to continue the hearing to the March 6 meeting. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting as alternate.

**Case 3188: 15-33 Richdale Ave., by Hathaway Partners LLC.** Maintain and exterior of existing building and renovate for residential conversion, construct 1-story roof additions, replace windows, arrange parking spaces in existing lot and within the building, demolish accessory sheds on railroad side.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the project history, which included a demolition delay and subsequent initiation of a landmark designation study, which was ongoing.

Rob Wolff, an owner, said the design had come a long way in response to comments made by the public and the Commission. Joel Bargman, the architect, displayed a PowerPoint presentation and described the revised proposal. The elevations would be restored to a 1938 appearance. The existing entry would remain and be restored. The wood windows would be replaced with metal windows matching the existing profiles. Window openings on the rear would be re-opened where previously closed. Small rear additions would be removed. The metal chimney, in poor condition, would be removed, as would be a shed and the incinerator and dumpster on the rear of the building. The garage door would be replaced. Some covered parking would be located on the first floor. The rooftop additions would be set back from the front and rear walls. Small (3' tall) air conditioning units would be located at the center of the roof. An elevator penthouse would also be located on the roof. Shadows would not change because the additions were set back deeply. New terraces would be set back so there would be no railings at the edge of the roof. The color of the addition would be light gray or silver.

The Commission responded enthusiastically to the proposal because it would preserve all the important elements of the building.

Mr. Irving asked if the number of residential units had changed. Mr. Wolff replied that the number had been reduced from 54 to 48. The below-grade parking had been eliminated.

Dr. Solet asked about the original design of the entrance at the two-story portion of the building. Mr. Bargman replied that the door was centered between two sidelights.

Mr. Bargman told Mr. King that the units ranged from 650 to 1500 square feet in size.

Mr. King opened the floor to questions of fact from the public.

John Sanzone of 540 Memorial Drive asked if all the windows would be replaced, and Mr. Bargman replied in the affirmative; the existing windows were not in good condition. Mr. King asked if the new windows would be operable. Mr. Bargman said they would be operable double hung windows. He told Dr. Solet that there would be no fire escapes; all egress stairs would be inside.

Liz Moore of 75 Richdale Avenue asked about condo vs. rental decisions and prices. Sam Wolff, an owner, answered that 15% of the units would be affordable.

Jacqueline Piret of 79 Upland Avenue asked how light and the depth of the units had been handled. Mr. Bargman said that there would be 2' x 2' light tubes to bring light from above.

Peter Miller of 46 Porter Road said the design had moved in the right direction. More details on the addition were needed, but it was very encouraging to see the new direction.

Elaine Spatz of 75 Richdale Avenue agreed that the design had turned in the right direction. The addition was rendered very lightly, making it hard to see the details.

Elizabeth Stern of 20 Cambridge Terrace said the addition did not add design value to the building. It was not appropriately sized or shaped. It was incongruous with the bakery building and the neighborhood. She objected to the contemporary addition being placed on top of the old building. She asked the owners to use only the new-old building and not construct the addition.

Ruth Ryals of 115 Upland Road disagreed with Ms. Stern. The old building would not get restored if the addition were not allowed. The relationship of new and old can be a very good one and there were plenty of examples of that approach.

Eric Hoagland of 17-19 Upland Road said the design looked good. It was time to get vibrancy back in the area. The combination of new and old made Cambridge shine brighter.

Oliver Radford of 24 Cambridge Terrace said he was overjoyed with the new approach. He encouraged the Commission to use its usual diligence in reviewing the details of the windows, masonry restoration, etc. He asked for more details to be presented before a final approval was granted.

Steve Perry of 24 Cambridge Terrace said he wasn't sure that there needed to be additions on both the one-story and two-story portions of the existing building.

Ms. Moore said there were perhaps still too many units, but she favored the changes that had been made. Ms. Spatz said the new and old could be great, but she still had questions about the density.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He said the difference between new and old was consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings. In regard to the proposed density, he noted that it was the largest building on the street and the proposed density

was probably not much greater than in the surrounding neighborhood. Every unit would have off-street parking. He encouraged the project because it would allow for the rehabilitation of the building.

Mr. Sullivan recommended the Commission find that the addition was appropriate in dimensions and massing for the existing structure and approve the application in concept, contingent on approval of the details and material of the addition and the exterior restoration. He noted that replacement of windows with aluminum was an approach accepted by the National Park Service for certified rehabilitation of commercial projects. The proposal was a positive solution to a difficult problem.

Mr. Barry moved to approve the application in concept, finding it appropriate in terms of massing with the setbacks of the additions, rehabilitation of the exterior of the existing building, and preliminary indications of materials of the addition, with the approval conditioned on a return to the Commission for confirmation of design details, materials, and construction details. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, adding that the modernity of the addition was not at all incongruous to the building or its context. Mr. Ferrara noted that the scale of the addition indicated the new residential use. The motion passed in a vote of 7-0, with Ms. Berg voting as alternate.

