

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

September 7, 2017 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate*

Members absent: Robert Crocker *Member*;

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed the hearing procedures.

Mr. Irving described the consent agenda procedure and suggested that Case 3838 could be a candidate. Audience member Michael Brandon requested a hearing, so that case remained on the agenda.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-121: Harvard Square Kiosk. City of Cambridge, owner. Consider draft landmark designation report and make recommendation to City Council

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and presented the staff report. He noted that while a first draft had been released a week ago, the current version had only been completed the night before. He recommended that the Commission take testimony and then continue the hearing until October 5 so that he could incorporate comments in the final version.

Mr. Sullivan said the kiosk had been built in 1927-28 to replace a solid brick headhouse constructed in 1912. It was designed by the firm of Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore according to a concept originated by MIT professor Charles B. Breed that called for a thin roof and a transparent covering over low brick walls enclosing the stairs leading to the subway platforms. By the 1960s the kiosk had come to symbolize Harvard Square, and in 1978 the Cambridge Historical Commission nominated it to the National Register to ensure that it would be preserved during the construction of the Red Line extension. A design prepared by SOM-Chicago in 1978 and approved by the Cambridge and Massachusetts Historical Commissions incorporated the Out of Town Newsstand as an adaptive reuse. The kiosk was dismantled and returned to service as a newsstand in 1983. Magazine racks filled the former openings to the staircases and the interior was enclosed. All the original perimeter brick masonry and the roof were restored, except that the south elevation was adapted for utilities. [Mr. Sheffield arrived.] The current tenant ~~was is~~ on a month-to-month lease that expires in 2019. The Community Development Department began considering future uses in 2014, and the City Council appropriated significant sums to renovate the kiosk and the plaza. The city retained The Galante Architecture Studio to develop architectural concepts, but design development paused until the future use of the building could be determined. The City Manager appointed a working group to consider this question in June, and had recently issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for an architect to update the kiosk for whatever use the working group decided upon.

Mr. Sullivan continued that the draft designation report identified significant features of the kiosk

and contained goals and guidelines for consideration of future alterations. The protected area would be 10' beyond the drip line of the roof. While the designation would protect the kiosk in its present configuration as a newsstand, the guidelines foresaw that the Commission could allow removal of the magazine racks and related accoutrements of the 1983 adaptive reuse.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

Dr. Solet offered identification of two figures in a photo in the presentation.

Mr. Irving asked why the stairs were different widths. Mr. Sullivan supposed it was because people moved more slowly going downstairs.

Ms. Harrington asked for confirmation that the building as it presently was-is would be the baseline for review. Mr. Sullivan agreed. She observed that the south elevation was unsightly. Mr. Sullivan said it had been modified to accommodate heating and cooling equipment, and certainly could be improved.

Mr. Barry asked about plumbing. Mr. Sullivan said there was water but no drainage. The building sat over an 18" crawlspace above the ceiling of the station below. Provision of drainage would be very difficult, if not impossible.

Mr. Barry asked about documentation for the designer. Mr. Sullivan said that Prof. Breed, a traffic engineer, had been retained by the Harvard Square Businessmen's Association; Blackall, Clapp & Whittemore had been brought in late in the process to translate Breed's concept into a more pleasing design. The plans were signed by the Boston Elevated Railway's chief engineer. A committee headed by Robert S. Peabody had advised the railway on the design of the original kiosk.

Francis Donovan of 42 Irving Street asked if Mr. Sullivan's report had been recorded. John Hawkinson volunteered that he had done so.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place noted that an online petition for landmarking had about 1,300 names. He asked about the Galante rendering. Mr. Sullivan said the rendering simply illustrated what would remain of the structure if all the 1983 alterations were stripped away and replaced by glass. It was not a design that anyone had approved in any way.

Mr. Williamson asked about the vents on the south elevation. Why were they called out? Mr. Sullivan replied that there would be a need for a vent somewhere, and that it might be better there than disturbing original fabric elsewhere. Sheldon Cohen, the owner of Out of Town News, had consulted with him in 1990 about alterations, including the exterior light fixtures, which were designed by Edward Tsoi. The fixtures would be grandfathered in the designation. The magazine racks could stay or be modified, depending on the future use determined by the Working Group; the report would not state a preference.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked when the vents had been installed. Mr. Sullivan said they were part of the 1983 renovation. She asked about installing wire glass like the original; Mr. Sullivan

thought this material was no longer obtainable, and said that the type of replacement glass would be determined by the architect, subject to Commission approval. Ms. Meyer spoke favorably about the exterior lights; said she would accept glass where the stair openings had been; and said that the south elevation should be rebuilt with the brick knee wall if possible.

