

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Cambridge Historical Commission (acting as a Historic District Study Committee) and the Reservoir Hill Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee

February 10, 2016 – 10 Phillips Place, Washburn Commons, Room 103 - 6:00 P.M.

CHC Members present: William Barry, William King, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*
CHC Members absent: Shary Page Berg, Chandra Harrington, Bruce Irving, Robert G. Crocker, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

RHNCD Study Comm. Members present: Robert Higgins, Arch Horst, with appointed CHC representative
Susannah Tobin

RHNCD Study Comm. Members absent: Peter Ellis, Bracebridge Young, Jr., and CHC representatives Chandra Harrington and Joseph Ferrara

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*; Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*; Samantha Paull, *Preservation Administrator*; Jeffrey Roberts and Swaathi Joseph, *Zoning Division of Community Development*

Public present: See attached list.

Robert Higgins called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M.

Sarah Burks showed slides of major construction projects in the neighborhood in the last five years. She summarized the statistics of project cost, and estimated that sixty percent of permit requests would be handled administratively if they had been in a district and would not require review by a commission at a public hearing.

Jeffrey Roberts, zoning specialist at the Community Development, presented a slide show about the existing zoning in Reservoir Hill. He explained that zoning regulations apply to land use and buildings when a change is being made to a property. Alterations could not create a new non conformity without relief. Much of Cambridge was already built before zoning was introduced in 1924. Most parcels were located in the A1 residential district and 7 parcels were located in the A2. A1 and A2 were the most restrictive districts. In A1 and A2 districts, the usable open space requirements is 50%; height limit is 35'; and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limit is 0.50. Only single family homes could be located in A1 and A2 unless a special permit is granted for accessory apartments. The special permit allowance would soon be expanded to other districts and to properties of any size by the Barrett petition. All basement Gross Floor Area (GFA) would be exempt from FAR calculations.

Carole Perrault, of 9 Dana Street, pointed out that exempting basement floor area would have an impact on binding vs. non-binding reviews in some NCDs like Mid Cambridge.

Arch Horst noted that the building code also was relevant in determining if basement space was habitable space.

Jeff reviewed several maps that had been created to illustrate different aspects of the neighborhood and conformity to existing zoning regulations. He concluded that there were a number of properties that had the ability for further enlargement on their lots. A second dwelling could only be added if the requirements for subdivision were met. Accessory buildings such as garages, home offices, pool houses, etc were allowed.

Jo Solet asked about underground garage floor area. Mr. Roberts answered that it would be exempt from GFA totals.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if accessory apartments could be detached structures. Mr. Roberts answered that they could not; they must be within the primary building and needed a special permit. Ms. Meyer asked when a home office became a commercial office. Mr. Roberts explained that the zoning ordinance had language about that indicating a limit on the number of employees, but without restricting the number of parking spaces allowed. He noted that parking spaces could not be rented out to non-residents but there was no maximum number of residential parking spaces allowed.

Charles Sullivan remarked that zoning was a quantitative tool to control dimensional aspects and land use. Preservation tools were qualitative and could regulate things like materials, roof form, etc. Mr. Roberts agreed that zoning was not a great tool for architectural style or preservation.

Mr. Horst asked if anyone had changes to the draft minutes of the January 13 meeting. He said that he had recalculated his statistics and of the 108 parcels in the study area, 27% had undergone extensive renovations in the last five years. Susannah Tobin moved that the minutes be approved, as amended. Mr. Higgins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Sullivan provided an update on the project at 29 Highland Street. The latest design proposal (to renovate the house on its current site and to move the carriage house forward and connect it to the house) was approved at the Historical Commission's January 7 meeting. The landmark study had been terminated on the basis that the house would be subject to the terms of the certificate of appropriateness and the ongoing NCD study. Anticipated cases coming up in the study area included an addition at 45 Brewster Street and possible demolition and new construction at 16 Kennedy Road.

Mr. Higgins moved to adjourn the meeting, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Committee Members and Members of the Public
Present on February 10, 2016**

Arch Horst	55 Brewster St
Jo M. Solet	15 Berkeley St
George Mabry	77 Sparks St
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Annette LaMond	7 Riedesel Ave
Robert Higgins	1 Highland St
William King	25 Hurlbut St
Jacob Farmer	P. O. 382122, 02238
Shary Berg	
Susannah Tobin	

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.