

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 2, 2025 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (870 5108 6376) - 6:00 P.M.

Present (online): Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Paula Paris, *Alternates*

Absent: Liz Lyster, *Member*; Gavin Kleespies and Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

Staff present (online): Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*; Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present (online): See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation pursuant to Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. She explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures and introduced commissioners and staff, noting the arrival of Ms. Zhang. After dispensing with the Consent Agenda, she opened the first hearing.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5006 (amendment): 124 Brattle St., by Gerald & Kate Chertavian. Remove a portion of the fence and construct a ball court/parking pad and basketball hoop.

Mr. Sullivan shared the screen and presented photographs of the property from various vantage points. He noted that the views from the private way were not the jurisdiction of the Historical Commission. He described the public view from Brattle Street.

Gerald Chertavian introduced himself and his wife, Kate Chertavian. He said they had lived on Irving Street since 2000 and recently moved to 124 Brattle Street.

Jay Olmsted, landscape Architect of Olmsted Design, shared the screen. He noted that the 20 foot wide driveway was shared with others on the cul de sac. He described the proposal to place two parking spaces off the shared driveway in the southeast corner of the property. The parking area would be paved with asphalt, with a granite cobble apron and edging. The fence along the south property line would be replaced in the spring after the remainder of tree work on the site was completed. He displayed a rendering of the proposed conditions. He noted the proposed basketball hoop location. He showed photographs of existing conditions at 124 Brattle and the surrounding properties including parking and paving.

Ms. Harrington asked for questions of fact from the commission.

Ms. Paris asked if parking was proposed on the private way. Mr. Olmsted replied in the negative.

Dr. Solet asked if there were other examples of basketball hoops in front yards on Brattle Street. Mr. Olmsted noted that there was a basketball hoop at 122 Brattle Street but it was not visible from Brattle Street. Dr. Solet asked if the proposed basketball hoop could be moved out of view from Brattle Street.

Ms. Harrington asked if there were questions of fact from members of the public.

Joan Miller Kohlberg of 122 Brattle Street asked why someone would need to play basketball in the front yard of the house. She commented that the parking would be in the front yard and the basketball hoop would block views of her house and devalue it.

Mr. Chertavian noted the cobblestone driveway and basketball hoop at 122 Brattle Street.

Ms. Harrington opened the public comment period.

Rosaline Gorin of 114 Brattle Street remarked that the Chertavians had done a beautiful job of renovating the house. She suggested there might be a way to provide more parking along Brown Street and that front yard parking would be inappropriate. She encouraged a continuance and exploration of other parking arrangements.

Elon Kohlberg of 122 Brattle Street said the driveway/play court would destroy the charm of the house. Why was the hedge shown in the rendering. He said there were beautiful trees there that had been removed. He offered to remove the unused basketball hoop at his property. He said his driveway was on the side, not on his front lawn.

Christopher Shachoy of 120 Brattle Street said the view of two cars from Brattle Street would be detrimental to the character of the property and not appropriate to the district.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet said she was surprised by the proposal. Was there precedent of parking in the front yard? She noted a case a few years ago for front yard parking, which was denied. In that case she would have considered a certificate of hardship due to the family having small children and no parking.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the pavement of the proposed driveway would be visible from Brattle Street. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative. The Commission had long discouraged parking in the front yard of houses in the historic district. Mr. Ferrara asked if there is a garage on Brown Street. Mr. Sullivan answered that there is a two-car garage on the Brown Street side of the property.

[Dr. Solet noted that cars parked in the driveway would be visible from the public way.](#)

Ms. Harrington asked if parking was not allowed on the shared driveway. Mr. Olsted replied in the affirmative. There was an easement along the east side of the property for the shared driveway.

Gerald Chertavian stated that Valerie Land Smallwood, his mother-in-law, is a co-owner of the property. She visits frequently and her safety was their highest priority and a reason for requesting the parking spaces. She had lived on Brattle Street much of her life. The garage was not spacious and was almost unworkable. He noted that the other two houses on the cul de sac have parking on their lots.