Mr. Irving said that the hearing was about the designation, not the future design of the kiosk.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Ave. said that the signatures on the online petition should be recorded. A petition he had submitted twenty years ago had not been acted upon. He asked about the clutter of signs. The Harvard Square Conservation District allowed certain signs and storefront improvements automatically. Could the tenant exercise that right? Mr. Sullivan said that if the building were landmarked the stronger provisions would apply. Mr. Brandon asked if the kiosk could be added to the Old Cambridge Historic District or designated individually under Chapter 40C; Mr. Sullivan said that would require a new study process. Mr. Brandon urged that the clutter of signs should be addressed at once.

Caroline James said she believed that a landmark designation would add greater protection. She asked what period in the kiosk's existence would be protected. Mr. Sullivan replied that the designation would apply to the kiosk in its present state; the designation study identified significant features to inform future decision-making about changes. He said the designation would not apply to interior features.

Adam Scofield-Bodt of 55 Seventh Street asked about plans for the building at the expiration of the lease. Mr. Sullivan replied that the working group would advise on that.

Mr. Williamson asked if features such as signs or mechanicals could be excluded from designation. Mr. Sullivan said the study could tag such elements as not significant, but could not exclude them from designation. Mr. Williamson said the guidelines discuss color, but colors were not subject to review. Mr. Sullivan said the Commission could discuss colors and offer advice even if it had no jurisdiction.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission continue the hearing and keep the record open for three weeks so he could update the report.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing until Oct. 5 for the reasons stated by Mr. Sullivan. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Alterations to Designated Properties and Properties Under Study for Designation

Case 3779: 40 Cottage St., by Robin Chase & Roy Russell (continued). Alter front of the house, renovate and construct an addition to the ell, replace foundation, demolish garage.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and stated that a Certificate of Appropriateness was needed for the proposed changes because the property was under study for Landmark designation. He noted that the foliage should be considered ephemeral. Staff members had visited the house to review current conditions.

Levi Tobias, the architect, presented the plans as they had been revised in response to comments made at the last hearing. The addition had been set back 7' from the side of the main house. The eave of the addition was now the same as the east dormer eave and the ridge heights matched. The flush siding on

the street façade appeared original and would be retained, as would clapboards in good condition. The siding on the addition would be a flush Boral cladding, a cementitious material. Existing trim would be repaired and preserved. The roof deck would have a tension-cable railing. The front windows would remain their existing height. The non-original front door and side lights would be replaced. The existing foundation was parged brick; the new one would be parged concrete.

Mr. Barry asked about the rationale for lengthening the windows on the east elevation. Mr. Tobias said that two were presently longer. With the new side door, it would be better to make them all the same. (It was noted that sheet A202 was not up-to-date.)

Dr. Solet asked about the basement window next to the stairs. Mr. Tobias said that would be a fixed sash with tempered glass. Existing basement openings would be retained. She asked about the three types of railings; Mr. Tobias said the wood handrail at the front had been criticized as too strong, so they switched to a traditional metal handrail. He said that the Boral siding came in two profiles, smooth and a lap siding, 2' x 6'. The rear deck would be made of wood. There would be a 2' overhang with no gutters.

Mr. Sheffield said the overhang could be carried over the door. Mr. Tobias said there had been several conversations with neighbors about this topic. The overhang could be lighter, like a brise-soleil (trellis). Mr. Sheffield noted that there were four double-hung windows on the garden room, but elsewhere there were casements. Mr. Tobias said the owners wished to keep the garden free from open casements. Mr. Sheffield suggested a venting casement. The owner preferred to have operable windows.

Mr. Irving opened the hearing to questions of fact.

