

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

February 5, 2015 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: William King, *Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Member*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. He made introductions, reviewed hearing procedures, and dispensed with the consent agenda. In the absence of Messrs. King and Bibbins, he designated alternates Berg and Ferrara to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3364 (continued): 16-18 Eliot St., by 16-18 Eliot LLC c/o Charles River Capital. Construct 3-story residential addition above existing 2-story commercial building.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the case had first been heard in December and continued. He showed slides of the building and its surroundings. The building was constructed in the 1980s with an as-of-right design. He recalled that a more ambitious project by Ben Thompson Architects had been abandoned by the property owner. He noted the historic retaining wall behind the property and the abutting properties. He described views of the building from the surrounding public ways.

Peter Quinn, the architect, said the design for the addition and alterations had been revised based on comments from the December meeting. He described the proposed materials and design features, including bike parking at the back, the arched entry, Equitone high density fiber cement (HDFC) panels on the façade, and clapboard-style HDFC and wood texture panels as accents. He noted the addition of angled side bays for views and architectural interest. The aluminum window trim would project and be accentuated in color. In answer to Dr. Solet, he pointed out changes from the first iteration, including recladding the first two stories to be consistent with the addition, using the same slats on the wall around the 1-story wing as were used on the 2nd floor windows to integrate that feature into the design. Dr. Solet noted that the angled bays were not symmetrically placed. Mr. Quinn reviewed the shadow studies and noted that no shadows would reach Winthrop Park.

Mr. Barry asked about the cornice. Mr. Quinn replied that the rectangular cornice would project 16" and be colored on the underside. The material would probably be metal.

Carole Perrault of 9 Dana Street asked if the architects were familiar with the approved plans for the Kennedy School. Mr. Quinn replied in the affirmative and added that the 16-18 Eliot building would also have an arch and would respond well to the Kennedy School. The massing of the building related to the massing of the garage and transitioned down to the lower density part of the block.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the material of the balcony and the ceiling height of the residential units. Mr. Quinn said the balcony would be painted steel or aluminum; the ceilings would be just under 9' high.

Ken Taylor of 23 Berkeley Street asked about side and rear setbacks, ducts on the rear of the existing building, public access to the retaining wall, and the planting plan. Mr. Quinn answered that there was no rear setback requirement; the existing ducts would be removed; the alley to the back would be gated for security; and that no landscape plan had been developed yet, but shade-hardy plants could be planted on the north side.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, Bruce Gorsky, remarked that the back of the building was currently open to trespassers, as John DiGiovanni had described in December. The bike storage would also need security. Mr. Gorsky reported that he had met with the owner of Harvard Historical Tours and offered to provide guides with a key to the gate so they could bring groups to see the retaining wall.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place also asked about public access to the wall. Mr. Rafferty pointed out that the wall was easily viewed from Winthrop Street and Charlie's Kitchen outdoor patio. He said the owner was willing to help to restore the wall and to let tour groups in to view it.

Mr. Barry asked if the metallic sheen to the HDPC panels was intentional. Mr. Quinn said other finishes were available; the intent was to look similar to stone. He passed around the material samples.

Ms. Perrault thanked Mr. Gorsky and Mr. Quinn for meeting with some interested members of the public. She commented that the building was too tall and shouldn't take its cue from the garage's stair tower. The building should harmonize with its context. Why not use brick? The addition of the cornice was helpful, but the human scale of the building wasn't evident. Little in the proposal celebrated the historic context ~~and did not~~ did it harmonize the new with old.

Mr. Williamson commended Mr. Gorsky for his cooperation with other owners to make repairs to the wall. Maybe CPA money could also be used. The cornice line of the garage would be a better reference for height of this building. He suggested a 2-story addition rather than 3.

Ms. Meyer remarked that the building was too high. There were too many different materials. As she understood it, the Ben Thompson design had not been built for monetary reasons, not because the Defense Fund objected to it.