Mr. King called for a brief recess at 9:10 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 9:20 P.M.

**Case 3192: 1316 Massachusetts Ave., by Paul Macdonald o/b/o Bishnu Rai, tenant.** Install sign for Thread & Shape business on protected Leavitt & Peirce storefront.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the new sign for Thread & Shape. Mr. Rai, the business owner, noted that the white lettering would be changed to gold to match the other lettering on the building.

Dr. Solet noted that the Leavitt & Pierce signs had an old fashioned font and the new sign had a modern one. Mr. Bibbins said the difference helped to distinguish the two businesses at that address.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application, noting that the lettering would be changed to gold in the spring. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. Mr. Ferrara voted as alternate.

**Case 3194: 21 Brattle St., by Wells B. Dow, Pamela Dow Brown, and Gary Doyle, owners, o/b/o Felipe's Taqueria, tenant.** Alter storefront and add canopy per design guidelines; construct open roof deck and stairway head house.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted the location of the store. He summarized the application for a fixed steel canopy and a roof deck.

Tom Brush, owner of Felipe's Taqueria, described the work proposed for his new location. He would restore the granite base of the storefront, install a fixed canopy, and construct seating and a service bar on the roof. He noted that the existing mechanical room was 10' high and measured approximately 300 square feet at the rear portion of the roof. Jef Leon, the architect, described the headhouse for the stairs, the festival lighting, and the red cedar sign band.

Dr. Solet asked if the sign band would align with the others on the building and Mr. Leon replied affirmatively. Dr. Solet asked about the need for signs on the sides of the canopy and the dark glass of the

canopy. Mr. Leon said the glass might be smoked. The canopy would extend 6'. Mr. Irving concurred with Dr. Solet. The signs would clutter the canopy's appearance and were not necessary.

Mr. Sullivan objected to a fixed canopy. It would be inconsistent with the character of the other storefronts. Although changes within the storefront opening were allowed, a fixed irreversible canopy was a very different thing. The Commission had denied previous applications in favor of awnings. He had no objections to the deck, which was set well back.

Mr. Barry asked about the second air conditioning condenser. Mr. Leon said it would be 4' high on a low platform. Mr. Brush said that it would be lower than the railings of the roof deck. There was no residential use nearby.

Mr. King asked for clarification of the height of the walls on the roof deck. Mr. Leon said the peak of the headhouse was 12' high. The wood slat wall was 8' high, and was not solid.

Mr. Williamson spoke favorably about Mr. Brush and his business. He asked if the sign would consist of individual letters. Mr. Brush said the canopy was designed to be compatible with the wrought iron interior design elements. Dr. Solet complimented Mr. Brush on the use of operable windows.

Mr. Sullivan suggested using the sign band for the sign and an awning of a more traditional nature. There could be additional lettering on the awning.

Mr. King did not object to the deck, but said that the materials should be chosen to blend in with adjacent structures. Mr. Barry recommended moving the HVAC unit at least 5' back from the parapet.

Mr. Crocker moved to find the fixed canopy inappropriate and incongruous because it was inconsistent with the other signs and awnings on the building. He further moved to approve the roof deck and other changes subject to staff approval of the colors and location of the air conditioning unit and the walls on the roof. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

#### Minutes

Mr. King offered corrections on pages 3, 4, 5 of the November 7 minutes and submitted the corrections to the staff in writing. Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0, with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Mr. King offered corrections on pages 1, 3, and 5 of the December 5 minutes and submitted the corrections to the staff in writing. Dr. Solet moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0, with Ms. Berg voting.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Mr. Barry seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM.  
Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed the Attendance List on February 6, 2014**

John DiGiovanni	50 Church St
Kate Loosian	79 Brattle St
Mark Verkennis	1350 Mass Ave
Mitchell Lowe	250 Dorchester Ave Boston 02127
Jacqueline Piret	79 Upland Rd
Kari Kuelzer	19 Copley St
Elizabeth Stern	20 Cambridge Terrace
Marion Foster	75 Richdale Ave #18
Elizabeth Moore Moriarty	75 Richdale Ave
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St #404
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr
Jamie Broe	28 Hardy Ave
Amy Green	92 Winthrop St
Peter Quinn	259 Elm St 301, Somerville 02144
Elizabeth Vandermark	33 Cambridge Terrace
Milton Yu	259 Elm St 301, Somerville 02144
Kenneth Taylor	23 Berkeley St
Jef Leon	221 Hampshire St
Tom Brush	4 Brattle St 203
Michael Janes	50A JFK St
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Ruth Ryals	115 Upland Rd
Mark Webster	Owahonna St, Auburndale 02464
Elizabeth Fox	2 Sparks Pl
Jo Ellen Hillyer	153 Cypress St, Brookline 02445
Eric M. Hoagland	17-19 Upland Rd