Charlie Allen of 44 Cottage Street said that if there was a setback greater than 7' the egress door could go out the back of the main block of the house, eliminating the side stair; then the side windows wouldn't need to be lengthened. Mr. Sheffield suggested that the egress could go out the west side through a new opening. Mr. Tobias said that could be part of a Special Permit application if the owner agrees. Mr. Allen questioned the approach to rebuilding the foundation. Mr. Tobias said the foundation would be replaced entirely, working in sections. There would be no driving of sheet piles.

Dave Fenchel of 36 Fairmont Street said the egress door seemed to feature a meeting rail. Mr. Tobias said that intended to look similar to the windows. The 7' setback was intended to clear the pilaster at the rear of the house. Mr. Fenchel said the cable railing did not conform to code; he was not certain whether the front porch needed a railing. Mr. Tobias did not know the height of the porch above grade.

Dr. Solet asked about the deadline for receiving amended drawings. Ms. Burks said it was not unusual for drawings to be tweaked before presentation.

Mr. Barry observed that the garden room could have more glass. There might be too many types of siding. If the front windows were not going to be lengthened there was no point in lengthening the side windows. He recommended moving the side egress door if possible.

Mr. Sullivan said the egress door was the major sticking point for him. He asked Mr. Allen if he

would accept a door on the west elevation, facing his house. Mr. Allen agreed.

Mr. Barry summarized the issues that needed resolution:

- Addition: casings and opening should differ from the main house; provide details of the overhang.
- East elevation: relocate the egress and consider not lengthening the windows.

Dr. Solet added:

- Deck and steps: show materials and details.
- Overhang over front door: show details.
- Provide material samples

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to October 5 in order to obtain clarification of the items listed. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion carried 7-0

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3838: 114 Mt. Auburn St., by Conductor's Building LLC. Install wall and blade sign for second floor tenant, Pure Barre.

Chris Tanner, representing the applicant, described the proposed 23" by 11' and 8" by 2' signs for the second floor tenant, Pure Barre. Ms. Burks noted that these were conforming signs, except that the larger one would be placed above the second floor level. In the Conservation District the Historical Commission had authority to approve this non-conformity. Discussion about the placement and mounting of the sign followed.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the application as requested, on the basis that it was not incongruous to the district. Mr. Sheffield seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Public Hearing - Demolition Review

Case D-1460 (continued): 64 Pearl St., by 64 Pearl Street LLC, c/o Mahmood Firouzbakht. Substantially demolish house (1827).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted that the house had been found significant and preferably preserved in ~~September~~August. The owner has asked for reconsideration.

Jai Singh Khalsa, the architect, said he had been tasked with showing alternative elevation studies in different styles, one of which he presented as their preferred design. He also showed a design for a conforming (10%) addition on the existing house. He said ceiling heights would be minimal on both floors.

Mahmood Firouzbakht, the applicant, said he had spent a considerable time studying the alternatives. He cited his restoration at 147 Prospect Street as evidence that he could tackle hard problems, but he couldn't do the same thing here. The new proposed design responded to commissioners' preference for a more modern design that would fit in the streetscape.

Dr. Solet questioned the rendering of the north dormer, saying that the roof looked nearly flat.

Mr. Barry asked about the proposed materials. Mr. Khalsa said there would be two different exposures of clapboards with a trim board between them, another trim board above the second floor windows, and clapboards in the gables. There would be an open trellis over the front door. The basement

windows would have railings around them.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the width of the dormers. Mr. Khalsa replied that a three-story house didn't have to conform to dormer guidelines. He told Ms. Solet that the eaves would be 6" at the dormer and 1'6" at the main gable.

Mr. Irving opened the hearing to questions.

Michael Brandon asked about the function of the trellis. Mr. Khalsa said it was to signify the location of the front door; it would extend about 2'6".

Ms. Burks told Mr. Brandon that five months remained in the delay period. He observed that the owner could sell and recoup his investment. Mr. Firouzbakht said he would sell the house to anyone willing to move it offsite. Mr. Brandon said the purpose of the delay was to explore alternate outcomes. Mr. Firouzbakht said the building had already been rejected for landmark designation. He had searched for a preservation option for the better part of a year already.

Mr. Williamson spoke about the neighborhood context.

Ms. Harrington said she appreciated the new information presented. Mr. Barry said the design had improved but objected to the traditional gable. Dr. Solet questioned the presence of two windows on one dormer and three in the other and the small eave on the dormer.

