

DRAFT Minutes of the Reservoir Hill NCD and HD Study Committees—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED

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

March 30, 2016 – 10 Phillips Place, Washburn Commons, Room 103 - 6:00 P.M.

CHC Members present: William Barry, Chandra Harrington, William King, Jo M. Solet, *Members*

CHC Members absent: Shary Page Berg, Bruce Irving, Robert G. Crocker, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

RHNCD Study Comm. Members present: Robert Higgins, Arch Horst, and Bracebridge Young, with appointed CHC representatives Chandra Harrington

RHNCD Study Comm. Members absent: Peter Ellis and CHC representatives Joseph Ferrara and Susannah Tobin

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

Public present: See attached list.

William King and Arch Horst called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M.

Charles Sullivan described the Lower Common NCD study that took place in 2006-2007 and the organization of the study report, which had been distributed to the committee members for review. Goals had been identified for the Lower Common neighborhood and jurisdiction of a potential district outlined. It was organized so that it was clear what alterations would have required approval by a commission, a long list of exemptions, and what could be approved by staff with a certificate of non-applicability. Very few projects came up during the study period and, in the end, the district proposal just did not garner a strong group of proponents to see it through. The Historical Commission terminated the study without sending it to the City Council.

Mr. King noted that a group of opponents arose during the study based on what parents at the Peabody School heard from unhappy residents in the Avon Hill NCD. (Before the Avon Hill NCD district was amended and new members appointed).

Arch Horst said the committee should list qualities is wanted to preserve in Reservoir Hill. He added that a straw poll on the NCD question was another option.

Bracebridge Young said the committee should review a draft of a district order prepared by staff to start discussion. A straw man to respond to would be helpful.

Mr. Sullivan suggested a walking tour of the neighborhood at the next meeting to help inform the staff about what characteristics of the neighborhood were of priority to the committee members and others. He added that once there is a draft to share with a broader audience, the committee could mail out a postcard poll asking for feedback on the ideas.

George Mabry asked about the commission administering a possible district. Mr. Sullivan explained that it could either be a commission of appointed residents of the neighborhood with a CHC representative or it could be administered by the citywide Historical Commission, as was the case with the Old Cambridge Historic District and the Harvard Square Conservation District.

Jo Solet asked the staff to share lessons learned about establishing new districts. Sarah Burks answered that advisory reviews by a commission at public hearing could sometimes be frustrating to the

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commission, applicant, or neighbors. When the decision is only advisory (non-binding) it may not be the best use of time to discuss it at a hearing, though it could work in some cases if the applicant is receptive to the advice being given by the commission.

Carole Perrault, a former member of the Mid Cambridge NCD, commented that the specifics of the review criteria for binding and non-binding was very important. If the parameters were not restrictive enough, there could be major projects receiving only advisory review—such as new construction of dwellings in Mid Cambridge if they measure less than 750 in gross floor area.

Ms. Burks noted that a sunset or review clause can allow for reconsideration of the district order by the City Council after a certain number of years.

Mr. King remarked that the Lower Common order had been well drafted.

Mr. Sullivan indicated that staff would begin to draft some goals and review criteria for the committee in the coming weeks.

Mr. Young was asked to speak to item #2 on the agenda: Institutional Issues in the district because of his role as a board member of Buckingham Browne & Nichols (BB&N) School. He described the large project that had just been completed on the Middle School campus on Sparks Street. It involved removal of the ell of the main building and construction of an addition to connect it to the south wing. The project had been permitted and was well underway before the Reservoir Hill study was initiated. He described other anticipated work in the long term including replacement of the temporary science trailers with permanent construction (at the back of the site, not visible) and the renovation of the carriage house for arts instruction (visible from Sparks Street). Mr. Sullivan asked if development potential was available in the front of the property. Mr. Young replied in the negative. Having the school set back from the street and separated by a wall gave added security to the campus. Ms. Perrault asked if the student population was stable. Mr. Young said enrollment was capped at the Lower and Middle schools, but was growing at the Upper School (Gerry's Landing campus). The latest project had not increased the number of students served at the Middle school. The committee discussed the history of the school's Sparks Street property. Mr. Young said it was unlikely that they would sell the property and relocate, an option that had been rejected many times by the board. Mr. King asked if the school had expressed a preference between NCD and historic district. Mr. Young reported that the board would prefer not to be included in either type of district.

Mr. Horst asked why Kennedy Road was included in the study area but other dead end streets were not. Mr. Sullivan explained his reasoning for the study area boundaries. The other cul de sacs were on the fringe of the neighborhood and Kennedy Road, if excluded would create a donut hole. BB&N was included because institutions had been flash points in some neighborhoods. He noted the Holy Trinity Armenian Church was the only other institutional property in the study area. The church had been notified

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of the study but had not contacted the staff with any questions. Their two lots total almost 100,000 sf and the buildings only represented about 1/3 of the FAR potential. The parking lot could be subdivided.

Mr. Mabry asked when the boundary question would be addressed. Mr. Sullivan answered that a walking tour would help inform on that topic.

The minutes of February 10 and March 9 were distributed. Mr. King said he had not recommended changes. The committee did not vote on the minutes, however.

The committee scheduled a walking tour of the neighborhood on April 13 at 5:00 P.M. to make best use of daylight.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn the meeting, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

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**Committee Members and Members of the Public
Present on March 30, 2016**

Arch Horst	55 Brewster St
Jo M. Solet	15 Berkeley St
George Mabry	77 Sparks St
Annette LaMond	7 Riedesel Ave
William King	25 Hurlbut St
Edward Kerslake	15 Woodbridge St
Brace Young	88 Appleton St
Chandra Harrington	123 Hancock St
Christian Nolen	29 Highland St
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St., #41
Robert Higgins	1 Highland St
Bill Barry	10 Norumbega St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.