

DRAFT Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

March 2, 2023 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (843 7150 3014) - 6:00 P.M.

Members present (online): Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Elizabeth Lyster, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, *Alternate Member*

Members absent: Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Jo Solet, *Member*; Paula Paris and Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate Members*

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

Public present (online): See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation consistent with the provisions set forth in the Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations signed by Governor Baker on July 16, 2022. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. He explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, then introduced commissioners and staff. He dispensed with the Consent Agenda and designated alternate member Kleespies to vote on all matters.

Mr. Sullivan announced that the applicant for Cases D-1642 and D-1643 (231 and 235 Third Street) had requested to continue the hearings to a future advertised meeting date so as to allow for additional time for neighborhood outreach.

Mr. Ferrara moved to grant the requested continuance. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion, and it passed in a 6-0 roll call vote. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 4891 (continued): 101 Brattle St., by Lesley University. Modify the curb cut, sidewalk, parking area, paving, fences; relocate water trough; install exterior lighting fixtures, construct landscape and water retention structures.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the property. He explained that the hearing had been continued from the Commission's December meeting in order to allow time for the applicants to consult with the neighboring Longfellow House and to consider an archaeological investigation. The commission had commented on the design of the parking lot that it was to be orthogonal and should be more organic in shape to retain the something of the original residential character of the property.

Matt Langan of the Stimson landscape architecture firm introduced the other design team members. He summarized the feedback they had heard at the last hearing and reported that they were in conversation with a consultant to provide archaeological oversight of the site work. He shared his screen and described the design changes of the parking lot. It would be curvier and have a smaller footprint than previously proposed while still providing 22 parking spaces. The basketball court had been shifted 10-12 feet to the east and south. He reported that they had spoken to Christopher Beagan at the Longfellow House and had agreed to provide additional landscape plantings and fence extension to further screen the basketball court. They would communicate about outdoor events and coordinate as necessary the usage of the

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court. He reported that they had also met with Brooke McKenna of the Traffic, Parking and Transportation department to understand the requirements for the drive and parking dimensions. He described the proposed pavement materials which would include concrete paths, asphalt driveway, porous unit pavers, and an asphalt ball court with soft sport surface. The front entrance of the driveway would be brick, granite, and bluestone. He described the plantings around the parking lot and the lighting plan. The lighting goals were to provide more uniform light levels with an average of 1.5 foot candles. They had selected a contemporary light fixture that would recede into the landscape. The pole heights would vary depending on the features provided like wifi and security cameras.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the Commission.

Mr. Ferrara asked about the lighting temperature and color. Carla Sigillo of Arup answered that the lights would be 3,000 Kelvin with a warm natural color.

Ms. Lyster asked why brick was proposed at the front of the driveway. Mr. Langan answered that it would be durable when installed on a concrete base. Ms. Lyster asked about the size of the proposed screen plantings along the Longfellow property line and the new location for the fountain. Mr. Langan said they would be 10-12 feet tall at the start. The fountain would be placed at the front east corner of the house near the pedestrian path.

Mr. Kleespies asked if lower light fixtures could be used in some area. Mr. Langan answered that bollard lighting would need to be more numerous. The pole lights could be shielded where necessary. Todd Andrews of Centerbrook Architects noted that the security goals of the lighting were to provide enough illumination to see peoples' faces and bollards did not provide that.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions from members of the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked how many parking spaces would be lost from the present number to proposed. Mr. Langan said there were 28 or 29 existing spaces and 22 proposed. Ms. Meyer asked about the asphalt color, removal of mature trees, and alternative locations for the basketball court. Did the plan meet the requirements of the climate resilience score sheet? Mr. Langan said the asphalt was black but would lighten with age. The mature trees would remain with the new layout of the parking lot. Thirty to forty additional trees would be planted. Other locations on campus for the basketball court had been considered but ruled out because there would be future improvements planned for those areas. He said they had submitted the tree mitigation plan per existing ordinances.

Patty Zerhusen of 156 Fifth Street offered design suggestions for the materials at the front of the driveway. It would be better to bring the bluestone and granite at the angled corners all the way to the curb so the granite would be just straight.

Mr. Irving asked if there was other public comment.

Ms. Meyer said the plan was better than at the first hearing. It was softer and less institutional

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looking. She agreed with Ms. Zerhusen about the materials. She said she would be very interested to see what the archaeological survey would find. Hastings House is being encroached upon.

Marie Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street said she hoped there is a written agreement with the Longfellow House to enforce the allowed hours for use of the basketball court. It seemed unnecessary to have the court so close to the Longfellow House.

Mr. Irving closed public comment.

Mr. Ferrara said he appreciated the discussion about minimizing the materials to be used near the street.

Ms. Harrington said she appreciated Lesley's efforts to confer with Longfellow House and the Traffic department. It was a better plan as a result. Ms. Lyster agreed.

Mr. Kleespies commented that the proposal was improved. He appreciated that the driveway would have a sweeping curve which helped to soften the view. He said he also would be very interested in any archaeological findings.

Mr. Irving said Ms. Zerhusen's suggestions would be a good improvement.