Mr. Sullivan interjected that the house had been before the Commission three times since 2008. After a year's delay for a landmark study the Commission had declined to support designation. Last month the Commission suggested that the applicant could return with a more modern design, and he had done that. Given the long history of failed efforts to save the building he recommended that the Commission waive the remainder of the delay.

Ms. Harrington moved to waive the remainder of the delay in the context of the current proposal. Ms. Tobin seconded. Mr. Sheffield abstained, as he had not been present at the previous hearing, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case D-1466: 350 Rindge Ave., by Joseph A. Ferro. Demolish house (1913).

Ms. Burks presented the staff memo and showed slides of the premises.

Mr. Irving asked for comments on the significance of the building.

Michael Brandon asked about a possible connection with former Mayor Danehy and concurred with the staff recommendation. Mr. Williamson hoped the business would continue during construction.

Ms. Tobin moved to find the building significant for the reasons staffed in the memo. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Clifford Boehmer, a principal at Davis Square Architects, introduced project architect Laura Cella-Mowatt and owner Joseph Ferro.

Ms. Cella-Mowatt described the structures on the property. The store would remain during construction of a four-story mixed-use building and then its site would become a parking lot. All setbacks

would be respected, and three curb cuts would be reduced to one. The view of the brickyard house would be enhanced. She referred to a recent Just A Start building adjacent to the west that the firm had designed with a similar language and setbacks. The house was in poor condition and needed a new foundation, windows and siding, as well as a complete interior renovation. It sat in the side setback, which would restrict windows on that side. It was a poor candidate for rehabilitation.

Ms. Cella-Mowatt reviewed the design of the new building and noted that the west bay echoed the gable and bay of 350 Rindge Avenue.

Dr. Solet complimented the design and appreciated that the store would remain.

Mr. Irving opened the meeting to public comment.

James Williamson questioned the front setback. Ms. Cella-Mowatt said it conformed to zoning. Mr. Boehner said it contributed to a pedestrian-friendly environment. Mr. Williamson asked if they had considered multiple buildings; Ms. Cella-Mowatt replied that a single building allowed a more efficient use of the site and a better layout for the store. Nothing could be built on the parking lot in future. Mr. Williamson said the sidewalks in the area were inadequate, and he wasn't sure this was an improvement.

Michael Brandon asked about zoning constraints. Ms. Cella-Mowatt said the zoning allowed 22 units with 10' setbacks and a 45' height limit; it was as-of-right except for FAR. He asked if the required notice was posted on site. Ms. Cella-Mowatt showed a photo of it. Mr. Brandon said the design had not been shown to the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, of which he was clerk. He asked about underground parking and the retention of the laundromat. Could the sidewalk be widened further?

Mr. Boehner noted that the site faced the park. The parking was set back to retain views of the superintendent's house and would be screened. Underground parking would be too costly.

Mr. Sheffield commended the architects but said that the replica of 350 Rindge Avenue at the corner wasn't quite right; multiple gables could be used without so much repetition. He wanted to see the next stage of the design. Mr. Barry agreed that the replication was unnecessary; other cues from the existing design could be used. Ms. Harrington said that part of the building could be set further back. Mr. Irving said the so-so design of 350 Rindge should not be the sole inspiration for the design. Mr. Sheffield agreed that it seemed unnecessary. Dr. Solet spoke in favor of the design, especially the gables.

Mr. Boehner said he understood the comments and would take them to heart.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the Commission find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed design and let the record of the hearing inform the architects as they developed the design. Davis Square Architects had a long track record in producing affordable housing in a first-class manner, and he was confident that they would respond appropriately. A similar approach had been taken with the St. Patrick's replacement.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed de-

sign, with the proviso that the proponents return to share the final design with the Commission. The proponents agreed. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the August 3. Dr. Solet moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn. Ms. Tobin seconded. The motion passed 7-0, and the meeting adjourned at 11:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on September 7, 2017**

Chris Tanner	244 Broadway, Somerville
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street
Adam Schofield-Bodt	55 7 th Street
Monica Wright	95 Thorndike Street
Elizabeth Gambosi	42 Irving Street
Francis Donovan	42 Irving Street
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Avenue
John Hawkinson	
Abie Berkowitz	253½ Broadway
Charlie Allen	44 Cottage Street
David Fenchel	36 Fairmont Street

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.