

Approved 2/6/14

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 5, 2013 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: none

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:04 PM, made introductions, and explained hearing procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2869: 0 Garden St., Christ Church Cambridge. Consider renewal of permission to install up to three banners, each not to exceed 3' wide and 10' high, for up to 105 days a year, and a single banner, not to exceed 3' wide and 5' high, for up to an additional 35 days a year (or in substitution for the 3 larger banners for any of the above-allotted 105 days) for a total of not more than 140 days/year.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the history of the case. The Commission had issued a temporary certificate of appropriateness for two signs, with restrictions on the sizes and number of days that they could be displayed during a calendar year. That certificate would expire in January and the matter was up for consideration of extending the approval or not.

Mr. King explained that, at its prior review, the Commission had not been sure if the sign would be appropriate for the setting and wanted to give it a trial period and then re-assess.

John Eden, the Associate Rector of Christ Church, said that the church would like to make the arrangement permanent. Ms. Harrington asked if fewer days would meet the needs of the church, and Mr. Eden replied that the church would like to maintain the same number in a new certificate.

Mr. Barry asked if the certificate covered the content of the signs. Mr. King clarified that the Commission had made it a practice to approve size, design, materials, but not content. This was especially important in the case of a church.

Elizabeth Stern of 20 Cambridge Terrace commented that the sign did not seem appropriate in its materials and graphic design; it could be more appropriately designed for the historic church. It looked like a Christmas advertisement.

Mr. King noted that the banner shown on the slide was one example of many changing banners that were installed for short periods. Mr. Eden added that the current sign was for the Christmas fair, but other banners were for services and Holy Week events. He noted that some of the banners were hand painted and others were modeled on art found in the church.

Mr. Sullivan commented that the Commission had adopted a temporary sign policy in 1967. This sign exceeded the dimensional limits of that policy, but the idea of exempting temporary signs for charitable organizations in the district was a decades-long policy.

Ms. Berg moved to extend the Temporary Certificate of Appropriateness for a period of 5 years. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. All members were present and voting.

Case 3165: 13 Brattle St., by Trinity Property Management. Install illuminated blade sign for Beat Hotel (tenant).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the location of the property.

Bill Keravuori, one of the proponents, explained that Beat Hotel, a music venue, restaurant, and bar, had a temporary sign. The application was for a conforming, unlit painted metal wall sign and a retro-inspired neon projecting sign. The neon would bring energy and liveliness to the Square at night.

Mr. Irving asked about the thickness of the sign box. Mr. Keravuori replied that the construction details were not yet confirmed, but it would probably be 8-10" thick. The dimension was dependent on the size of the transformer for the lights.

Mr. King asked if there were other neon projecting signs in the district. Mr. Sullivan replied that Charlie's Kitchen and the Hong Kong both had neon signs. Mr. King noted that supporting creative, contemporary design for storefront alterations and additions in order to sustain commercial vitality was among the Harvard Square Conservation District guidelines.

Mr. Sullivan asked how the sign would be mounted to the building. Mr. Keravuori said it would be supported on existing brackets with an additional cross member.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked if there was a perspective view of the proposed sign looking down Brattle Street. Mr. Keravuori passed around a rendering and explained that the colors and exact wording on the signs was not accurate. Mr. Williamson said the sign seemed larger than he would find appropriate. It would be a mistake to make a decision before the details were finalized.

Anne Jenkins of 56 Regent Street said she had left Harvard Square because of the boring chain stores. The Beat Hotel's temporary sign was creative and lively and just what was needed in the Square.

Chris Lutz of 75 Richdale Avenue said he had attended a music event and eaten at the venue. It was hard to find and needed a better sign.

The Commissioners agreed that the design concept was acceptable, but further detail was needed for approval. Mr. King said he would consider the application incomplete. Mr. Barry said the described manner of supporting the sign sounded cobbled together and he would recommend attaching it directly to the building so the frame was less distracting. Dr. Solet requested information about the brightness of the neon illumination and a comparison to other signs in the Square.

Mr. Irving moved to find the application incomplete and to continue the hearing to January 2. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1308/L-115: 33 Richdale Ave., by Hathaway Partners LLC. Consider amended design proposal for partial demolition of Hathaway bakery building and new construction. Consider whether to initiate a landmark designation study for the property.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the case history. The advertised hearing was to consider both the new design proposal per the demolition delay ordinance and to consider a petition requesting that a landmark designation study be initiated for the property. He explained that landmark designation did not freeze a building in time nor would it prevent a change of use. It would establish a process for reviewing proposed changes for appropriateness. He considered the building eligible for landmark study.

Rob Wolff, an owner, said he had met with neighbors a few days earlier to discuss the best way forward. He had a new design proposal and asked for direction from the Commission.