Mr. Sullivan said the staff had several good meetings with the design team to offer suggestions. He recommended that a Certificate of Appropriateness be approved for the design, as proposed with the condition that the materials at the front of the driveway be adjusted as discussed and on the further condition that an archaeological consultant be engaged to oversee the sitework and that construction details, materials, and colors be delegated to staff. Ms. Harrington so moved. Ms. Lyster seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 without further discussion. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1644: 22 White St., by 22 White St. LLC c/o Mike Tokatlyan. Demolish 2½-story mixed-use building (1872).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff report about the 1872 Italianate house built by Thomas Elston. She described how the street had developed and changed over time. There was another house at 18 White Street from built by another member of the Elston family that had been the subject of a demolition hearing about ten years ago. She noted original details of the Italianate style that were still present on the house such as the paired brackets at the eaves and the incised floral design of the trim boards at the front porch. She noted that a nearby site on the Somerville end of the street was being proposed for new construction of a lab.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the commissioners and then the public.

Ms. Harrington asked if #18 had been similar in appearance. Had it been demolished for the existing 5-story building at the site? Ms. Burks answered in the affirmative and showed a photograph of the three houses at 18, 22 and 26 White Street.

James Williamson of 30 Churchill Avenue asked if 18 White Street had been found significant

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and preferably preserved. Ms. Burks answered in the affirmative. He noted that there was a tree in the back yard adjacent to the parking structure for the Galeria. Would the tree be subject to the Commission's review? Ms. Burks said it might be a factor discussed about the impacts of redevelopment of the property.

Minka Van Beuzekom of 20 Essex Street said she understood the fondness for the small cottages that were part of the history of the street but she supported demolition of the house in order to provide more housing units. Four units would be better than one.

Mr. Irving asked if there were other public comments regarding the significance of the existing building.

Marie Saccoccio asked if there had been discussions about relocating the house. Ms. Burks said she was not aware of such discussion.

Mr. Williamson commented that the house is significant for the reasons given in the staff report. It represented an important period of the neighborhood's development.

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the building significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons given in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Evan Stellman, architect at Khalsa Design, introduced himself, shared his screen and presented the proposed design for a new 5-story residential building at 22 White Street. The building was similar in massing and layout to the one built next door. He said bike and car parking would be provided at the ground floor and there would be four residential units above, each with two bedrooms and two baths. He described the materials of brick, metal standing seam siding and cementitious cladding.

Mike Tokatlyn, representing the 22 White St. LLC, stated that during the recent deep freeze the pipes in the building had frozen and there was extensive water damage. The plan had been to have the tenant stay until September but now he was not sure that was possible due to the repairs that would be needed for that.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Ms. Zhang asked if the building height of the proposed new building would be the same as the building next door. Mr. Stellman replied that it would be the same (55 feet) and the new building would have an elevator. Ms. Zhang asked about the complicated design moves and use of multiple materials. Mr. Stellman answered that he was trying to reduce the perceived weight and massing of the structure by breaking it up in massing and material.

Mr. Kleespies asked the owner would consider moving the existing building. Was there an available site nearby? Mr. Stellman said it wasn't a current consideration. They had looked at moving the building on the site, but it did not result in a satisfactory plan.

Mr. Williamson asked about the tree. Mr. Stellman said all the trees would be removed and they

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would go through the permitting process and mitigate for that. Mr. Williamson asked about the slope of the roof in the rendering. Mr. Stellman said that was merely the result of a fish-eye lens that had been used in the photograph of the streetscape. Mr. Williamson said there might be room for the existing house on White Street Place on a lot that had been considered for re-zoning in Somerville, but that idea had been dropped. Mr. Stellman said he knew the parcel, but it was not owned by the same developer.

Suzanne Blier of 5 Fuller Place asked why car parking was included in the plan. Mr. Stellman said the project pro forma showed that marketability of the units was improved with the parking included. Ms. Blier asked if it was a potential site for affordable housing. Mr. Stellman said it was not part of the area addressed in the recent affordable housing petition.

Ms. Zerhusen asked about the cladding materials and if the brick was carried up to the elevator overrun. Was there a shadow study? Mr. Stellman said a shadow study was coming and the brick did get carried up to the elevator overrun.

Ms. Meyer asked if the floor to ceiling heights on floors 2-5 were consistent and Mr. Stellman replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Saccoccio asked about materials, setbacks, fenestration, and open space on the side facing #18. Mr. Stellman said the setback on the right side was 5' and there would be windows there. There would be a deck on the first floor and a balcony at the third floor.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the project needed zoning relief and Mr. Stellman answered in the negative.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Ms. Blier spoke in support of moving the existing building. She agreed the need for housing was great. Maybe a taller building at this location was a good idea.

Ms. Meyer said the street was lost and would never go back to what it once looked like. She said the design of the new building should not emulate that of #18. The proposed design looked top heavy and did not have enough green space.

Mr. Williamson said the former building at #18 had been in worse condition than the current condition of #22. The existing house was charming and had value. A preferably preserved finding would allow time for exploration of moving the building and for further design development. The units would not be affordable and the parking so close to transit was unfortunate. Cambridge and Somerville should work closer together on planning for the area.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Ferrara said the complexity of the façade was unnecessary and should be looked at further. The brick pilaster appeared to be floating in an unnatural way.

