

Approved 4/7/10

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

March 3, 2011 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: Frank Shirley, *Member*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed the agenda and hearing procedures. He described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases that any members of the staff, Commission, or members of the public would like to dispense with a full hearing. The following cases were identified for the consent agenda procedure:

Case 2663 (Amendment): 52 Brattle St./1Story St., by Brattle St. 52 LLC. Amend the design of the 3rd floor and roof of addition previously approved for Certificate of Appropriateness.

Case 2672: 1350 Massachusetts Ave., by President & Fellows of Harvard College, o/b/o AT&T Mobility Corp. Add and replace telecommunication antennas.

Mr. Irving moved to approve cases 2663 and 2672, per the consent agenda procedure, subject to further review and approval of construction details by staff, and subject to the ten day notice procedure for Case 2663.

Mr. King designated Ms. Berg to vote as alternate. The motion passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Designation Proceedings

Consideration of tabled petition requesting initiation of a NCD designation study for the properties at **0-12 Blanchard Road** and **149-267 Grove Street** and consideration of inclusion of the property at **777 Huron Avenue** in an NCD study area.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the discussion and actions of previous hearings. The Commission had tabled the matter at its January meeting so that the neighbors could investigate a zoning approach to the planning issues under examination. He noted that that there was another community meeting which made it difficult for some neighbors to attend. There had been a request for further postponement of the discussion.

Mr. King noted the receipt of several letters from original petitioners asking that their names be withdrawn. He noted that in his experience with NCDs in Cambridge, it was generally not worth pursuing designation without substantial support from the owners involved. He noted that support seemed to be diminishing. He recommended leaving the matter on the table for the next month. He noted, however, that the matter had been advertised as a public hearing and if there was anyone present who wanted to speak they were invited to do so.

Abby Zanger of 207 Grove Street referred to her letter describing the unsuccessful efforts to start a discussion about the zoning. The opponents of the petition blocked any idea of a meeting to discuss a zoning approach. Councilor Seidel had offered to host a neighborhood meeting but it was canceled. The proponents and opponents of an NCD were split 50/50. A study would allow the neighbors to learn something and gain a firmer basis on which to support or oppose the idea. She expressed support for either an NCD or a zoning study.

Ben Wilson of 265 Grove Street read a statement from Amy Nadel. The statement explained that there had been strong opposition to a city council order suggesting a neighborhood meeting to discuss the issues. The NCD study petition had not been part of a personal dispute between Amy Nadel and Duncan MacArthur. He had offered to show his plans for the house to anyone who wanted to see them. She said in the statement that the design was in scale for the neighborhood. Mr. Wilson, on his own behalf, said there were many opponents to an NCD. He said he was in favor of a discussion of possible zoning changes, which might be the better avenue.

Steve Samuel of 7 Blanchard Road said the Blanchard Road owners disagreed with those on Grove Street. None were interested in a zoning restriction or an NCD. The two streets were in different planning neighborhoods. Further discussions were a waste of time. The issues had already been considered and opinions clearly expressed. There were fewer than ten names remaining in support of the petition. Councilor Seidel's offer for a meeting was canceled due to illness and may be rescheduled. He said he did not oppose keeping the NCD petition tabled. He had hoped this meeting would be postponed.

Duncan MacArthur of 245 Grove Street said the meeting with Councilor Seidel would probably still happen. There was no overt attempt to block it.

Mr. King observed that there was no motion to remove the matter from the table and take formal action. He noted that the beauty of the NCD ordinance was its flexibility. NCDs could be tailored to the needs of the district or parts of a district. It was unfortunate when neighbors don't want to talk to each other. He noted that the planning neighborhoods pre-dated the development of the Grove and Blanchard subdivision.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2094: (Amendment): 424-432 Windsor St., by Just-A-Start Corp. Correct existing conditions plans and modify plans previously approved for Certificate of Appropriateness to include replacement of windows, alteration of size and location of select windows, add two new window openings, install exterior HVAC equipment and snow guards.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the former Immaculate Conception church and rectory, a landmark. The Commission had previously approved a conditional Certificate of Appropriateness for adaptive re-use of the church and rectory for affordable housing. The litigation against the special permit was now resolved and Just-A-Start was moving forward with permit drawings, which needed to be adjusted to meet current conditions.

John Raulinitis of 65 Union Street asked for permission to speak because he was ill and needed to leave. Mr. King said it would be more productive to hear the applicants' presentation first.