Joel Bargmann, the architect, reviewed the amended design proposal, which would preserve the full frontage of the one-story portion of the building as well as 4 bays of the two-story portion. A small yard on the left side would give relief to the building façade and open up the site for green space and views. The new construction would be lighter in color. The mass along the rear would be broken up with balconies into 28' wide segments.

Mr. King asked if the owner of the abutting garage had been contacted. If that parcel was added it would open up new possibilities for parking. Mr. Wolff said he had been unable to reach the owner.

Mr. Bibbins asked about the materials of the new construction. Mr. Bargmann described the cement fiberboard, corrugated metal panels, brick, and glass. He noted that the Planning Board had recommended using industrial scale and materials for the new building. Sam Wolff, an owner, indicated that the red brick end walls were still under discussion.

James Williamson indicated that the fenestration on the one-story section of the old building was more original and more pleasing.

Charlotte Moore asked about the depth of the remaining old building. Rob Wolff answered that the depth of the bay would be approximately 22'. Ms. Moore asked if there would be mechanical units on top of the building. Mr. Wolff replied that there would be approximately 30" high mechanicals centered on the roof of the new building but there would be none on the old one.

Carol Cohen of 40 Porter Road asked the height of the new construction. Mr. Wolff said it had been reduced in height from 45' to 39'. Ms. Cohen asked if there was a new shadow study; Mr. Wolff replied in the negative. Gene Hull of 75 Richdale Avenue asked how high the existing building was at the rear of the site. Mr. Bargmann answered that the two-story portion was just under 30' high and the one-

story portion was 22' high. Sam Wolff noted that one part of the building was 44' high. Chris Lutz of 75 Richdale Avenue suggested that the new construction be less regular and more varied in height.

Several residents of 75 Richdale Avenue made suggestions about re-using more of the old building, in ways similar to their building. Suggestions for fewer units and lower heights were shared.

Karen Hull of 75 Richdale asked what percentage of the old building would be demolished in the current proposal. Mr. Wolff indicated that most of the façade was to be preserved, but of the whole building, he estimated 75 percent demo and 25 percent preservation.

Anne Jenkins of 56 Regent Street noted that none of the old building would be visible from her property. Charlotte Moore recommended keeping the tall flour storage tower.

Oliver Radford, a petitioner, made a presentation about the history and significance of the Hathaway Bakery, its architect, and construction. He recommended saving as much of the building as possible. The brick was very important to the North Cambridge industrial history. The tie bolts were original to the design, not a later structural intervention. The rear view of the building was publicly visible and seen by thousands of commuters every day. He described the career of the original architect, Benjamin Fox, who had designed reinforced concrete piles for the building, a very early use of the technique. The ~~Wolff's~~ Wolffs' original proposal would have demolished 97 percent of the building and the third proposal would demolish 91 percent.

Joe Sullivan of 79 Upland Road said many people would like to see the building maintained.

Chris Lutz asked if the Commission could hire a structural engineer to assess the building. Charles Sullivan answered that there was no ability to pay for that.

Elizabeth Stern read a statement about the success of the adaptive reuse of 75 Richdale and 1 Richdale. She indicated that the reuse of 33 Richdale Avenue would tie all three together. The whole of the streetscape was greater than the sum of its parts.

Charlotte Moore said there were few landmarked industrial buildings but they were an important element in Cambridge's history.

Doug Baker spoke in favor of preserving the Hathaway building.

Mr. King closed the public comment period and thanked everyone for their participation. He recommended initiating a landmark designation study. He said the information presented showed that the property met the statutory requirements for landmark significance.

Mr. Sullivan asked for feedback from Commissioners on the viability of the current proposal for a certificate of appropriateness if a landmark study was initiated.

Mr. Bibbins asked if other uses would be allowed besides residential. Mr. Sullivan replied that the mixed office uses there now were grandfathered. Mr. King pointed out that the Commission's jurisdiction was limited to the physical appearance of the exterior of the building.

Mr. Irving said that if a landmark study was initiated, he would want to see a study made of how much of the original building could be preserved. Mr. Barry agreed. The testimony that the rear of the site was publicly visible was compelling. Selective demolition from the whole, rather than merely focusing on the front façade, would be the best approach.

Mr. Barry moved to initiate a landmark study and offered the record of the hearing as guidance to the developers. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Mr. King called for a short recess and reconvened the meeting at 8:25 P.M.

Case D-1323: 53 Jay St., by Jay Street LLC. Raze house, 1886.

Mr. King explained the demolition bylaw and application review procedures.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the staff report on the house. The area, a former salt marsh, had not been developed until after the Civil War and was heterogeneous in character. The boxy form of the two-family house and several others in the vicinity that were designed at the same time was the result of new technology that allowed for a nearly flat roof. The houses were residences for workers in local industries such as the Riverside Press. Four such buildings shared a common history and presence on the street.

Jill Shulman, an owner, indicated that initial discussions with neighbors revealed that they did not want something tall on the lot. The message she heard from Mr. Sullivan was that it was important to maintain a consistent streetscape.

