

**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**

November 7, 2019 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, *Members*;  
Paula Paris, *Alternate*

Members absent: Robert Crocker, William G. Barry, Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *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 6:09 P.M. He introduced the Commission members and staff. He noted that alternate members Kleespies and Paris could vote on all matters. He explained the consent agenda procedures and recommended Case 4190 for consideration.

**Case 4190: 20 Craigie St., by Peter Hiam.** Install new door at grade on side of addition and install an elevator at rear.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for Case 4190 and delegated the review and approval of construction details by staff. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Public Meeting: Informational Presentation

**Nineteenth Amendment Centennial Committee report on site selection of Cambridge Common for a piece of public art.**

Jennifer Mathews of the City Manager's office introduced members of the Nineteenth Amendment Centennial Committee including Barbara Berenson, Kim and Sofia Bernstein, Marian Darlington-Hope, Gail Willett, and Sarah Burks as well as Lillian Hsu and Cecily Miller of the Arts Council. She explained that the Committee was seeking the Commission's support for the Cambridge Common as the site for the piece of public art commemorating Cambridge women's participation in the woman suffrage movement and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. She presented slides describing the timeline of the Committee's site selection study and four artist finalists who would present proposals for the art piece. She said the City had appropriated \$300,000 for the project.

Ms. Berenson spoke about the history of woman suffrage, the reasons why the committee felt so strongly about Cambridge Common as the location for the art piece, and the importance of recognizing women's participation in the movement and in public life.

Miss Sofia Bernstein explained that symbolism is important and that it is inspiring to see public art that looks like you. Kids learn in different ways and the art would be meaningful to her generation.

Kim Bernstein remarked that people often assume that the art would be representative of a specific woman as a bronze figure, but the Committee had discussed why that would be problematic and that the artists may propose something more symbolic and less literal.

Ms. Hsu said it was important to receive an indication of support for the selected site because the finalists would make site-specific proposals. She noted that there would be several more opportunities for feedback from the public at large and the Commission on the design proposals.

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Ms. Miller 108 Pleasant Street gave a short presentation about the direction of contemporary public art and the concept of monuments. The field had moved past the historic model of a general on horseback. She showed examples of other recent monuments as examples. The goal was to commemorate the movement and make the subject matter engaging to people today.

The Commissioners asked questions about the sites considered, the artist selection process, diversity considerations of the proposal, site treatment around the art, and maintenance of the art piece.

Peter Valentine of Brookline Street said the project on the Common could affect people in beautiful ways. He noted the importance of color.

Mr. Sullivan suggested some guiding parameters for the artists, including size not to exceed the John Bridge statue, no bright illumination, no moving electronic messages, minimal extra pavement around the art piece, maintaining the dignified character of the Common. It would be okay to be original, colorful, and fun, but expressed concern about the nature of what the artists might propose.

Dr. Solet said she had expressed support for the Common at the last presentation. She said the current presentation was additionally convincing.

Ms. Harrington said she agreed that the Common was the best location of the sites mentioned. She expressed her support for a participatory quality to the design to engage and inspire people toward public engagement in our democracy.

Ms. Paris also agreed that the Common was the best of the sites mentioned. She said she appreciated the research that would go into the design process. She favored an interactive and educational design.

Mr. Irving said he could not imagine the art piece anywhere else but the Common. He agreed that a participatory monument would be best and that too much dependence on electronics would be difficult to maintain. He indicated that the artists should be respectful of the context and character of the site.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-128 (continued): 116 Brookline St. and 112 Pacific St. Ledgemoor, LLC, owner.** Consider staff report and make recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property and described the history of the buildings and their recent use by artists. He said the renovation project had already received two certificates of appropriateness and work was nearly complete. The question before the Commission was whether to recommend to the City Council that the property be designated as a Cambridge landmark. He noted that the hearing had been opened three months ago and then continued.

John DiGiovanni of Ledgemoor, LLC read a letter to the Commission with his thanks for the extra time to discuss the proposal with the new tenant. He agreed with the findings in the landmark study that the building contributed positively to the streetscape. Demolition was not an option and the building had been fully renovated. He did not think the architecture rose to the level of a landmark.

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Ms. Harrington said the ownership might change and landmark designation could protect the property in future years.

