



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

MELISSA PETERS

*Acting Assistant City
Manager for Community
Development*

To: Board of Zoning Appeal

From: Harvard Square Advisory Committee

Date: February 19, 2025

Re: 29 Mt Auburn Street – Positive Recommendation

Overview

The Harvard Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, to discuss a variance application to install a wall sign at a height greater than the 20 feet allowed by Article 7 at 29 Mt Auburn Street. The meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions of Section 20.50 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance in advance of the applicant’s hearing for a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA). Committee members present were Chad Bonney, Ryan Clinesmith Montalvo, Allison Crosbie, John DiGiovanni, Gareth Doherty, Henry Grabar, Kari Kuelzer, Ivy Moylan, Alexandra Offiong (chair), Matt Simitis, and Nicola Williams. After discussion, John DiGiovanni moved and Ivy Moylan seconded the motion to forward a report to the BZA with a positive recommendation for the sign as presented. Eight (8) members present voting in favor, two (2) members voting against, and one (1) member abstained.

Proposal Description

The Applicant is proposing the installation of a wall sign at a greater height than allowed by Zoning Article 7. The top of a wall sign may not be mounted higher than 20' at this location and the applicant proposes to mount this sign at 28'10". BZA variances within the Harvard Square Overlay District require review by HSAC.

Public Comments

No public comment.

Recommendation

During extensive discussion, the Committee debated the effectiveness of this sign for wayfinding (both for pedestrians and vehicles), its impact on the building’s architectural integrity, and safety concerns for drivers looking up to a highly mounted sign. Members were glad to know that the sign was subject to additional review by the Cambridge Historical Commission.

The Committee voted to forward a positive recommendation on the sign as presented. The Committee additionally would like to communicate to the applicant and to the BZA the below guiding principles for the proposed signage that were discussed and debated

by the Committee. Although there was no unanimous agreement on whether the proposed signage was successful in achieving these design principles, members agree that they are each important to consider:

- Minimize the number of signs.
- Ensure signs are well sited and not cluttered.
- Allow the church to be able to have signage so that their congregation and visitors can find where they need to go.
- Design and site wayfinding to be effective and within a pedestrian sightline.
- Ensure that signage does not diminish the architectural integrity of the building.
- Prioritize safety for pedestrians and drivers.

Respectfully submitted for the Committee,



Mason Wells
Community Development Department