Mr. Boyes-Watson said he would keep his presentation brief. He said the modifications fell into three categories: modifying location of windows, installation of A/C compressors, and replacing rather than restoring the first floor windows. He reviewed the elevations and described each change. He noted where the new floor level would hit the windows. He pointed out the mistake to the previous existing-conditions drawings. He described the proposed snow guards, which were needed to diminish the sheeting of snow off the roof. He described the arrangement of proposed A/C units for the 14 housing units. Four compressors would be located inside the garage; four more would be located behind the rectory and would not be visible from a public way; and three more pairs were to be placed elsewhere around the church building. He acknowledged they were objectionable, but said they

would prevent window units from being used. The wood windows on the first floor of the church needed to be replaced and quotes for new windows were coming in at \$5,000 each. They were very large openings and triple-track storms would be dangerous. He proposed aluminum commercial-grade windows. The panning detail could be matched to the existing or a stock panning could be used. Operability and safety were key concerns.

Mr. Raulinitis said the appearance of the building should not be changed. They wanted to change the shape of the windows and put in A/C units that were considered inappropriate before. He expressed doubt that Just-A-Start's groundwater testing was reliable. He recalled seeing a running stream below an old store on the street in his youth. The stream ran beneath the church as well. It was a tributary of the Miller's River. He expressed concern for the foundations of the church. The church occupied the last open lot in the neighborhood because it was a mud puddle. No changes from the existing should be allowed.

Mr. King noted that the Commission's jurisdiction was not geotechnical engineering, but features visible from a public way. Mr. Raulinitis raised interesting points which should be explored by the developers. The high water table in some parts of the city was an important issue. Mr. Boyes-Watson noted that there would not be a massive excavation for the garage. The amount of material to be removed was modest.

Charlie Marquardt of 10 Rogers Street said digging of the basement at Sacred Heart led to further changes. The A/C units were ugly and the noise would echo around in the canyon between the buildings and bounce back out into the neighborhood. The visible units would affect the sale of the units.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He recommended that the A/C units be screened from view.

Dr. Solet described the complaint-driven noise ordinance enforcement procedure. She suggested budgeting for maintenance of the units long term. She asked if the garage door would be noisy. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that it would be like a residential garage door, not as noisy as a commercial door.

Ms. Harrington asked if more units could be placed in the garage. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that the temperature inside had to be low enough for the A/C units to work. He had placed as many as possible inside.

Mr. King asked if there were any concerns about the appropriateness of the window changes and Messrs. Irving and Ferrara answered that they had no concerns.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the details of the proposed windows had not been reviewed. He said he understood the request to replace all the windows, but asked that the details be delegated for review by the staff.

Ms. Berg asked if the proponents had considered using fencing to screen around the A/C units. Mr. Boyes-Watson said the units would not pose a sound problem because they were high-efficiency units that vented up. He proposed screening the six visible units with evergreen shrubs such as holly or yew. He distributed supplemental materials with details of the windows, A/C units, and snow guards. Mr. Boyes-Watson confirmed that the A/C units were only for cooling.

Mr. Boyes-Watson told Mr. Sullivan that the existing red clay roof tiles would remain. Peter Graham of Just-A-Start described the rails and clips of the proposed snow guards. A roofing expert would be consulted.

Mr. King framed a possible motion, that the Commission grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as submitted on the understanding that details of the windows, snow guards, A/C units and screening

would be delegated to the Executive Director in addition to the overall construction details and masonry work per the previous certificate. The minutes would reflect that approval was made after consideration of the public comments about the groundwater situation and a recommendation for high quality A/C units that would be least likely to cause noise problems down the line.

Mr. Bibbins so moved and Ms. Harrington seconded. Mr. King designated Mr. Ferrara to vote as alternate, and the motion passed 7-0.

Minutes

Dr. Solet moved to approve the minutes of January 6, incorporating any corrections that Ms. Berg might submit to staff. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara to vote. Mr. Irving abstained because he had not been present. The motion passed 7-0 with Messrs. Bibbins, King, Ferrara, and Crocker, Dr. Solet, and Mss. Berg and Harrington voting.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported about enforcement actions on the Hotel Veritas transformer and the Christ Church sign, special permit approval of the Lesley/AIB project, and a scheduled Planning Board hearing on technical amendments for the St. James project. Preservation Awards were scheduled for May 25.

Mr. Bibbins suggested Harvard's new bells at Lowell House for an award nomination. Mr. King suggested the most recent Harvard tower restoration be considered. He described the Ordinance Committee's hearing on the St. James landmark order.

Mr. Bibbins moved to adjourn, and Mr. Irving seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 3/3/11**

Lauren Curry	Just-A-Start, PO Box 410310
Robert MacArthur	Just-A-Start, PO Box 410310
Steven Samuel	7 Blanchard Rd
Charlie Marquardt	10 Rogers St #1120
Roy Tishler	207 Grove St
Abby Zanger	207 Grove St
Ben Wilson	265 Grove St
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Ave
Duncan MacArthur	245 Grove St
Peter Graham	Just-A-Start, PO Box 410310

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.