Mr. DiGiovanni said the property would still be protected by the demolition delay ordinance and that it had already been built out to its full FAR.

Dr. Solet said that the owners had done a beautiful job restoring the building. The building was not just significant for its architecture but also for the diverse history of uses. She noted that without landmark designation alterations would not be subject to review.

Mr. DiGiovanni said that was true of all the buildings on the street. He noted that if the Commission wanted to celebrate the restoration, they could give the architects a preservation award. He was not afraid of historic designation and that he owned properties in the Harvard Square Conservation District but he did not think that this property rose to that level.

Ms. Meyer stated that new zoning for the area could allow higher density on the site.

Mr. Valentine said he saw only straight walls and bricks. What would that do for the community? How would that empower us to live in the vastness in which we have to survive?

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet raised the option of a preservation easement. Mr. Sullivan answered that it was an onerous process to undertake and that landmark designation would be more straightforward. The factory sash and painted signage were the most vulnerable aspects of the building. Mr. DiGiovanni had been an exemplary steward of the building and he did not see landmark designation as an excessive burden.

Mr. Irving agreed. He noted that the energy and passion of the community members who petitioned for the landmark study should be acknowledged.

Ms. Harrington moved to accept the staff report and recommend landmark designation to the City Council. Dr. Solet seconded the motion and asked for clarification that it covered both lots. Mr. Sullivan said that it did. The motion passed 4-0, without further discussion.

**Case L-132 / D-1529: 109 Gore St. Patrick Stern and Lakshmi Balachandra, owners.** Consider whether to initiate a landmark study for the preferably preserved significant building.

Mr. Sullivan noted the property was located in the East Cambridge neighborhood conservation district study area and that the demolition delay imposed by the Commission five months ago would expire in another month.

Ms. Burks reported that she had spoken to the owners and that they had said they leased the house to tenants for a year and had no current plans to proceed with redevelopment. She summarized the history of the property and indicated that it was not in unrecoverable condition. She said that the staff did not consider the property to be a compelling candidate for landmark designation.

A neighbor asked if landmark study could be started in the future if necessary. Ms. Burks replied

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in the affirmative.

Another member of the public said the owners just wanted to knock the building down and make a quick buck.

Dr. Solet asked if the staff had been inside the house to see what original features might remain intact. Mr. Sullivan answered that he had not been inside, but interior features would not be protected by a landmark designation.

Ms. Harrington moved that the Commission take no action at present to initiate a landmark study for the property. Ms. Paris seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the Commission voted in favor of the motion, 4-0.

**Case L-130 / Case 4197: 74 Oxford St. / 43 Wendell St. 74 Oxford St., LLC, owner.** Consider application for certificate to construct addition and exterior renovations for 3-family development.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property. He stated that the project review began in 2018 with a demolition application. In December of 2018 the Commission initiated a landmark study. At that same December hearing, the owner had presented a proposal for preservation of the building, construction of a rear addition, and renovation of the site for four residential units. The owner had asked for and received the Commission's support to the BZA for the necessary relief for that design, but the application to the BZA for parking relief was denied, so the project was redesigned for a total of three units. Mr. Sullivan summarized the history of the Agassiz neighborhood and the 1893 House. Half of the building had been operated as a boarding house. A nearly identical house existed on Walker Street. He noted that a certificate of appropriateness was needed for alteration of the property during the study period. An oversight by the staff had resulted in not catching a building permit application for exterior siding removal. He noted that the failure to get approval was not the developer's fault. The questions before the Commission at present were whether to recommend landmark designation to the City Council and to consider the application for certificate of appropriateness for the design as presented in the plans.

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

Fred Meyer of 83 Hammond Street said that he was moved by the documentation that the house had been a home for many Harvard students as well as city residents. It was striking that the Agassiz neighborhood did not develop for such a long time. When students could not afford to live in the fancy Gold Coast dormitories, they had to live in boarding houses in the neighborhood surrounding the university. This building was one of the last examples of such boarding houses. He indicated that a historic marker would be a good idea.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Sean Hope, attorney for the owner, noted that there had been several public hearings on the project including at the BZA. Any derivation from the approved plans would have to go back before the

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BZA. He noted that the zoning decision would be permanently recorded with the deed. The three units would be sold as condominiums and would have separate owners under a condo agreement, so it was unlikely that the house would be torn down in the future. The design on file was very similar to what was presented to the Commission in December 2018. The landmark designation would not change the quality of the project and that the owner was not opposed to such designation. He did not think that the designation was necessary.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Historical Commission had approved schematic level plans in December and forwarded its support for that design to the BZA. He described the ways in which the property met the criteria for designation of the ordinance. He said designation would be a way to ensure that the details of the restoration were completed in a historically appropriate manner.

