

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 5, 2020 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Caroline Shannon, Jo Solet, *Members*; Paula Paris, *Alternates*

Members absent: Joseph Ferrara, Elizabeth Lyster, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He introduced Commissioners and staff and designated Ms. Paris to vote on all matters. He explained the consent agenda procedure.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve Case 4279, for new fence and gate at 8 Willard Street, per the consent agenda procedures. Ms. Paris seconded the motion. No members of the public, staff, or Commission requested a full hearing. The motion passed in a vote of 6-0.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 4264 (continued): Burnham Hall, 99-2 Brattle St., by Lesley University. Construct fence to enclose HVAC equipment on north side of building.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the hearing was continued from the last meeting because of objections to the height of the proposed fence and to allow the applicant time to study alternative options. He showed slides of the existing conditions.

Oliver Radford, of Perry & Radford Architects, displayed the revised plans. The height of the fence was lowered to match the height of the adjacent brick wall. The proposed HVAC units had been lowered but had increased to seven units from five. The acoustical consultant had determined that it would meet the requirements of the noise ordinance even if all the units were running at the same time. He noted that the window on the north elevation of the building would not be covered by the new fence. The existing meter would be painted out to match the brick color.

Dr. Solet remarked that the proposal was a good improvement. The natural wood fence was better than the painted version. She asked about the proposed parking spaces. Mr. Radford answered that one of them was large enough for the shuttle vans. Dr. Solet said she had noticed that the vans had been parking in one of those spaces rather than on the street. She thanked the proponents for making the change.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions or comments, but there were none.

Ms. Harrington said the lower height was a big improvement. Ms. Paris complimented the new design and color of the fence.

Dr. Solet asked if the handicap parking signs could be posted on the fence rather than the wall of the building. Mr. Radford explained they could not because ADA required they be posted at 5' high. Ms. Paris moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application, as amended. Ms. Shannon seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 without further discussion.

Case 4280: 66 Hurley St., by 66 Hurley Street LLC. Exterior rehab including new stoop, windows, doors, siding and trim. Construct stair head house and decks.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property and explained that it was located in the East Cambridge NCD study area.

Mark Boyes-Watson of Boyes Watson Architects showed a site plan of the property noting its small size and location facing a park. Lopez Street was closed and not a through street. The house currently had vinyl siding and replacement windows. He showed elevations and explained the proposal to add windows on three sides, keep the garage at the back, rehab the three units, and construct a deck from the house to the garage roof, and a deck on the roof of the house.

Dr. Solet asked about the park. Mr. Boyes-Watson said it had a basketball court and a nice green space. Dr. Solet suggested sound-dampening windows. Mr. Boyes-Watson said they had considered it.

Ms. Shannon asked about the rear corner porches, were they glazed or screened? Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that the rear corner openings were glazed. The windows were fixed. The top portion was mulled to the bottom third.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the applicant proposed to remove the brackets. Lauren Harder, an owner, said the existing brackets were wrapped and their condition was not known. The current proposal was to remove them.

Ms. Shannon asked about the trim under the windows on the front left bay. Mr. Boyes-Watson said there would be continuous sills that extended all the way across the front elevation. The left bay would remain the same depth as existing.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions of fact or comments.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street questioned the amount of glazing on the building. She said it would be very transparent at night and there was too much of that type of construction already.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period. He said that the front door with small lights looked Colonial in style and did not fit with the other stylistic elements of the building such as the 2+2 windows.

Dr. Solet asked if the garage doors would be replaced. Ms. Harder answered that they would be solid overhead doors in a composite material.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the second floor door on the rear elevation. Mr. Boyes-Watson said it was to access a bridge to the deck, which was set back from the edge of the garage. Mr. Sullivan asked about brackets under the front bays. Mr. Boyes-Watson said he had not developed details on those brackets yet.

Dr. Solet asked if zoning relief was needed for the project. Mr. Boyes-Watson said relief was needed for the decks. If the relief was not granted the door would become a window. The proposed head-house would access the house roof deck. It would also be clapboarded.

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Ms. Shannon noted that a rendering with the neighboring building would have been helpful in considering the appropriateness of the project design. For a narrow front elevation, there was a lot going on and it might look busy next to the other building. She suggested one larger window on the left front bay rather than pairs of windows.

Ms. Harrington said that existing and proposed elevations should be provided on the same page.

Mr. Sullivan said he would like to see the condition of the original brackets, details of the new brackets over the front door, detailing of the panels, window sizes, and front door.

Ms. Shannon moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness with the condition that the above-named details be delegated to staff for approval. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case 4281: 29 Brattle St., by AP Brattle Square, LP, owner, o/b/o allbirds, tenant. Alter storefront and sign band.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the group of stores in Brattle Square. The block was made up of several buildings. He pointed out the exposed steel lintel under the existing awning. The application did not conform to the storefront guideline for the Harvard Square Conservation District because the proposed covering of the knee walls and the oversize sign.

