

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

April 5, 2018 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield *Alternates*

Members absent: William Barry, Robert Crocker, *Members*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M. He made introductions, reviewed hearing procedures, and described the consent agenda procedure.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the following case per the consent agenda procedure, delegating review of construction details to staff. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion.

**Case 3908: 15 Hawthorn St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Construct 6' fence on south side of property.

Mr. Irving designated all three alternates to vote on all matters. The motion passed 7-0.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 3878 (continued and amended): 36 Follen St., by Mark Lanza, Trustee of 36 Follen St. Realty Trust.** Raise house approximately 18" and construct new foundation and front steps. Partially enclose porch. Construct rear addition. Construct dormer. Build trash enclosure.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the house and its evolution over time. He noted that the water table of the house was at grade. The proposal was to raise the foundation of the house approximately 18 inches. He showed views from the public ways noting that plant material is considered ephemeral.

Sam Kachmar, the architect, read a letter from the owners to the Commission. He displayed plans and elevations describing how the design had been modified based on the comments heard at the first hearing. The size of the addition was reduced and style made more contextual. The balcony was eliminated and the dormer made smaller. The chimneys would be retained. A solar study had been done and the panels at 34 Follen Street would not be impacted by the project.

Mr. Sheffield asked if the front window wells were existing. Mr. Kachmar replied in the affirmative, adding that they would be replaced in kind. Mr. Sheffield asked about construction details of the eaves, hip roof, and window casings. Mr. Kachmar confirmed that the large fascia and corner boards would match existing, the hip would die into the gable, roof materials and window casings would match existing, and the dimensions of the rear addition had been reduced.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions of fact.

Doug Yoffe of 50, 44 and 34 Follen Street asked if the roof structure would be removed when the dormer was tied into the gable. Would the dormer be below the ridge? Mr. Kachmar replied that the dormer would be a little below the ridge, as were the existing dormers. Mr. Yoffe asked how the top floor would have enough head room to be code compliant. Mr. Irving said the Commission could only regulate the exterior appearance. Mr. Yoffe noted that the sun/shadow study only had data for 12 noon when there

would be the least shadow, not in the morning or afternoon. He said he thought 36 Follen would put shadow on all the windows on the south side of 34 Follen Street in December.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Mr. Yoffe read from his letter to the commission. The proposed shed dormers did not follow the dormer guidelines, started from the ridge, had a shallow slope, lacked symmetry and the dormer windows did not align with the floors below. It would look jumbled. The existing dormers were not well designed and shouldn't be copied.

Jonathan Austin, an architect and friend of the future residents, noted that 50 Follen Street cast a lot of shadow on the neighborhood. The house at 36 Follen had lots of accretions over time. The proposed changes were consistent with that pattern. The small addition would not jeopardize the tree in the back yard. The design was quite modest.

Mark Lanza, Trustee, summarized a letter of support from Susan Cogan at 35 Follen Street and submitted it for the record.

Mr. Irving noted other letters received by the Commission including those from Mr. Yoffe, David Elliott/Hungwah Yu, Jonathan Goodman, Roger Lowenstein/Judy Slovin, Dale & Bob Mnookin, T. K. McClintock, Emily McClintock, and Gerri Bernstein. He noted that three letters expressed concerns over the project, one was neutral, and six were in support. He closed the public comment period.

Mr. Kleespies commented that the design had been much improved. He said it was not a negative characteristic for a house to be the little one on the street.

Mr. Sheffield agreed. He said he appreciated the design development and response to the commission's suggestions. The house is idiosyncratic but doesn't have to be made more so. Construction details could be delegated to staff. He recommended that the ceiling heights on the third floor and the alignment of dormer windows be given further study.

Dr. Solet asked how much of the house was near grade level. Didn't the grade drop off at the back? Mr. Kachmar estimated 70 to 80 percent of the house was near grade. Dr. Solet commented that lifting the house would be complicated due to its proximity to the property line. She questioned how the roof lines would perform in heavy snow.