Ms. Harrington moved to accept the study report and recommend landmark designation to the City Council. Ms. Paris seconded the motion. There was no further discussion on the motion, which passed 4-0.

Steve Hiserodt of Boyes Watson Architects presented the plans for the application. He said the design had changed very little since December 2018. The number of units had been reduced from four to three because parking relief was not granted, so the site plan had been modified to include only three parking spaces. He said they had reviewed the construction details of the Walker Street house and were incorporating those details into the design.

Ms. Harrington asked if each unit had a total of four stories including the basement. Mr. Hiserodt replied in the affirmative.

Dr. Solet asked why the rear dormer was larger. Why were the dormers asymmetrical? Mr. Hiserodt answered that the rear dormer did not face the street; the new front dormer would match the other existing dormers. Dr. Solet asked why a single window was proposed for the rear dormer--it looked odd. Jess Tones, the project manager for Senne Construction, said they were trying to change the dormer windows, but it would require going back to the BZA. Mr. Hiserodt said it was a drawing error. Mr. Sullivan said the fenestration on that dormer was not visible from a public way.

Ms. Meyer asked if the eaves were deeper in the newer version Mr. Hiserodt answered that it was a difference in the level of detail from the schematic level and at the permit level. He said the goal would be to match the details on the Walker Street house. He noted that the Oxford Street building's exterior had been simplified over time and wrapped in aluminum.

Fred Meyer asked about tree protection. Would the window well kill the roots? Mr. Hiserodt said the well would be almost twenty-four feet away from the tree trunk.

Mr. Irving closed public comment period.

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Mr. Sullivan recommended granting the requested certificate of appropriateness and delegating review and approval of construction details, material samples, windows, etc. to the staff. Dr. Solet so moved. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion passed 4-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

**Case D-1542: 56 Walden St., by Alfred and Carl Accardi, owners, o/b/o Scott Zink, Newmarket Properties. Demolish duplex (1889).**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the history of the site. The parcel was adjacent to the Boston & Maine Railroad tracks. Four buildings were constructed on the original large parcel between 1887 and 1890. Much of this area along the tracks had once been industrial but had recently attracted larger residential development such as the one across Walden Street. This house was constructed by owner Mary Nevins, an Irish immigrant whose prior house on Pemberton Street burned down in 1888. She died in 1900, and her sons sold the house. Mr. Sullivan reported on the subsequent owners and residents of the building. He noted that only a few architectural features remained on the house, including the bracketed entrance and a nice interior stair. He reported that the house could be found significant within the context of the surrounding buildings and the neighborhood's development.

There were no questions of fact about the report or the staff finding of significance Mr. Irving asked for public comments.

Ms. Meyer said she agreed that it was significant within the context of the neighborhood.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period regarding the significance of the building.

Ms. Paris moved to find the house significant for the reasons stated in the staff report and as defined in the ordinance. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. With no further discussion on the motion, the Commission voted 4-0 in favor.

Allison Hammer, the architect, introduced Sean Hope, the attorney, and Scott Zink, the developer. Ms. Hammer showed the proposed plans for the new building. She noted on the site plan a retaining wall next to the tracks. She said that she had noted the preponderance of Mansard-roofed houses in the neighborhood and decided that the new building would reflect that. She said she had been inspired by the history of the area with the herding of cattle through a tunnel under the tracks. She described her design for a house with a masonry base and three stories of wood frame structure above. The house would conform to zoning requirements. She said the front and sides would be softened with landscaping and displayed a perspective rendering.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Dr. Solet said she was concerned by the number of windows so near the train tracks. She asked about the acoustic qualities of the windows. Ms. Hammer said that she had considered the acoustics and the windows would be balanced to the appropriate noise level inside the house. Dr. Solet asked how the

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garage would be accessed. Ms. Hammer said the entrance to the garage would be at an angle and would make use of the existing curb cut. Dr. Solet asked about the basement of the existing house. Ms. Hammer answered that it was not a full basement and was not very deep.

