

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

December 5, 2019 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: William G. Barry, Jo Solet, *Members*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. He introduced the Commission members and staff. He noted that alternate members could vote on all matters. He dispensed with the consent agenda procedure.

Public Hearing: Harvard Square Conservation District, Study Committee Report
Consider study committee report and make recommendations to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the Study Committee process had begun in 2017 and was tasked to evaluate the operations of the District and to make recommendations for improvements to its goals and guidelines. The study process came about after the Historical Commission's review of the Abbot building project. The District was established in 2000 during a period of intense development. Approximately seventeen people regularly participated at the Study Committee meetings. The final meeting took place on November 20, 2019. The appointed Study Committee members unanimously voted to approve the Preliminary Report and to send it to the Historical Commission and the Planning Board. The Planning Board will meet on December 17th. The report summarizes the areas of the district that were evaluated by the study committee including its operations, boundaries, goals, guidelines and sub-district descriptions. Mr. Sullivan summarized the Study Committee's recommendations to amend the district order, the enabling ordinance (Ch. 2.78, Art. III), and the Harvard Square Overlay District to incorporate the goals and guidelines of the conservation district. He noted that individuals from the study committee began to meet separately about possible zoning amendments and consulted with Patrick Barrett of Central Square. The zoning amendments had been presented by Mr. Barrett to the Study Committee, and there was a consensus of support for them.

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

Ms. Harrington asked what the most unexpected development was during the study. Mr. Sheffield said he had been surprised at how antiquated the zoning language was for Harvard Square. It had been written for the HS Overlay District in the 1980s. The language was focused on cars and traffic but now the focus was on pedestrians and human scale development. Mr. Ferrara said the impact of technology on retail sales, pedestrian accessibility, and architectural lighting were areas he found notable. Mr. Sheffield said the study had identified areas where development could possibly occur. Those were called out in the subdistrict descriptions.

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Mr. Kleespies noted the use of the word “quirky” in the primary goal statement. He said quirky was hard to maintain in these times of high real estate values. He asked if there had been discussion about how to support small businesses and small retail spaces. Mr. Ferrara answered that there had been much discussion on that topic.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the members of the public. There were none, and he opened the meeting to comments.

Suzanne Blier of the Harvard Square Neighborhood Association thanked the Commission for the study report and said she was strongly in support of its recommendations. She said the Neighborhood Association and the Business Association had drafted a zoning petition that was moving through the zoning process. She said it would promote local businesses and maintain existing height limits. The new zoning would exempt small retail spaces from the gross floor area (GFA) calculations. It would remove the parking fund requirements and limit the allowed frontage of banks, financial institutions and cannabis retail.

Marilee Meyer of the Neighborhood Association said she was pleased with the results of the study process. There was enough of a safety measure in the district to protect the historic character of the area. The conservation district and zoning amendments would work well together.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period

Ms. Paris asked Mss. Blier and Meyer if there had been discussion about restricting franchise retail operations Ms. Blier noted that new formula businesses replacing local businesses would have to go to the BZA.

Kyle Sheffield said it had been an enjoyable process. He was impressed at the broad spectrum of representations from the Square. He moved to approve the report as submitted and send it on to the City Council. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 4231: 27 Church St., by 27 Church Street LLC. Replace restaurant windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property and described the history of the site. It once was the site of a fire station. The lintel of the firehouse had been re-used in the existing building, which was first a garage and then a restaurant. The existing front sash had been installed for the Cambridge 1 restaurant.

Frederick Wilkins of Duncan Builders described the proposed change. He distributed a rendering of the proposed overhead-opening windows. The size of the overall window opening would remain the same. The window would fold into the restaurant, not out over the sidewalk. The color would be black. Mr. Sullivan asked if there would be any changes to the windows facing the Burying Ground. Mr. Wilkins said there would be no changes on that elevation at this time, but the owner was looking into it. Mr. Sullivan said it would not be appropriate to have openable window overlooking the cemetery.