Mark Boyes-Watson, the architect, explained that zoning allowed 3 units. The new front house would have one unit and a detached two-unit house would be built behind it. The existing building was in poor condition. The bay of the new house would have the same 7' front setback as the existing front wall. He displayed a photo of the existing house and streetscape with a transparent overlay showing the new building. He had taken cues from the existing building such as the mass, the bold cornice, height, and placement on the lot in designing the new building. Ms. Shulman said the rear building had been made smaller in response to neighbors' comments.

Mr. King asked about the easement noted on the site plan. Mehri Sater, an owner, said the surveyor had found the easements on record, but they were not currently used by either property owner.

Dr. Solet asked where the mechanicals would be located. Mr. Boyes-Watson wasn't sure.

Mr. Crocker asked about the structure on the roof. Mr. Boyes-Watson explained that it was a monitor that would bring light into the house.

Amy Thompson of 57 Jay Street said she had been unaware of the zoning potential of the lot. The new owners had been respectful, accessible, and responsive to concerns. She spoke in favor of the proposal and asked if the Historical Commission would review future alterations to her own property. Mr. King clarified the demolition review process and said the Commission did not have jurisdiction to review alterations to existing buildings on the street.

Lee Williams of 48 Jay Street indicated that he would rather see the height stay at 24' rather than 25' so that it would be consistent with the other houses, but did not have other concerns about the project.

Mr. King noted that the Commission had received a letter from Carol Moses objecting to the proposed demolition and new construction, especially its density.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house significant, as defined in the ordinance, and for the reasons in the staff report. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 6-1. Ms. Harrington voted in opposition.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement, because the new house was very similar in proportion and scale to the existing and would not unduly interrupt the streetscape. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

PG 14-5: 23-25 Madison St., by Homeowner's Rehab. Requested grant of \$65,000 for siding, windows, trim restoration.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the 1913 three-decker. The elderly homeowner had applied to Homeowner's Rehab after being denied a conventional loan. The request was for \$65,000 for exterior renovation including shingles, door and window trim, porch, and paint. He noted that the Commission generally granted up to \$30,000 for individual properties. He suggested a grant of \$36,000 in this case.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a grant of \$36,000 for the work described. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

PG 14-6: 96 Gore St., by Just A Start. Requested grant of \$18,530 for gutter and siding restoration.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the existing conditions. The sides were covered in asphalt siding. There was no cornice overhang and no gutter, causing water damage. The request was for \$18,530 for new clapboards and window casings.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the requested grant of \$18,530. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

Ms. Burks noted that the description of the grant allocation for 56 Magazine Street in the October 10, 2013 minutes was inaccurately stated. It should read, "The first \$50,000 would be an outright grant and up to a second \$50,000 would be given on a matching basis."

Mr. Irving moved to authorize the correction to the October 10 minutes. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan noted that Mr. King had, on behalf of the whole Commission, written letters of thanks to the Historical Society, the City Manager, and Secretary of State Galvin after the Preservation Celebration event.

Mr. Crocker moved to adjourn. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on December 5, 2013**

Jonathan Eden	0 Garden St
Ann Jenkins	56 Regent St
Rick Levy	64 Richdale Ave
Elizabeth Stern	20 Cambridge Terrace
Marianne Nelson	175 Richdale Ave
Charles Stevenson	16 Cambridge Terrace #1
Prilla Smith Brackett	75 Richdale Ave #11
Dave Olson	144 Ferry Rd
Arthur Wolfson	33 Richdale Ave
Debbie Whitney	75 Richdale Ave #8
Jeff Listfield	4 Cambridge Terrace #2
David Phillips	75 Richdale Ave #9
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Rob Wolff	42 Arlington St
Norma Wassel	175 Richdale Ave
Liz Vandermark	33 Cambridge Terrace
William Senne	100 Pacific #10
Ahad Chadhury	39 Jay St
Sam Wolff	19 Maple Ave
Bijou Bose	9 Cambridge Terrace #3
Charlotte Moore	9 Rutland St
Gordon Moore	9 Rutland St
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr
Elaine Spatz-Rabinowitz	75 Richdale Ave/159 Hancock St
Polly Attwood	175 Richdale Ave #320
Cathleen McCormick	9 King St
Chris Lizsimon (? illegible)	2046 Mass Ave
Gene Hull	75 Richdale Ave #5
Karen Hull	75 Richdale Ave #5
Christopher Lutz	75 Richdale Ave #15
Marion Foster	75 Richdale Ave #18
Oliver Radford	24 Cambridge Terrace #1
Stephen Perry	24 Cambridge Terrace #1
Carol Cohen	40 Porter Rd
Arlene Miller	75 Richdale Ave #10
Ellen Wolfe	75 Richdale Ave #14
Morris Rabinowitz	75 Richdale Ave
Elizabeth Moore Moriarty	75 Richdale Ave
Sally Lutz	75 Richdale Ave #15