Mr. Irving asked about the building material on the Mansard roof. Ms. Hammer said it would be either fiber cement or an asphalt shingle. Mr. Irving commented that using asphalt would be a disaster because it was such a prominent feature of the building. He suggested looking at metal roofing. Ms. Hammer said that was a good option too.

Steve Bardige of Stearns Street asked how many units would be located in the building. Ms. Hammer answered, four. She said the house would be up to 6,000 square feet. Mr. Bardige asked if renovation and addition to the existing house had been studied. Ms. Hammer answered in the affirmative. She said the ceiling heights of the house were an issue, and the number of changes to the building would drastically change its character.

Ms. Meyer asked how tall the new house would be. Ms. Hammer said that it would not exceed the forty-five-foot height limit of the zoning district. The existing house was probably less than thirty-five feet. She noted that the existing house had no front set back and the new house would have the required ten-foot set back in the front.

Mel Downes of Walden Street asked about the layout of units in the building. Ms. Hammer said there would be flats on the second floor and two-story units on the third and fourth floors. Mr. Downes asked about the height of the store next door. Ms. Hammer said she was unsure of its height. Mr. Downes asked if four parking spaces would be provided. Ms. Hammer answered in the affirmative. She noted that the rear set back would be fifteen or sixteen feet deep.

Ms. Meyer asked about the cut-outs on the top floor. Ms. Hammer said there may be windows there, but that the cut-outs reduced the gross floor area to the allowed total.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Ms. Meyer noted that the larger developments in the neighborhood were located on side streets, not on Walden Street. She said the building would be incongruous to the street context and the neighborhood. The facade looked incomplete and off balance. She was not sure what the Mansard was trying to do. There were too many elements going on and the scale would not fit with the streetscape.

Sean Hope commented that the context of Walden Street with taller mansards existed, but that the site also took into consideration the context of buildings along the railroad tracks, which tended to be larger brick buildings providing a buffer to the neighborhood. He said there was a benefit of going taller so that parking can be located at grade and open space retained in the rear yard.

Ms. Meyer asked if this would be a LEED certified building. Ms. Hammer said the stretch energy

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code required very efficient new construction, and they might not pursue LEED certification.

Dr. Solet said she was impressed. It was a challenging site. She said that while she typically encouraged keeping old buildings, she could see that this building had problems such as no setback, limited parking, and adjacency to the railroad. She said she liked the efficiency of the new design.

Ms. Harrington said she could not understand what was trying to be achieved with the Mansard roof. The design was jarring and out of context for Walden Street.

Ms. Paris said she was having a hard time understanding the new design as well. She noted that the context on the other side of the railroad tracks were two and three-deckers. There were some innovative ideas in the proposal. But modernizing the Mansard made it look boxy. She said it neither fit with historic or modern architectural styles. She said she also did not understand the purpose of the Juliette balconies. Ms. Hammer replied that the balconies provided light and air. She explained her design aesthetic as Critical Regionalism, firmly rooted in Modernism but taking inspiration from history and context. Ms. Paris said that perhaps the development of materials would help the design. Ms. Hammer said that she took great pride in design and wanted it to be beautiful and feel good.

Mr. Sullivan commented that this would be a complicated building to frame and construct. Scott Zink, the developer, indicated that he was also a builder and could figure it out. Mr. Sullivan said he agreed with Ms. Paris that the Juliette balconies were unnecessary, especially since it was a busy street.

Mr. Irving thanked Ms. Hammer for the description of her architectural method and style. It made the design more understandable than references to the cattle and cars. He said the design should embrace modernity; he liked the off-set setbacks of the floors and generally liked what she was trying to do with the design.

Dr. Solet said she was hard to convince, but she had been convinced. She moved to find the existing house not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement building with the condition that the staff be consulted on construction details and materials. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed 4-0.

Preservation Grants

**Case IPG 20-02: 56 Magazine St., by Pentecostal Tabernacle (#4).** Request of \$100,000 for window restoration, doors, and access ramp.

