

DRAFT Minutes of the Harvard Square Conservation District Study Committee—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED

October 19, 2017 – 14 JFK Street, Cambridge Savings Bank, 3rd Floor - 6:00 P.M.

Appointed Members present: Christopher Angelakis, William Barry, Joseph Ferrara, Christopher Mackin, Jerry Murphy, Jessica Sculley, Kyle Sheffield

Appointed Members absent: none

Additional committee participants present: Jen Deaderick, Raj Dhanda, Gary Hammer, Frank Kramer

City staff present: Charles Sullivan, CHC; Sarah Burks, CHC; Suzannah Bigolin, CDD; Stuart Dash, CDD

Public present: Dan Fraine, Ed Guitton, John Hawkinson, Peter Kroon, Marilee Meyer

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), played a short video of Harvard Square in the 1960s and indicated that he had first experienced the Square at about that time. He explained the purpose of the study. He said appointed members of this study committee were all new rather than appointing the same people from the study completed in 2000. However, he said the city wanted all the constituencies to be represented and participating so everyone who had applied to be on the study committee would be considered as participants and were encouraged to attend and be part of the discussions. Eventually, when the time comes to vote, only the seven appointed members would be able to vote, but otherwise he hoped everyone would be fully engaged in the process.

Introductions were made around the room of all the committee, staff, and additional interested members of the public.

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner at the CHC, gave a short presentation about the Open Meeting Law, civil discourse, and the Conflict of Interest Law. She reminded the appointed members to be sworn in at the City Clerk's office and to send her the related form. She noted that meeting materials would be posted on the study web page (<http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/hscdstudy>). She emphasized that all committee business and discussion needed to take place in the public meeting forum and to avoid *ex parte* discussions.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the agenda and said there would be time for questions from the committee and then the public at the end. He presented the history of historic preservation in the United States and Massachusetts then explained the evolution of the historic preservation tools in Cambridge starting with the architectural inventory, creation of small M.G.L. Ch. 40C historic districts, the introduction of demolition review procedures, and a local ordinance for establishing single property Landmarks and larger Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) by way local ordinance, Ch. 2.78 of the City Code. He described the National Register of Historic Places, how it is used as a planning tool, and to mitigate projects involving state or federal permits, licenses, or funding and what protections it does not provide. He noted that the Harvard Square Kiosk had been nominated to the National Register by the Cambridge Historical Commission and listed in 1978. This had led the MBTA to agree to protect it during the subway extension project and to reinstall it at the end of the project as an adaptively re-used news stand.

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He explained an additional historic preservation instrument: the preservation restriction (or easement) such as the one that protected and restored the storefronts at College House (1430-1440 Mass Ave.)

Mr. Sullivan highlighted eras in Harvard Square's history and noted that periods of intense development were cyclical. In recent memory, there was a lot of development around the time of the completion of the subway extension in the early 1980s then again during the real estate boom of the 1990s. He described the larger projects at Winthrop Square and the Read Block that spawned interest in establishing a district for Harvard Square. The City Council passed an order directing the CHC to study the area for a Ch. 40C historic district. That proposal lost momentum when it was noted that the appeal provision in 40C would allow any preservation non-profit to appeal a decision made in the historic district. The owners and business community dropped support for the historic district due to concerns of appeals by the Harvard Square Defense Fund. The proposal was sent to the City Council where it died. A new NCD study committee was appointed and a proposal put forward to the City Council at the end of 2000. The proposal included guidelines to streamline review of zoning compliant signs and storefront alterations within masonry storefront openings (and with the exception of four intact original or highly significant storefront designs). Paint color is not regulated in NCDs.

Ms. Burks said she would email a brainstorming exercise and asked people to reply with their first impressions of the Square from their first time to visit the Square and how it compared to their experience of the Square today.

The following dates were selected for upcoming meetings:

Thurs. Nov. 16, 2017, 6PM

Sat. Nov. 18, 10AM (walking tour) Note: a weekday time for a repeat tour will be scheduled.

Thurs. Dec. 14, 2017, 6PM

Wed. Jan. 17, 2018, 9AM

Wed. Feb. 14, 2018, 9AM

Wed. Mar. 21, 2018, 9AM

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner