

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, 2026 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (826 9379 0082) - 6:00 P.M.

Present: Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Liz Lyster, *Vice Chair*
Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, Yuting Zhang, *Members*
Florrie Darwin, Scott Kyle, Michael Rogove, *Alternates*

Absent: Joseph Ferrara, *Member*

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

Public present: See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation pursuant to Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. She reviewed the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, noting that public questions and comments would be combined and limited to two minutes. She dispensed with the consent agenda procedure.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review (Continued Case)

Case D-1774: 37-39 Essex St., by Amelia Taylor Pour-Over Trust. (Continued from 12/4/25). Partial demolition of house (1845).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and introduced the case involving an 1845 Greek Revival house that the Commission found significant and preferably preserved at the December 4, 2025 hearing. The proponents had returned with a substantially revised proposal for the Commission’s consideration.

Attorney Adam Dash, developer Deepak Amaneni, and architect Will Yost presented a redesign responding to Commission, staff, and neighbor feedback. The new plan would rehabilitate the Greek Revival house and construct an addition with modest setbacks and contextual materials (brick at the street facing portion; fiber cement elsewhere).

Discussion Highlights:

- Design Refinements: Commissioners praised the streetscape compatibility and suggested removing the second triangular pediment on the new addition and setting back the top floor, potentially creating usable porch/railing space to transition from historic to new. The applicant agreed to explore this with staff.

- Materials: Concerns were raised about synthetic trim appearing “shiny” and long-term shrinkage/gapping; members encouraged wood or compatible fiber cement trim for corner boards and window casings, delegating approval of material samples to staff.

- Fenestration: Mixed views were expressed about single vs. double windows at the fourth floor; applicant will study interior egress, stair/elevator placement, and exterior symmetry.

- Units & Parking: The applicants clarified the project would have 10 dwelling units (2 retained in the front building and 8 in the new rear building), which was an increase from the 9 units proposed in the first design. Ms. Lyster noted that the project did not include any affordable units. The garage was eliminated because the site could no longer accommodate a compliant ramp/turning geometry.

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

The chair called for public questions and comments; there were none.

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the building no longer preferably preserved in the context of the present proposal, with the suggestion that the applicant explore a setback of the top floor and delegating approval of construction materials and details to staff, and further moved to waive the remainder of the demolition delay. Mr. Rogove seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, and Kyle). Mr. Sheffield did not vote due to his absence at the December meeting and because he had not reviewed the recording of the hearing.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5382: Austin Hall, 1515 Mass. Ave., by President & Fellows of Harvard College (continued from 1/8/26). Replace platform lifts with enclosed lifts.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the application to replace two retractable platform lifts with enclosed lifts. At the prior hearing in January the Commission requested design refinement.

Architect Jonathan Austin of Austin Architects, with Harvard representatives, described standardized enclosed lift units at the existing locations, with a simplified glass and metal enclosure, wider door, flush detailing, and black metal to match the existing steel stair. The lift would not touch the historic masonry. It would be more reliable and easier to maintain than the existing retractable lifts.

Discussion Highlights:

- Members compared the January vs. March iterations, noting the new scheme's clean composition and consistency with site context.
- Members asked about glass transparency and color treatment; the applicant confirmed consistent transparent glazing and black painted metal finish.

The chair called for public questions and comments; there were none.

Mr. Kyle moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for the revised design, delegating construction details to staff. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, and Kyle). Mr. Sheffield did not vote due to his absence at the January meeting and because he had not reviewed the recording of the hearing.

Case 5388: 17 Berkeley St., by Huien Huang and Hui Gao. Exterior restoration and renovations. Alter paint colors, paving, fences.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and introduced the application for alterations to a house in the Old Cambridge Historic District. The house was constructed in 1863 as a schoolroom addition to 15 Berkeley Street. It had been detached in 1900. A second floor was added in 1912, and it was remodeled in 1930 with stucco siding and porch modifications.

Architects Duo Yu and Brad Lovering and landscape architect Achan Sookying outlined the proposed renovations. Work would include rebuilding the front porch, repairing the siding, stucco, cornice, and foundation, installing slate gray architectural roof shingles, restoring historic windows on the front

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

elevation, and making adjustments to the rear deck and windows. The rendered color palette would be refined with staff via inspection of samples on site.

Discussion Highlights:

- Landscape & Site: Front picket fence (nominal 4' in concept, to be verified for neighborhood consistency), native plantings, stone paths; green screen (metal with vines) on the right side of the property, subject to neighbor consultation and tree root protection. A front welcome mat paving concept was introduced, but several commissioners recommended a softer approach.

- Front porch privacy screens: The proposal for a trellis screen across the front of the porch sparked considerable discussion. Commissioners noted the porch is a primary architectural element and a social connector to the neighborhood; the lattice enclosure risks visual clutter, conflicts with the welcome mat concept, and obscures the facade. Staff underscored reversibility as a preservation principle, but consensus favored further design study.

- Curved second floor bump out: Commissioners viewed the semi-circular projection over the entry as incongruous, and a non-reversible change; recommended returning with simpler, straight design.

- Upper balcony railing: Reconstruct at code height and study inset/recessed panel profiles and baluster detailing based on enhanced historic photos; delegate exact profiles to staff.

- Transformer: Design team will push back on a pad-mounted transformer; engineers believe 400A service can be pulled from pole instead.

- Neighbor consultation: Applicants have engaged 15 Berkeley and other neighbors and committed to collaboration on fencing/screening and root protection for a large elm.

Summary of Public Comment:

- Adam Sonnenschein of 19 Berkeley Street asked about protecting his tree and noted that one of the chimneys needed structural assessment; applicants agreed to address that with a structural engineer.
- Marie Saccoccio asked about the rear garage visibility and front-yard vs. side-yard fencing; applicants clarified the garage remains (exterior restoration only) and the right side yard screening was being developed in consultation with the Solets.
- Mike Solet of 15 Berkeley Street said they had enjoyed meeting their new neighbors. He commented on the proposed design that the proposed welcome mat paving did not have historic precedent and the porch screen looked busy. He indicated a desire to preserve the existing plantings on the right side.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for all but the porch screens and the welcome mat paving and invited the applicants to return for those two components. Ms. Lyster seconded. Motion passed in a 7-0. (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Rogove)

Ms. Harrington called for a five-minute recess at 8:27 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 9:32.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1801: 76 and 78 Thorndike St., by 76-78 Thorndike Street LLC. Partial demolition of two buildings including roofs. (1894 and 1844).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo about the two existing buildings on the site. They are contributing buildings in the East Cambridge National Register District and therefore met the ordinance definition of significance.

Architect Alison Hammer described raising the roof of the front house approximately 3' to remediate very low ceiling heights, replicating the Greek Revival entablature, cornice and pilasters, and constructing a cross-gable addition. The rear house would gain a third story; retain the porch columns; brick sides remain with fiber-cement siding above; window patterns would align with historic precedent. The unit total remains under study (4 existing units).

Discussion Highlights:

- Commissioners compared neighborhood heights and precedent for raising the roof (e.g., Spring Street example), encouraged retaining original porch details where feasible.

Summary of Public Comment:

- Lacey McCafferty asked about heights of nearby houses and supported careful context review.
- Marie Saccoccio urged structural engineering review and caution to avoid inadvertent demolition during construction; applicant confirmed structural engineer will be engaged before permitting.

Mr. Sheffield moved to find the existing buildings not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed design with the goal of preserving as much original detail as possible and subject to review of construction details by staff. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote of 7-0. (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin)

Case D-1802: 60 Vassar St. (MIT Building 39), by Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Demolish the building (1966) except for columns and slabs.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building designed by SOM architects in 1966.