Ms. Burks said that the drawings on the screen were an earlier draft but that the proposed design had been sent out in hard copy to the Commission members. She explained that the difference was that the current proposal was for internally illuminated letters spelling “allbirds” with no goose-neck lights. Otherwise the plans were the same.

Kate Kim of Kenneth Park Architects explained that the proposal was to cover the steel beam and sign band with a dark gray metal panel and to install an illuminated sign with lit white letters and vinyl window signs. She noted that the existing knee walls would also be covered with a dark gray metal veneer. She showed a section view of the proposal.

Dr. Solet asked how the metal would stand up to water and salt. Ms. Kim said the aluminum panel would be easy to clean. The glazing would match the existing.

Ms. Shannon asked where the metal cladding would end; would it extend past the lease line into the next retail space? Ms. Kim answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the condition of the stone required that it be clad. He noted that the knee walls, where original, to be part of the masonry surround of a storefront and worth preserving. They should not be clad just for branding reasons. He noted that the black brand color in the sign band would result in more than the allowed sign area (one square foot per linear foot is allowed by zoning code). He questioned the Community Development department’s determination that the sign was zoning compliant.

Dr. Solet suggested a lighter color backing to the sign, to meet zoning requirements.

Ms. Shannon asked how the metal panels would be attached to the stone knee walls. Ms. Kim

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answered that they would use mastic and mechanical fasteners.

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

Barbara Britton, a Cambridge resident, asked if the current tenant would be leaving. Mr. Irving answered that the Commission did not know the lease situation and had no jurisdiction over how the space would be occupied.

Julio Torres Santana of Ellery Street asked if the aluminum panels would be coated because otherwise the salt would eat away at them.

Michael Brandon of Seven Pines Avenue asked what allbirds sold. Ms. Kim answered that it was a shoe company from New Zealand.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the window signs were illuminated. Ms. Kim said they were just vinyl applied to the glass. Ms. Meyer said the dark gray was too large for the scale of the store.

Ms. Harrington was concerned by the size of the sign band. Ms. Shannon said she had concerns about the metal cladding on the stone knee walls. The existing granite material was very hardy and wouldn't fade. Mr. Irving opposed the application of cladding on the stone.

Ms. Burks noted that if the sign band were smaller and did not cover the top of the masonry opening, then the sign would meet both the zoning code and the Commission's guideline.

Mr. Sullivan noted that most stores on the block had awnings. It was a practical solution to the strong sun from the southwest. The existing steel beam was rusty and needed to be covered with something, but the overall effect of the design was that the sign band was too large.

Mr. Irving said he did not object to the size of the sign band. It was a slick panel over the entry and the actual logo with the "allbirds" lettering was very modestly sized. Dark gray was a far quieter color than some other bright colors of other brands.

Dr. Solet said it looked cavernous with the white lettering just floating. She recommended a dark gray band of smaller dimensions on a lighter backer board.

Mr. Sullivan recommended disapproving the panels at the knee walls and approving the metal panel/sign band as a practical solution to the problem of covering the lintel.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application with the following conditions, 1) that there be no metal cladding on the knee walls, and 2) that the metal panel over the storefront be approved, subject to resolution of the zoning situation for the determination of the sign area. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1549: 169 Rindge Ave., by Steven McNulty & Kate Berseth. Demolish house (1873).

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Ms. Burks summarized the staff report. She recommended that the Commission find the house significant for its relationship to the Race Course neighborhood and its Irish and French immigrant populations and its associations with the broad cultural, economic and social history of Cambridge. She noted that the garage at the back lot was not considered significant but the proposed development covered both lots. The proposal was to construct six residential units in five buildings on the L-shaped site.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact regarding the staff report and significance of the house. There being none, he asked for public comment regarding the question of significance of the building.

Mr. Brandon agreed with the staff opinion that the house was significant. He noted that the proximity to the former Notre Dame church just across the street further supported the relationship to the French Canadian immigrant population in the neighborhood.

Charles Fineman of 75 Winter Street said he used to live around the corner. He said the staff report provided an excellent description of the neighborhood.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Irving turned the discussion toward the question of whether the existing significant building was preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owners, introduced Steven McNulty, an owner, and Scott Kenton, a developer/builder. Mr. Rafferty said that Mr. McNulty was an artist who makes props for movies. Props for The Last Samurai movie had been made in the garage behind the house. He noted that four of the units would be detached and two would be semi-detached. Six parking spaces would be provided as required by zoning. The existing house with its current shape and size would prevent the development.

Scott Kenton said the development team had studied re-use of the existing garage building for residential conversion since that would be a larger number of units, but it was not suitable for adaptive re-use. He described the proposed site plan, which included six parking spaces and outdoor space for each unit. Though the lot was an L-shape, the building commissioner had indicated that the rear setback for the entire site needed to be 28', which would make a variance necessary for the proposal. The house could be retained as a two-unit building, but the total number of units would decrease by one.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Ms. Harrington asked if a design study with the existing house was available to show the Commission. Mr. Kenton said he did not have it with him. He showed the footprint of the existing house overlaid on the proposed site plan.