Mr. Sheffield noted that restructuring the roof at the back would involve a new structural ridge. Mr. Yoffe interjected that the whole roof would be new, the foundation would be new, everything would be new; why not just tear it down?

Mr. Sullivan observed that the informal growth of the house over time was very appropriate for a New England home. The inappropriate features of the first proposal had been mitigated or changed. The rear was not a prominent elevation as seen from the public way. Raising the building was a practical necessity because the sill and framing of the house was in contact with the ground. The proposal was not incongruous or inappropriate to the district.

Mr. Irving asked if the size of the north dormer had been brought down to the smallest size to accommodate the stair. Mr. Kachmar replied in the affirmative.

Dr. Solet registered concern about the buzzing of the speakers in the room.

Mr. Sheffield moved to find that, given the idiosyncratic nature of the house, the adjustments proposed were not incongruous to the existing building and would enhance some aspects of the existing; he further moved to approve the application as presented subject to staff approval of construction details, window restoration, trim, and exterior paint colors. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion. Dr. Solet asked if the motion could include protection for the large pine tree in the rear yard. Mr. Sheffield amended his motion to indicate that measures be taken to protect the tree to the greatest extent possible. Mr. Kleespies seconded the amended motion, which passed 4-0 with Messrs. Irving and Sheffield, Dr. Solet, and Ms. Paris voting. Ms. Harrington and Messrs. Kleespies and Ferrara did not vote because they had been absent at the first hearing.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-122 (continued): 101 Rogers St., The Foundry building, City of Cambridge, owner.** Consider study report and make recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan introduced the continued hearing. He showed slides and described the Blake & Knowles Foundry building. The building had been adaptively re-used in 1983 and altered at that time. He summarized the proposed design guidelines contained in the study report.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Dr. Solet asked about the feasibility of a preservation restriction that could protect interior features of the building like the exposed framing members. Mr. Sullivan answered that a restriction was not a practical option in this case due to the cost and complications of placing it with an outside party. He added that the city had a good working relationship with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority and he did not anticipate the loss of significant interior features.

Mr. Sheffield noted the construction of an apartment building next door. Given that, did staff still recommend opening up the arched openings on the east side of the foundry? Mr. Sullivan replied that there would be about 20' between buildings and that he still recommended it.

Marie Elena Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street said she was the lead petitioner for the study. She summarized the research she had done on women's labor history associated with the foundry building. It was extraordinary that the presence of women in this factory had brought about the first minimum wage law for women in the state. Mr. Sullivan noted that he had strengthened the statement of significance in the report to include women's history associations.

Carlos Peralta of the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority said he respected the Commission's decision on the matter and looked forward to moving forward with the Commission staff.

Betty Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street remarked on the grand interior features of the building's architecture and construction. She emphasized the importance of preserving those features and keeping them visible rather than boxing them in with new walls. Mr. Irving agreed.

Mr. Sheffield said he worked nearby and the changes in the area over the last fifteen years had been remarkable. The Foundry project would be a welcome one. It was nice to see some industrial buildings preserved.

Dr. Solet moved to accept the designation study report and its recommendations and to forward a positive recommendation for designation to the City Council. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 with Dr. Solet, Messrs. Irving and Sheffield, and Ms. Paris voting. Ms. Harrington and Messrs. Kleespies and Ferrara did not vote because they had not been present at the previous meeting.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

**Case D-1471 (Amended): 140-142 Prospect St., by the Islamic Society of Boston.** Review amended plans for partial demolition and addition to existing double house (1844).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Greek Revival house.

Peter Martin, the new project architect, described the location and surrounding buildings. He displayed drawings and described the current design proposal, which would preserve the main body of the house and replace the ell with a three-unit townhouse addition. The rear unit would be a little higher than the two in the middle. Five parking spaces would be accommodated at the back of the site in the same location as currently. The front chimney would be retained. Two dormers would be constructed on the front plane of the roof. The Doric-columned porch would be restored at the front of the house and enclosed to be part of the living space for the two front units. Prospect Street was too busy to make an open porch a pleasant place for sitting. The original entry detail on the north side of the house would be replicated on the south side. The entrances to the three rear units would be on the south side and garden space would be located on the north side of the lot. He and his clients had met with Bruner Cott Architects, abutters to the south, and modified the height of the interior units to preserve their views from their office windows.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Ms. Paris said she appreciated the difference in the design concept from the previous design shown to the Commission. The design succeeded in preserving the front house. She asked if the architect would elaborate on the details of the new construction.

