

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

November 13, 2025 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (844 4766 9047) - 6:00 P.M.

Present: Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Members*;
Florrie Darwin, Scott Kyle, *Alternates*

Absent: Liz Lyster, *Vice Chair*; Gavin Kleespies, Joseph Ferrara, Yuting
Zhang, *Members*; Michael Rogove, *Alternate*

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

Public present: 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 that the meeting was scheduled to hear a case continued from the November 6 agenda, due to the late hour. She reviewed the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, dispensed with the consent agenda, and noted that public questions and comments would be combined and limited to three minutes.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5230: 1124 Massachusetts Ave., by Sigma Chi Foundation Inc. Construct 4th floor addition and front roof deck.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and explained that the application was to amend a certificate of appropriateness issued previously to include a new addition to the fourth floor and a roof deck. The original application was for a full renovation and reconstruction of the building with the front exterior details to match the existing. He showed images of the property. He said the side setbacks were minimal, so the primary public view was of the front elevation from Massachusetts Avenue.

Stephen Hiserodt of dhA Architects introduced himself and shared his screen. He presented the elevations and described the proposed new fourth-floor library addition. It would be pushed back from Mass. Avenue with room for the mechanicals at the back and a roof deck at the front. He noted the proposed height would be 45' to the roof. He displayed renderings of the proposed conditions and indicated that the addition would not compete with or detract from the character of the original building.

Ms. Harrington opened the question period for members of the Commission with a question about visibility from Mt. Auburn Street. Mr. Hiserodt said he had taken photos from Mt. Auburn Street, but the existing building was not visible.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen to show the Google street view from Mt. Auburn Street. He said the 2 ½-story house at 11 Mt. Auburn would largely block the view of 1124 Mass Ave.

Ms. Darwin noted the curves of the bay windows on the existing building and asked what led to the decision to square off the addition. Mr. Hiserodt said he had designed a traditional addition as well as the modern one but it looked fussy and busy. Ms. Darwin asked if the addition would be painted the same color as the existing building. Mr. Hiserodt answered that they had not yet proposed colors for either.

Mr. Sheffield asked how tall the fourth story would be, noting that the measurements on the

elevation appeared to be wrong. Mr. Hiserodt answered that the fourth story would be 8'11" tall. Mr. Sheffield asked about the choice of black aluminum storefront system for the front of the addition and the roof deck guardrail. Mr. Hiserodt explained that the new windows would be black aluminum, so he wanted to keep the color the same on like materials. Mr. Sheffield asked if exterior lighting was proposed. Mr. Hiserodt said it would comply with night sky requirements and there would be no fixtures pointing up from the top of the roof.

Ms. Harrington asked how many residents would be in the house and noted that the interior lighting would be evident on the top floor. Mr. Hiserodt said there would be at least four residents. Window shades would be installed which could control the light spill.

Mr. Kyle asked about the location of garbage storage. Mr. Hiserodt answered that it was not finalized but would likely be in the space between buildings, beyond the basement door.

Ms. Harrington opened the public question and comment period, noting that speakers would be limited to three minutes.

Bishop Nawrot of Bloomfield, Conn. introduced himself as one of the developers of 9-11 Mt. Auburn Street. He said that they had been held to a high standard in their project and was surprised that the Commission had approved the demolition of 15 Mt. Auburn Street. He said the mechanical equipment for 1124 Mass. Ave. would be very near their own properties. The addition would not blend in with the historic context of the district. The proposed addition had the look of a layered wedding cake.

Ellen McDonald of Lexington and an owner at 1110 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, said a roof deck was an invitation to dangerous activity at a high-up level. She had witnessed bad behavior at the property such as urinating off the roof. The top floor would be a clubhouse, not a library. She noted a video she had seen posted online indicating that the building was still being used despite being boarded up. She noted that the trash cans were always out front.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked the dimensions of the roof deck. Mr. Hiserodt answered it would be approximately 12' x 15'. Ms. Meyer noted the penthouse at 989 Mass. Ave. with a large roof deck. She said she wished the addition had a more vernacular character.

Tom Gordon of Wilton, Conn. introduced himself as another investor for the project at 9-11 Mt. Auburn Street. The proposed addition to 1124 Mass. Ave. did not belong there. The previous plans had the mechanicals further away from 9-11 Mt. Auburn but the new proposal had the mechanicals just 10' away. He doubted that the space would be used as a library; it would be loud and bright. He noted that his team had maintained the historic character of their restored homes.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period. She asked the director to clarify the guidelines for the Commission's decision. Mr. Sullivan said the Commission had no jurisdiction over use of the building. Its jurisdiction was limited to the exterior appearance of the proposed addition. The appropriateness of the size and shape of the addition could not be a factor in the Commission's decision on the application, but the Commission could consider materials, fenestration, general appearance, and placement of

the addition, deck, and mechanicals. He showed the approved plans from the prior hearing.

Ms. Paris asked about the mechanical equipment. Mr. Hiserodt said it would comply with the noise ordinance and would be located above the habitable spaces of the abutters. He said zoning relief would not be needed.

Ms. Harrington said the addition looked like it had no relation to the existing building and looked like an out-of-place structure placed on the top of the existing building.

Mr. Sheffield noted the example of a fourth story addition at Hotel Veritas, which extended the existing building's design up a story. Mr. Sheffield noted that he could support the logic of a contemporary addition, especially since it was stepped back from the front. The Commission had often approved additions with a contemporary design language as distinct from the original buildings. He recommended that a black anodized cable railing would have less contrast and be less visible.

Mr. Sullivan agreed that the Hotel Veritas example was an idea worth considering.

Mr. Hiserodt noted that his former firm had designed the Hotel Veritas. He said the applicants would agree to a continuance to the next meeting to study alternate ideas.

Ms. Paris moved to continue the hearing to the Commission's December 4 meeting. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed 4-1 in a roll call vote. (Paris, Harrington, Darwin and Kyle in favor; Sheffield opposed).

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and provided an illustrated explanation of the work of the department and the different sections of the director's monthly reports. The Commission expressed appreciation for the work of the staff.

Ms. Darwin moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded and the motion, which passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Paris, Sheffield, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle) The meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks

Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner

Members of the Public Present on November 13, 2025

Stephen Hiserodt	dhA Architects, Brookline, MA
John Hawkinson	Cambridge
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Ellen McDonald	1110 Massachusetts Ave
Stephen McDonald	1130 Massachusetts Ave
Franne Rosenthal	1105 Massachusetts Ave
Sharmil Modi	1124 Massachusetts Ave
David Williams	810 Memorial Dr
Cameron Oliveira	1124 Massachusetts Ave
Lacey McCafferty	108 HMS Bickerton Way, Hingham, MA 02043
Thomas Gordon	25 River Rd, Apt 1205, Wilton, CT
Yun Peng	150 Barton Rd, Wellesley, MA 02481
Bichop Nawrot	16 Seminole Way Bloomfield, CT 06002
Michael Driscoll	9 Orchard Crossing Andover, MA 01810

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