Dr. Solet asked about outdoor space for units 1, 2 and 3. Mr. Kenton said the space behind those units would allow for small urban patio outdoor spaces. Each unit would be 1300-1450 square feet,

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including the basement.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Mr. Torres Santana remarked that he liked the fact that the cars were hidden at the front. He asked if the back units could be all in one building, move the parking and continue the pedestrian path along the west side of units 1, 2, and 3. Mr. Kenton answered that a 5' setback along the driveway was required.

Ms. Meyer asked about the header over the door of unit 1. Mr. Kenton said it was an architectural detail, but that entry could be recessed as at units 2 and 3.

Dr. Solet asked about the asymmetry of windows on the rear wall of unit 3. Mr. Kenton said the bathroom window was smaller, but could be made the same size.

Mel Downes of 360 Concord Avenue said he had recently toured a new house larger than these, but with very little storage. He questioned if a family could really live comfortably in such a small space.

Mr. Brandon asked who the architect was. Mr. Kenton said it was Peter Quinn Architects. Mr. Brandon asked about Sam Azzam's involvement in the project. Would there be mechanicals on the roof of the third floor. Could the roof be white? Mr. Kenton said the mechanicals would be located on the ground. The roof could be white.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Mr. Brandon, clerk of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, said he hoped the Commission would find the house preferably preserved in order to allow alternative plans to be considered. A plan that preserved the house might be acceptable. The current plan needed a variance and wasn't detailed.

Ms. Meyer said she was tired of this brand of building where every unit has a little open space and a little parking space, use of horizontal windows, and a mix of cladding materials. She asked if three units could be put in the existing house.

Dr. Solet said mechanical units on a concrete pad next to the patio would be noisy. How would snow be removed from the roof decks? Mr. Kenton said the roofs could have an interior drain.

Ms. Paris asked for clarification of whether the Commission was only considering the front lot. Mr. Sullivan said the rear building was not significant.

Mr. Rafferty described the zoning setback situation. He disagreed with the building commissioner's determination that a 28' setback was required across the whole width of the rear lot.

Ms. Burks asked if there was a right of way for an abutting lot. Mr. Rafferty replied in the negative. The right of way was only to access the back lot, not for adjacent properties. Ms. Burks asked if the developers had considered keeping the front of the house and removing the ell. Mr. Kenton said they had looked at it but the house would need modifications and maybe dormers. Mr. Rafferty said the existing units in the house were only 1200 square feet, including space in the ell and the proposed 3-bedroom units

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were 1300 square feet, not including the basement space.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the project included any affordable units. Mr. Rafferty said the project was less than 10 units and less than 10,000 square feet, so inclusionary zoning requirements were not triggered. Mr. Sullivan said the Commission's decision was based on comparing the public benefits of preservation of the house vs. the proposed redevelopment. Adding housing units was a pro but losing a significant building was a con.

Mr. Irving said he thought the house could be preserved and new units added to the site to achieve both benefits. He had no objection to more units on the lot, but the building should be recycled.

Ms. Harrington agreed. She moved to find the existing house preferably preserved in the context of the proposed redevelopment. Ms. Shannon seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the December 5, 2019 draft minutes. Dr. Solet asked about the meetings of members of the Harvard Square Conservation District Study Committee outside the study process. Mr. Sullivan clarified that it was participants in the study but not appointed members of the committee who had met to discuss a zoning petition for Harvard Square. Dr. Solet noted on page 4, Mr. Harrington should be Ms. Harrington. Dr. Solet moved to approve the December minutes with corrections. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0. Mr. Irving said the January minutes could be continued.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on a difficult meeting of the East Cambridge NCD Study Committee where the attendance doubled and there were disruptions to the staff presentation.

A consensus of the Commission was reached to move the July meeting date from the 2nd to the 9th and to meet on September 10th after Labor Day.

Preservation Award Nominations

Mr. Sullivan showed the first round of nominated projects to the Commission for consideration. He said additional nominations were welcome and he present again at the April meeting.

Ms. Paris moved to adjourn. Ms. Shannon seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on March 5, 2020**

Kate Kim	Kenneth Park Architects, NYC
Pamela Hart	Pamela Hart Landscape, Cambridge
Madeline Jacquet	8 Willard St
Mark Collins	Lesley Univ., 29 Everett St
Oliver Radford	Perry & Radford Architects, 2067 Mass. Ave.
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave.
Julio Torres Santana	84 Ellery St #7
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Aubreeh Lynn	33 Harry Agganis Way, Boston
Bill Dines	69 Otis St
Charles Fineman	75 Winter St
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.