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Mr. Sheffield remarked about the profiles of the jam sections; they were quite wide because of the operation of the window. He noted that the existing windows have a thin frame; there would be a loss of glass around the sides of the new windows. Mr. Sheffield said that if the muntins were between the glass it would have a very different look than the existing. Mr. Wilkins said he did not think it would be a problem to get exterior muntins.

Ms. Harrington asked if the awnings would be removed. Mr. Wilkins replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact from the public.

Ms. Blier asked if the layout of the lights would change. They were currently 3 up and 6 across. Mr. Wilkins said they would change to 4 up and 6 across. Mr. Sheffield suggested 4 up and 7 across, for better proportion of the lights.

Ms. Meyer said it was appropriate for the windows to recall the original use of the building as a garage.

Mr. Irving closed public comment.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the application, with details of the window configuration, dimensions of the frame and muntins, and proportions of the lights delegated to staff. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 4232: 169 Spring St., by Dana Sajdi. Construct roof and side additions, alter windows and doors, and replace siding.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted that the property was located in the East Cambridge neighborhood conservation district study area, across the street from the Kennedy School. There were three similar workers cottages in a row.

Bill Boehm, the architect, said that #169 was the smallest of the three houses. It was covered with faux stone and vinyl siding, which he proposed replacing with Boral siding (a poly-ash material). The side addition would allow for a code-compliant stair. Raising the roof 3' would allow more livable space on the second floor. The interior would be fully renovated. The height would still be well below 35 feet.

Dana Sajdi, the owner, said she had bought the house when single, but she had since acquired a very tall husband and the house needed modifications for the two of them to live there comfortably.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the cladding details. Mr. Boehm said he planned to use 8" nickel-gap siding on the main block and 4" nickel-gap on the addition. The colors of light gray and a green/blue would also differentiate the two parts of the house. The trim would be flat and the sills would be 2" deep.

Mr. Kleespies asked about the windows. Mr. Boehm said they would be Kolbe aluminum clad wood windows with a fixed top sash and an awning style bottom sash. The top and bottom sash were intentionally not the same size. The asymmetry of the corner window was also by design, as that corner was key for getting sunlight into the house.

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Mr. Sheffield said that walls within 5' of the property line could not add windows. Mr. Boehm said he thought it was 3', but would look into it. Mr. Sheffield noted that the corner board ran alongside of the window.

Mr. Sullivan noted that houses of this period were framed with 6" x 6" posts in each corner. He asked if the architect had accounted for that post when positioning the corner window. Mr. Boehm said he would investigate.

Ms. Burks read the criteria and three applicable objectives from the review guidelines of the Half Crown-Marsh NCD, which in effect for residential applications in the East Cambridge study area.

Ms. Meyer asked if the proportions of the windows were to change. Mr. Boehm said they would be taller than the existing windows. The front basement windows would remain the same size.

Michael Brandon asked about the proposed gate and fence. Mr. Boehm answered that the existing chain link fence was about 3.5' high. It would be replaced with a horizontal board fence of about the same height. Ms. Burks noted that fences under 4' high were exempted from review per the HCM guidelines.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Ms. Meyer remarked that maintaining the gable profile was positive. She said it was unfortunate to see the exterior modernized to this extent.

Charles Fineman of 75 Winter Street said it was similar to his own house. The corner window would break the pattern of the three workers cottages.

Mr. Irving closed public comment.

Mr. Kleespies said he had no objection to raising the roof, but he was unconvinced that the corner window and unequal sash sizes were appropriate. He said the addition was very functional.

Mr. Ferrara said he thought the new plan typology with the stair to the side could make this type of workers cottage more usable. He commended the architect's planning approach. He did not object to the changes to the windows because there was already a wide variety of window types in the neighborhood. He suggested lowering the eave of the side addition so that it was below the eave of the main house.

Ms. Paris said she would be interested in seeing a sample of the siding. The proposal was overall an improvement over the existing condition.