Ms. Lyster questioned the decision to provide parking.

Ms. Zhang said breaking up the materials wasn't necessary in order to lighten the appearance of

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the massing. The materiality could be refined. She suggested they look at the proportion of the cornice.

Mr. Kleespies said the existing building had merit and added character to the neighborhood. There should be an attempt to re-use the building in some way and to design a new building that would also contribute positively to the street.

Mr. Sullivan agreed as to the merit of the existing building but noted that the location was well suited to increased density and added housing, which was a priority of the City Council. The entire shopping center might be redevelopment some day with increased density. Surface parking was wasted space.

Mr. Irving said he did not consider #18 to be an eyesore but agreed with Ms. Zhang and Mr. Ferrara about aesthetic improvements to the proposed #22.

Ms. Lyster asked if there was a good way to give a nod to the existing building in the new. Ms. Burks said it would be a mistake to try to replicate design elements of the existing house on the new building as it could look cartoonish at that scale.

Ms. Zhang said the context around the existing building had changed dramatically which made it a difficult proposition to choose.

Mr. Ferrara said it wasn't far off but could be refined by adjusting the cornice line, reducing the number of pieces clad in brick, pull the brick pieces together, etc.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the project would require Art. 19 review by the CDD staff. Mr. Stellman said he hadn't yet checked with them to know. Mr. Sullivan said the urban design staff would have good ideas, if the project did need Art. 19 review.

Ms. Lyster moved to find the building preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement design and recommend that they come back with response to the Commission's design comments.

Mr. Sullivan recommended a continuance of the hearing instead if the applicant would consent to it. Mr. Tokatlyn said he would consent to a continuance. He said they had thought about how to distinguish between 18 and 22 or how to give a nod to the old building but a new building of this type just couldn't be made to look old.

Ms. Lyster moved to continue the hearing with the applicant's consent. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion which passed 6-0. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Ms. Burks noted that some communities were requiring deconstruction of buildings and storage of construction materials rather than simple demolition. Perhaps the building at #26, which was missing some of its original detail, could make use of some of the materials from #22.

Mr. Irving called for a 10-minute recess. The meeting reconvened at 8:35 P.M.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 23-7: 5 Magazine St., by Central Square Church. \$270,000 for steeple and belfry restoration.

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Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the Central Square Church (formerly called the First Baptist Church) which was built in 1886. The roof of the steeple was shedding slates due to fastener failure. The flashing was deteriorating and causing leaking into the building. The tower was last repaired in 1972. The clock faces were deteriorating as was the belfry deck. The requested grant was \$270,000. The account had a balance of about \$430,000 until it would be replenished in September. The church was also applying for MPPF funding through the Mass. Historical Commission. The new church congregation was more viable and bankable.

Mr. Kleespies said it was one of the most important buildings in the city and he would support a grant of between \$200,000-\$240,000.

Ms. Lyster asked how far the Commission would go for these types of buildings. Mr. Sullivan said the Commission had approved grants to over 35 churches over the last twenty years. A few buildings had changed congregations but continue to play an important role in the community and contribution to the city's architectural diversity. The buildings were cultural landmarks that had many lives.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve a grant of \$210,000. Ms. Lyster seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Preservation Awards

Mr. Sullivan shared slides of 17 award candidates. He said no decisions needed to be made tonight but wanted to get the commissioners' initial reactions.

Minutes

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the February 2, 2023 minutes, as submitted. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion which passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving)

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Ordinance Committee had scheduled a hearing for March 7 to discuss the petition for amendments to Chapter 2.78, Art. III which provided for landmark and neighborhood conservation districts. He said the hearing would be open to public attendance in person and online.

Mr. Irving extended his thanks to the Vice Chair, Susannah Tobin, for filling in during his absence.

Ms. Lyster moved to adjourn. Mr. Kleespies seconded and the motion passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Zhang, Kleespies and Irving) The meeting adjourned at 9:42 P.M.
Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, March 2, 2023**

Todd Andrews	Centerbrook Architects & Planners, CT
Susan Wyeth	Centerbrook Architects & Planners, CT
Evan Stellman	Khalsa Design, 17 Ivaloo St, Somerville 02143
Carla Sigillo	Arup, 60 State St., Boston 02109
Ron Ronacher	Arup, 60 State St., Boston 02109
Mike Tokatlyan	57B Prescott St, Somerville 02143
Megan Little	Stimson Studio, 288 Norfolk St
Matt Langan	Stimson Studio, 288 Norfolk St
Joanne Kossuth	Lesley University, 29 Everett St.
Joshua Stevens	Stimson Studio, 288 Norfolk St
Amanda W	309 Hurley St
Patty Zerhusen	156 5th St
John Goodman	8 Fairmont Ave
James Zall	203 Pemberton St
Morton Alling	Auburn NH
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St, 404
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com
Marc Levy	3 Potter Park #1
Lucy Patton	333 Walden St.
James Williamson	30 Churchill Ave
Minka Van Beuzekom	20 Essex St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.