Mr. Taylor suggested brick for the material. He objected to the awnings and colors of the proposed building. He suggested reducing floor-to-floor heights by one foot, lowering the building by 3'.

Costanza Eggers of 47 Porter Road remarked that the windows were large. She commented that the project offered an opportunity for something significant, not just another building like the new one in Davis Square. She asked the Historical Commission if they had identified what they would like to see at development sites in Harvard Square. She said the design plan should be done first and developers could respond to that plan.

Dr. Solet asked about restaurant exhaust fans and whether the wall was landmarked. Mr. Quinn said the fans would be moved to the rooftop. Mr. Sullivan said the wall was not a landmark but to the extent that it was visible from a public way, alterations were subject to commission approval.

Mr. Barry commented on the improvements to the design. He remarked that it was keying into the character and diversity of the square; the lighter color, variety of fenestration, and projecting bays were interesting. The façade was interesting but the faux stone and wood cladding were awkward. The rain screen system should be celebrated as part of the design. The voids were an opportunity; the joints could vary in size. He suggested that the top floor step back and the cornice relate to that of the garage.

Mr. Ferrara said he could appreciate the textures of the current design. He suggested the top floor be lightened. This could be achieved by moving it back. The larger windows on the top story helped to lighten it. He suggested that the corner be pushed back. Brick was not a must as a material, but the materials should have substance.

Mr. Irving said he was struggling with the height and forwardness of the building. He remarked that there was a nice tension between formality and informality and between symmetry and asymmetry in the design. There could be more asymmetry in the design. The material color did not have to be light.

Mr. Sullivan said the proposed material was not inappropriate for Harvard Square but the finish could be better. He recommended bringing a sample that would show the proposed joints. The building's height could be mitigated by setting the top floor back.

Messrs. Barry and Irving and Ms. Harrington provided positive feedback about the diagonal bays. Dr. Solet suggested updating the awnings at the first floor. Ms. Harrington expressed concern about keeping the wood slats on the windows of the 2nd floor.

Mr. Rafferty, on behalf of his client, consented to a continuance.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to March 5. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Sullivan responded to Ms. Eggers' comments about design guidelines. He referred her to the Harvard Square Conservation District and Harvard Square Overlay District goals and design guidelines.

Minutes

Dr. Solet offered corrections to the December 4, 2014 draft minutes on pages 5 (3rd paragraph) and 9 (2nd paragraph). Ms. Burks described the proposed corrections to both the December and January draft minutes offered by Chair King prior to the meeting. Dr. Solet moved to approve both sets of minutes, as corrected. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that Brian Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community Development, had passed away that morning.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 15-2: 367-369 Western Ave., by Just A Start. Request for \$30,000 to strip and reside street facade.

Case PG 15-3: 157-159 Allston St., by Homeowners Rehab, Inc. Request for \$50,000 to repair fire damage and rebuild upper floors.

Case IPG 15-8: 1418 Cambridge St., by First United Presbyterian Church (#4). Request for \$100,000 to provide accessibility.

Case IPG 15-9: 1 Follen St., by Longy School of Music (#2). Request for \$100,000 to restore roof, masonry, windows, and perimeter wall.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of each of the subject properties and described the current conditions, proposed scope of work, and estimated costs. He reported on the available funds and the grants already approved in the current fiscal year (FY15). He recommended approval of grants for 367-369 Western Avenue in the amount of \$30,000, \$50,000 for 157-159 Allston Street, and \$50,000 on a matching basis for 1 Follen Street, subject to available funds in FY15. He added that more discussion was needed with the church at 1418 Cambridge Street before he would be prepared to make a recommendation for that project.

Mr. Irving moved to approve three grants, as outlined by Mr. Sullivan. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on February 5, 2015**

Kenneth Taylor	23 Berkeley St.
Bruce Gorsky	180 Beacon St., #4E, Boston 02116
Peter Quinn	259 Elm St., Somerville 02144
Charles Teague	23 Edmunds St.
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St., #41
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St., #404
Maxwell Solet	15 Berkeley St.

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.