Mr. Harrington had concerns about the corner window and preferred the existing symmetry of the window layout.

Mr. Sheffield suggested reducing the size of the window casing at the corner. He saw the design reflecting the house evolving and entering a new chapter. It would still stitch into the neighborhood well.

Mr. Sullivan reminded the Commission of the difference in design review goals for an NCD vs. a Historic District. It was like the difference between National Parks and National Forests—preservation vs.

sustainable change.

Mr. Irving noted that the guidelines recommended allowing for architectural diversity. The design was sophisticated and of the 21st century. He agreed with Mr. Sheffield's suggestion for the corner casing and Mr. Ferrara about the eaves. He asked the applicant if she would be willing to consider those changes and continue the hearing. She consented to a continuance.

Ms. Paris moved to approve the design in principle, but to continue the hearing at which time the details of the corner window, siding, and eaves would be considered. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 4233: 101 Rogers St., The Foundry, by City of Cambridge. Complete renovation of building including select demolition, restoration of masonry and window pattern, installation of new entrances and skylights.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the existing conditions. The City Council had designated the property a landmark on the Commission's recommendation. He described modifications to the original design of the building and the history of the factory, its women workers, and later use.

Michael Black, project manager, introduced the architects from Cambridge Seven architects.

Stephanie Greenfield of Cambridge Seven described the collaboration between the city and the redevelopment authority on the project as well as the establishment of the Foundry Consortium to advise on the program of the building. The existing 70,000sf would be reduced to approximately 50,000sf. She reviewed the plans and elevations and described the structural work that was needed. The entrance addition was not original and would be removed. The former furnace enclosure would also be removed. A new three-story, metal clad addition would house two means of egress, an elevator, and the transformer. The floors introduced to the building in the 1980s would be removed. Steel framing would be inserted. The center of the building would be a full-height three-story space, as it had been originally. The front and rear elevations would be restored. Because the building was located mid-block, they wanted to introduce something eye-catching at the entrance to draw people to the building. She showed the design proposal for this entry. It was bright brass and contrasted with the brick building. She described the landscape in front of the building and in the 200' long side yard.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact from commissioners and then from the public.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the metal cladding on the addition. Would it be highly reflective? Ms. Greenfield answered that it would be a bronze or brass tone, powder-coat finish. She said they were still studying the details such as corrugated or perforated panels. Mr. Sheffield noted that it would be very reflective in the late afternoon sun, but since it would be reflecting onto the blank wall of the Verizon building, he did not object.

Ms. Harrington asked how the building would be visible from the corner. Ms. Greenfield said

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they hoped to create something eye-catching at the street corner either with banners or lighting. Ms. Harrington asked if there shouldn't be more ways into and out of the building for the neighborhood. Ms. Greenfield indicated that for the safety and security of the building users, the entries needed to be controlled. There would be additional egress doors, but not more than two entry doors.

Mr. Kleespies asked who would be programming the building. Mr. Black said the city was advertising for an operator.

Mr. Sullivan asked for further description of the entry portal. Ms. Greenfield showed a rendering. The metal might be perforated.

Mr. Downes asked about the basement. Ms. Greenfield said the basement level would be filled in with earth and not used.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment but there was none. He closed the comment period.

Mr. Sheffield noted that his office looked out at the site. It was nice to see a city project engage the rampant development in Kendall Square. He commended the organization of the plan. The metal was a bold choice, but he did not disagree with it yet. He complemented the form of the new entrance canopy. It was an artistic statement and compelling, but it needed further development. He noted that the trees at the front of the building might compete with their desire to make the entrance eye-catching.

Mr. Sullivan informed Ms. Harrington that there would be an historical exhibit inside. Ms. Harrington said she liked the boldness of the entry. It was exciting and would help people find the building.

Mr. Kleespies said he liked to see the evidence of the historic building's evolution over time. The new addition was bold and interesting. He asked about architectural lighting or internal lighting.