Mr. Olmsted offered an alternative which would be to keep the fence along the full east side and enter the parking spaces from an opening in the fence on the south side.

Mr. Sullivan said that in his opinion there was sufficient information to find the application for the parking pad, basketball hoop and change to the fence inappropriate. The applicants would be free to develop alternate design options or modify the garage and return to the Commission at a future date.

Dr. Solet moved to deny the application as presented, based on a finding that a parking pad in the front yard and the intrusion of a basketball hoop would be inappropriate. She further noted the precedent of denying front yard parking in the historic district. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

(Ferrara, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Paris, Harrington)

Public Meeting: Determination of Procedure: Alteration to Designated Property

Case 5245: 16 Eliot St., by Charles River Holdings, LLC, owner o/b/o Too Hot, tenant. Install a wall

sign on side wall of stairs to lower-level restaurant.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed photographs of the commercial property.

Eric Zhou, of the Too Hot restaurant, described the proposed sign that would be attached to the side of the stairway leading down to the restaurant entrance. It would be made of Corten steel. He indicated the dimensions of the overall sign board and of the lettering itself.

Ms. Harrington asked if the yellow marks would be illuminated. Mr. Zhou clarified that the yellow in the photograph was just tape, not a part of the design. Only the letters would be lit.

Ms. Paris asked about the brightness of the sign. Mr. Zhou answered that it would be 1000 lumens, or not very bright.

Dr. Solet asked if the letters would be illuminated in red. Mr. Zhou replied in the affirmative. Dr. Solet asked if the steps had a handrail and if there was an accessible entrance to the restaurant. Mr. Zhou indicated that there was a handrail and the main lobby of the building had an elevator.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

Ms. Paris moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for the sign, subject to the ten-day notice procedure and with construction details delegated to CHC staff in consultation with CDD staff. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. (Ferrara, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Paris, Harrington)

Preservation Grants

Case IPG 25-4: 21 Linnaean St., by Historic New England. Carriage shed repairs, accessibility.

Case IPG 25-5: 39 Sixth St., by Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Emergency masonry repairs.

Case IPG 25-6: 5 Longfellow Pk., by Friends Meeting. Replace windows in 1991 addition.

Mr. Sullivan shared the screen and showed photos of the subject properties. He described the condition of the buildings, the scope of proposed work and estimated costs. The carriage shed of the Cooper-Frost-Austin house requires repairs and accessibility improvements. The requested grant was \$100,000, which would be matched for a total project cost of \$200,000. The Sacred Heart church spire burned off years ago and the belfry was capped. The coping stone has been displaced and scaffolding erected to protect the sidewalk. The requested grant is \$5,560 outright and \$25,945 on a matching basis. The Friends Meeting addition (built 1991) has failing insulated windows that need replacement. The request is for a matching grant of \$27,905.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the three grant applications, as presented. Ms. Zhang seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. (Ferrara, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Paris, Harrington)

New Business

Dr. Solet asked for an update on recent violations at 9 Waterhouse Street and 4 Berkeley Street. Mr. Sullivan indicated work was underway at 9 Waterhouse and staff would follow up with the owner of 4 Berkeley St.

Dr. Solet suggested that attendees be on screen and have the ability to share their screens. Most attendees are regulars or are known to the commission.

Ms. Paris said there is already capability in the zoom to allow an attendee to be on screen if the chair grants a request to do so. She noted that only the school committee has all attendees on screen in remote meetings.

Ms. Tobin moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. (Ferrara, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Paris, Harrington) The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, January 2, 2025

John Hawkinson	Citizen of the Universe
Christopher Shachoy	120 Brattle St
Eric Zhou	18 Eliot St
Xin Christine Shangguan	18 Eliot St
Elon Kohlberg	122 Brattle St
Joan Miller-Kohlberg	122 Brattle St
Rosalind Gorin	114 Brattle St
Susan Carter	41 Holden St
Jay Olmsted	Olmsted Design
Gerald Chertavian	124 Brattle St
Kate Chertavian	124 Brattle St

Note: City is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.

Note: See <https://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/permitsApplications/projectplansandstaffreports> for a link to the Zoom meeting recording.