The chair called for public questions and comments on the matter of significance, but no attendees indicated that they wanted to speak. Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the existing building significant for the reasons presented by staff. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote of 7-0 (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Kyle)

The MIT team (Sarah Gallup, John Alvarez, Samir Suruji (HGA), and Christos Maravelias) presented the proposal for a transparent glass box lightly wrapping the original concrete structure (addressing modern energy code and thermal bridging), expressive lateral bracing (necessitated by height/wind load code triggers), and a robust penthouse (to house double stack AHUs, relocated switchgear, generator)

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

using shimmering, bird-safe glass cladding to reduce bulk perception. The west drive would become a public lobby/gallery; two 2-story recessed glass bays would showcase the quantum computers within.

Discussion Highlights:

The penthouse height/massing had been reduced approximately 2' since meeting with staff; fenestration was more transparent than neighboring buildings; lighter mullion expression toward upper floors; public invitation strategy (exhibit/gallery programming and clear visual porosity).

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the existing building not preferably preserved in the context of the new design and subject to review of further details by staff. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed in a 7-0 roll call vote (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Kyle).

Minutes

The Commission considered the draft minutes of January 8, 2026. Staff explained that AI tools had been used to generate the summary of the discussion but had been checked and re-formatted. The Commission indicated approval of using AI for such tasks. Ms. Darwin moved to approve the January minutes, with a correction on page one in spelling of Rogove. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Rogove)

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan noted reduction of legal ad publication to only what was required by law, a significant savings to the department's budget. He described the new marker on Quincy Street, which would replace the blue oval for the Agassiz House. Ms. Paris asked if the committee on public monuments and markers was active. Mr. Sullivan answered it had issued a report in 2022 but was no longer active. Ms. Harrington asked about the Memorial Drive road diet, 17 Fresh Pond Parkway, and the Margaret Fuller House projects.

Ms. Lyster moved to adjourn. Ms. Darwin seconded, motion passed 7-0. (Kleespies, Lyster, Paris, Sheffield, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin) The meeting adjourned at 10:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks

Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner

Note: This draft was generated with the assistance of Microsoft Co-Pilot Generative AI and reviewed and edited by CHC staff for accuracy and form.

Members of the Public Present on March 5, 2026

Christos Maravelias	MIT
Samir Srouji	HGA Architects
Adam Dash	Adam Dash & Associates law firm
Diane Gray	Harvard Planning & Design
Sarah Gallop	MIT
Jon Alvarez	MIT
Jonathan Austin	Austin Architects
Deepak Amineni	Amineni Construction
Barry S. Cyrus	37-39 Essex St
Aliah Debejian	CSL Consulting
Brett Loverin	HEXi Architecture
Duo Yu	HEXi Architecture
Jennifer Hegarty	Hammer Design
Andrew Collins	ZRE Development
Alison Hammer	Hammer Design
Achan Sookying	AS Collective Landscape Architecture
William Yost	Architect
Ayush Gupta	235 Albany St
Gerardo Berlanga	299 Vassar St
Donal Jamieson	1 W Sutton Rd, Sutton
Catherine	8 High Street, Acton, MA
Su Zhang	171 Swanton St, #64
Jennifer Marshall	1074 State Road, Eliot, ME
Gail Roberts	13 Berkeley St
Jerry Friedman	9 Aberdeen St, Newton, MA 02461
David Huang	17 Berkeley St
James Zall	203 Pemberton St
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Luke	8 Sharon Dr, Conn.
Mounika Popuri	1179 Broadway, Somerville.
Minka van Beuzekom	20 Essex St
Debby Carr	9 Aberdeen St
Sonia Payne	108 Yeoman's Ave, Medford MA 03255
John Hawkinson	
Qing Li	10 Hinckley Rd
Marcell Graeff	59 Henry Street
Zhulin He	34 South St
Miks	219 Concord Ave
Cynthia LaBonte	219 Concord Ave
Adam Sonnenschein	19 Berkeley St
Gary Riggott	32 Vassar St, Building 12, MIT
Michael Berman	41 Essex St, #2
Mike Solet	15 Berkeley St
Jo Solet	15 Berkeley St
Davis Bacon	

Note: See <https://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/permitsApplications/projectplansandstaffreports> for a link to the Zoom meeting recording.