Mr. Martin said the new units would have awning and casement windows and minimal trim. He did not want a pastiche of historic details, but the trim would be differentiated from the front house. The new units would have horizontal board siding like Hardie boards or tongue and groove flush boards. Roof drainage would be taken care of with an internal drain.

Mr. Sheffield asked why the front units had two entrances each (one at the original entrances and one at the front porch). Mr. Martin replied that he thought having two means of egress was important in

any residence.

Mr. Irving asked if the dormers met the ridge of the house. Mr. Martin replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the neighboring buildings also extended the length of the lots and there would always only be an oblique view of the new building. The block contained buildings of all ages. This would be new and different.

Ms. Harrington asked if the house previously had dormers. Mr. Sullivan said it had not.

Dr. Solet asked about placement of mechanical units. Mr. Martin said they would be small units placed on the south side.

Beaver Spooner of Walden Street asked about the building to the south. Mr. Sullivan explained it was originally the gym for St. Mary's parish school. It was now an office building. She asked if the new units would be blank facades, as depicted in the drawing. Mr. Martin said they would have details and limited trim but would be simpler than the historic house. The units were approximately 1500 sf, with 3 bedrooms and 2½ baths.

There were no comments, so Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet recommended that the architect work closely with staff on the detailing of both the old and new buildings. Mr. Martin said he would do so.

Ms. Harrington wondered if the porch doors were needed.

Mr. Kleespies said the design was much better—night and day compared to the earlier proposal. He supported the reconstruction of the columned porch.

Mr. Sheffield expressed concern about the drawings. He asked for clarification about the cornice, doors, trim, and siding. He said the design was extremely promising but he wanted to see the details.

Mr. Sullivan offered language for a possible motion delegating review of details to the Architects Committee, a subcommittee of the Commission.

Ms. Burks noted that a further request for continuance could jeopardize the Society's petition to the Zoning Board.

Mr. Ferrara moved to waive the remainder of the demolition delay on the condition that the architect bring the design development to the Architects Committee for further review at a public meeting.

Ms. Harrington agreed as long as anyone interested was welcome to participate at the Architects Committee meeting. She seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1 with Mr. Sheffield opposed.

Ms. Burks said she would notify the abutters, Ms. Spooner and all the commission members of the date, time and place of the Architects Committee meeting.

Mr. Irving called for a short recess. He reconvened the meeting after five minutes.

#### Preservation Grants

#### **PG 18-2: 13-15 Lincoln Street, Homeowner's Rehab Inc.**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property and said the applicant was requesting \$70,000 to strip

the asbestos siding and restore the porch. He recommended offering up to \$70,000 but said he hoped to negotiate it to \$50,000.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve the grant as described. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

Dr. Solet noted that the photocopied minutes were missing the even numbered pages.

Mr. Irving announced the review of the March minutes would be deferred to the May meeting.

Preservation Award Nominations

Mr. Sullivan distributed a list of nominated projects and showed slides of each of them. He described the scope of work and what he knew about the projects.

The Commission discussed each nomination, asked questions, and made their final selections to be announced at the Preservation Awards program on Thursday, May 31.

Director's Report

Mr. Irving acknowledged the receipt of Daryl Jaynes' letter.

Mr. Ferrara moved to adjourn. Mr. Kleespies seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed the Attendance List on April 5, 2018**

Marie Elena Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Betty Lee Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Kathleen Ranelli	58½ Spring St
Beaver Spooner	329 Walden St
John Hawkinson	jhawk@mit.edu
Allison Crump	9 Kinnaird St
Amr Elfass	Islamic Society of Boston
Karim L Razzaz	Islamic Society of Boston
Carlos Peralta	Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
Quinn Mulholland	Harvard College

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.