**Case IPG 20-03: 193-199 Auburn St., by Cambridge Zen Center.** Request of \$100,000 for porches and accessibility.

**Case IPG 20-04: 16 Camelia Ave., by Cambridge Health Alliance.** Request for \$43,020 for window trim replacement.

**Case IPG 20-5: 137 Allston St., by St. Augustine's A. O. Church (#2).** Request for \$100,000 for siding replacement and accessibility.

**Case IPG 20-6: 299 Western Ave., by Western Avenue Baptist Church (#4).** Request for \$8,174 for mold remediation.

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Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the applicant properties. At the Pentecostal Tabernacle, the proposal included replacing three pairs of entry doors, none of which were original to the building, replacing the handicap ramp and restoring stained glass windows and storm windows. The total project cost would be \$100,000. The church had spent \$1.5M on the church exterior restoration, \$300,000 of which came from preservation grants. He introduced Dr. Marian Darlington-Hope of the Tabernacle. The Cambridge Zen Center on Auburn Street was a nonprofit with public activities. The grant proposal included restoring the porch to others in the row. The application also included costs for a handicap ramp on the rear and side of the building. He noted that the application was not very specific and reported that he had not had a chance to refine it with them. The Cambridge Health Alliance at 16 Camellia Avenue proposed restoring the wood panels under the windows for a total cost of 43,020. He said he had mixed feelings about this application because they had already started repointing the building in a crude way and the handicap accessibility at the front entry was not well designed. He said he had not spoken to the applicants before Dr. Solet facilitated an introduction. Dr. Solet commented that the Health Alliance did not have adequate finances for proper care of the building. Mr. Sullivan described Saint Augustine's African Orthodox Church at 137 Allston Street. They had received a \$50,000 grant last year, so another grant would have to be matched. The current proposal included stripping the asphalt siding, insulating the walls, and building an accessible entrance on the side of the building. At the Western Avenue Baptist Church, the application was to remediate mold that had started as a result of improper construction by a contractor. Mr. Sullivan made his recommendations as follows: \$100,000 for 56 Magazine St on a matching basis; \$50,000 for the Zen Center outright; \$43,020 outright to the Health Alliance; \$50,000 on a matching basis for St. Augustine's Church and \$4,087 on a matching basis for Western Avenue Baptist. Ms. Paris recused herself from the vote for the Cambridge Health Alliance because she was a member of the board of trustees. Mr. Irving said the windows should have a higher priority at the Pentecostal Tabernacle than the ramp. Dr. Darlington-Hope said that every window in the Tabernacle had been damaged; the church had agreed on a plan and wanted to finish the exterior work now. The doors looked terrible and detracted from the rest of the very good restoration. Ms. Harrington moved to approve the grants as recommended by Mr. Sullivan. Dr. Solet seconded the motion. The votes all passed 4-0 except for IPG 20-4 where the vote was 3-0 with Ms. Paris recused.

Director's Report

Dr. Solet noted the death of her neighbor, Richard Pipes. She remarked on the artificial turf approved at 1 Berkeley Street, saying that she had read bad things about the material. She cautioned against approving it elsewhere. She asked about possible uses for the Cooper-Frost-Austin House and the term "dinacar." Mr. Sullivan described the possible uses and that the term referred to a brand of dining car.

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John Hawkinson said the date on page 2 should read, November 21<sup>st</sup>. He noted that the Harvard Square zoning petition had passed to a second reading on Monday night.

Mr. Sullivan said he needed three volunteers for the East Cambridge study.

Ms. Paris moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed the Attendance List on November 7, 2019**

Jennifer Mathews	208 Lakeview Ave
Cecily Miller	108 Pleasant St
Lillian Hsu	344 Broadway
Peter Valentine	37 Brookline St
Eric Dunn	46 Carver St #2
Gail Willett	72 Chestnut St
Barbara Berenson	39 Karen Rd, Waban
Jenny Rood	105 Gore St
Jacqueline Camenisch	3 Cottage St
John DiGiovanni	50 church St
Charles Fineman	75 Winter St
Mel Downes	360 Concord Ave
Dennis Kerrigan	16 Fifth St
Marian Darlington-Hope	56 Magazine St
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.