



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Fl., Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Telephone: 617 349 4683 Fax: 617 349 6165 TTY: 617 349 6112

E-mail: histcomm@cambridgema.gov URL: <http://www.cambridgema.gov/Historic>

Bruce A. Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Barton Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*
William Barry, Robert G. Crocker, Joseph V. Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Gavin W. Kleespies, Paula A. Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

February 26, 2018

To: Members of the Historical Commission

From: Charles Sullivan *CWS*

Re: 40 Cottage Street

There was an extended discussion about the designation of 40 Cottage Street at the Council meeting on February 12. The measure was charter-righted and discussed again tonight. The owners, who oppose the designation, submitted a letter stating their intentions to protect the property. The councillors voted to continue the discussion until next Monday, March 5 to allow the Commission to review the letter and the staff to report on whether it represents an adequate substitute for designation.

The City Council also voted unanimously to designate 44 Cottage Street as a landmark.

Please review the attached letter and be prepared to discuss it at the Commission meeting on Thursday, March 1.

attachment

Roy Russell and Robin Chase
40 Cottage Street
Cambridge, MA 02139

February 21, 2018

To the Honorable, the City Council:
Re: landmark designation for 40 Cottage Street

We want to assure you that we do not intend to demolish 40 Cottage Street. Our plans have always been to restore the front historic portion of our house and replace or renovate the back of it with a net zero structure which is sensitive to the architectural fabric of the neighborhood. Indeed, the Historical Commission granted us a partial demolition permit to do just this over a year ago, unanimously approving the replacement of the back of the house and garage with a new structure.

In addition to our desire to preserve the historic nature of the house, another important reason why we would never want to demolish and build an as-of-right structure is our very generous side yard. Our house, like our neighbors' on either side, was built on one side of the lot, Any as-of-right new construction built on this lot would need to conform to existing zoning setback requirements, placing the house in the middle of the lot, ruining its large garden. The garden is a cherished and well-used space, has been on the library fundraising garden tour, and is used constantly in three seasons. Everyone who knows us knows that this garden is one of the many reasons we have enjoyed living here for so long. New construction would eliminate it.

We realize now that our request for a demolition permit -- a misguided attempt to demonstrate to one neighbor that we had options in our quest to renovate our living space -- was open to misinterpretation. We regret having requested it now. Our goal was then, and remains, to preserve and renovate the front half of the property, and to make a 19th century home suitable for life in the 21st century with the back half.

40 Cottage St is not a risk of being demolished. Quite the contrary, we are about to invest money into it so that it will be structurally sound for another 30 years. We have spent a lot of time and money with architects to produce a plan that we want to build, preserving the front house just as the historical commission has desired. It does not deserve to be the 14th privately owned landmarked home in the city of Cambridge. We did not initiate this process. We ask that you reject the commission's recommendation for historic landmark status. Such a designation would subject us to the unnecessary burden of further approvals for each and every change to the appearance of the building or the yard that we might wish to make.

If necessary, we would be happy to agree to consult with the Historical Commission when making fundamental changes to our home, with the understanding that maintenance, repairs, and modifications are constantly necessary to meet the changing needs of life in the 21st century.

Like every homeowner in the city of Cambridge, should anyone in the future ever want to demolish this house, they would have to abide by the existing regulations and processes that govern such requests.

As citizens of Cambridge for most of our adult lives, and residents of 40 Cottage Street since 1989 we have deep ties to the city, local institutions, and this neighborhood. Many of our closest friends live here. We raised our family here. Our children attended Cambridge Public Schools and many of their closest friends grew up here. We intend to make Cambridge our home for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Roy P. Russell

Robin M. Chase

2018 FEB 21 PM 12:26
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

cc: Donna Lopez, City Clerk, for inclusion in the city council meeting packet

Attachment: Roy Russell and Robin Chase (COM 129 #2018 : Roy Russell and Robin M. Chase)