Paula Paris noted the residential building next door, introducing housing into what was once an industrial area. Mr. Black said they had been working closely with the developer of that building.

Mr. Irving asked about other studies for the entrance. Ms. Greenfield showed another that was in black metal. Messrs. Irving and Sheffield expressed support for the light-colored entry design.

Ms. Harrington moved to find the design appropriate and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project, delegating to staff the details of the cladding material, landscape design, and entry. She noted that if the design of the entry took a major turn it should come back to the full commission. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 without further discussion.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1543: 60-62 Reed St., by The Marie Claire Maloney Living Trust. Relocate building to the left and remove rear portion of the building (1875).

Mr. Sullivan reported that the applicant had requested a continuance until February.

Michael Brandon of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee asked if public testimony would be taken. He said he had noted errors in the report but would email the corrections to staff. Mr.

Irving said he would wait to take public testimony until after the presentations in February.

Mr. Kleespies moved to grant the requested continuance, with the consent of the applicant to extend the statutory time limit. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case D-1544: 9 Pine St., by Nine Pine Cambridge LLC. Demolish house (1845).

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the history of the house and this part of the Port. She recommended that the building be found significant for its associations with the second phase of development in Cambridgeport in the 1830s and 1840s and for its associations with the Stevenson and Sherman families, both early residents.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact or comments about the significance of the building. There being none, he closed the public comment period.

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the building significant for the reasons stated and as defined in the ordinance. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Sam Azzam, the owner, introduced his builder Scott Kenton. Mr. Azzam passed out photos and an engineer's report about the house's condition. It had been vacant for two years. Parts of the building were open to the weather. He did not see any way the house could be saved; everything inside it was rotted and beyond repair. He reviewed the site plan and elevations of the proposed new building. It would have shingle cladding, flat roofs, and each unit would have its own back yard space.

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

Mr. Downes said the exterior looked stark and plain. Would the building have basements? Mr. Azzam replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Burks asked why the owner had not boarded up the house when he purchased it. Mr. Azzam said there was no need to do so, since the site was fenced.

Mr. Irving commented on the proposed natural wood materials with translucent finishes. He said this type of finish did not last and the houses with it soon looked terrible. He urged the applicant to use a pigmented stain instead. Mr. Kenton agreed.

Ms. Paris commented that off-street parking was beneficial in this neighborhood.

Mr. Kleespies expressed regret that the 175-year old house had been left to rot. Mr. Irving commented that it must have been neglected for many years to get to this point. Mr. Sheffield asked if the owner had reached out to the neighbors. Mr. Azzam said that he had sent copies of the plans to them.

Ms. Paris moved to find the existing building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Mr. Irving seconded. The motion passed 7-0.

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Preservation Grants

Case PG 20-3: 288-290 Washington St., by Just-A-Start. Request of \$10,500 for repairs and windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property. Some windows were already replacement units. He recommended the requested grant of \$10,500 for repairs and replacement of selected windows. Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the grant as described. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the December 2018 and October 2019 minutes. Mr. Kleespies moved to approve both sets of minutes as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Commission had been invited to the Pentecostal Tabernacle service on Sunday at 11:30 and that the church would be presenting the Commission with a community service award. He reported the death of former commission member M. Wyllis Bibbins. His service would be on December 21st.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on December 5, 2019**

Gary Hammer	Harvard Planning Office
Fred Wilkins	105 Springvale Ave, Chelsea 02150
Dana Sajdi	169 Spring St
Bill Boehm	18 Laurel St
Jim Bowles	169 Spring St
Michael Austin	64 Reed St, #1
Charles Fineman	75 Winter St
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Robert Garner	City Hall
Michael Black	City Hall
Eric Grunebaum	98 Montgomery St
Erica Schwarz	255 Main St, 8 th Fl (CRA)
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com
Sam Azzam	1979 Massachusetts Ave.
Scott Kenton	152 Vassal Lane
Mel Downes	360 Concord Ave

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.