

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 8, 2026 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (830 0612 2206) - 6:00 P.M.

Present: Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Paula Paris, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Florrie Darwin, Scott Kyle, Michael Rogove, *Alternates*

Absent: Liz Lyster, *Vice Chair*; Gavin Kleespies, Joseph Ferrara, Kyle Sheffield, *Members*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*; Eric Hill, *Survey Director*

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 6:05 P.M. She reviewed the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, noting that public questions and comments would be combined and limited to three minutes. She dispensed with the consent agenda procedure.

With regard to Case D-1786: 38-40, 48, 54-56 Banks St., by Lubavitch of Cambridge, Inc., Mr. Sullivan announced that on the advice of counsel, based on the application of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) to the current application, there would be no hearing on the matter.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-149: 84 Magazine St., by Thomas & Martha Sieniewicz, owners. Consider initiation of landmark study of 1867 house.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and summarized the staff report evaluating the 1867 Mansard-style home against the landmark criteria of the ordinance. He explained that the property owners had requested the landmark designation study after a careful multi-year restoration.

Discussion Highlights:

- Staff presented detailed historical context: built by Samuel Leonard, remodeled in 1890 by George Fogerty, served as nurse's residence, restored after 1939 fire.
- Martha Eddison and Tom Seiniewicz, the owners, expressed desire for long-term preservation, citing concerns about future inappropriate alterations or redevelopment. They emphasized restoration as a labor of love.
- Commissioners praised restoration quality; noted public benefit and architectural significance.
- Public comment raised questions about tax benefits and inclusion of backyard playhouse; consensus leaned toward flexibility for the playhouse's future removal.

Ms. Darwin moved to initiate a landmark designation study for entire property. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle), 0 opposed and 1 abstention (Rogoff).

Mr. Sullivan explained that the property would be subject to interim protections for up to one year during the study.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5346: 177 Brattle St., by Red Bird Group LLC. Alter driveway materials.

Mr. Sullivan showed photographs of the existing driveway. The owner was seeking approval to redesign the driveway with pavers and channel drains to address runoff and erosion.

Discussion Highlights:

- Ed Kania, the owner, shared his screen and summarized his application to prevent the frequent wash out of the driveway. He explained the drainage issues and intent to use reclaimed pavers and granite curbing at the front 25-30 feet of the driveway. He described the proposed channel drains that would feed into a new dry well. He shared renderings of the proposed materials.

- Commissioners discussed slope, aesthetics, and material samples; emphasized maintaining historic character.

- There were no members of the public who wished to speak on the matter.

Mr. Kyle moved to approve the application as presented, subject to staff review and approval of construction details and materials. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed in a unanimous roll call vote, 6-0. (Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle, Rogove).

Case 5382: Austin Hall, 1515 Mass. Ave., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Replace platform lifts with enclosed lifts.

Mr. Sullivan introduced the case, provided background on the past approval of the existing lifts, and introduced architect Jonathan Austin.

Discussion Highlights:

- Mr. Austin, presenting for Harvard, explained that the project was to replace two failing retractable platform lifts with enclosed lifts for ADA compliance and better functionality. He detailed maintenance issues with the existing lifts; and described the proposed standardized enclosed lifts with glass and metal panels.

- Commissioners raised concerns about aesthetics, visibility, and material choices; suggested opaque panels, color matching stone, and design refinements.

- Security and weather protection discussed; Harvard agreed to a continuance and to return with revised design options and detailed drawings.

Ms. Darwin moved to continue the hearing to a future advertised date with the understanding that the applicant would return with further design details. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed in a unanimous roll call vote. (Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle, Rogove)

Public Meeting: Preservation Grants

Case IPG 26-7: 42 Brattle Street, by the Cambridge Center for Adult Education. Requesting matching grant of \$25,175 to rebuild access ramp.

Case IPG 26-8: 170 Rindge Avenue, by the Reservoir Church. Requesting matching grant of \$115,200 for masonry and exterior repairs.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of existing conditions and provided background on the problems with the existing CCAE ramp. The church tower and roof were leaking causing masonry and interior damage.

The Commission asked questions and Mr. Sullivan recommended grants of \$25,175 and \$100,000, respectively. The total project for the church was estimated at \$230,000.

Ms. Paris moved to approve both grants, as recommended by the director. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote 6-0. (Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle, Rogove)

Minutes

The Commission considered the draft minutes of November 6, 2025. Mr. Kyle moved to approve the minutes, as submitted. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle, Rogove), 0 opposed, and 1 abstention (Paris).

Director's Report

Mr. Rogove asked about the section of the report tracking requests for determinations of significance and demolition permits. Mr. Sullivan agreed that the two items should not have been presented in the same table.

Ms. Paris asked for an update on the African American Heritage Trail markers project and the Agassiz marker. Mr. Sullivan answered that both were moving ahead. Harvard had drafted a longer narrative history of Quincy Street to replace the blue oval for Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz' house site. Ms. Darwin commented that more information is better than saying nothing by erasure.

Ms. Paris moved to adjourn. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed in a roll call vote 6-0. (Paris, Zhang, Harrington, Darwin, Kyle, Rogove) The meeting adjourned at 7:54 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner

Note: This draft was generated with the assistance of Microsoft Co-Pilot Generative AI and reviewed and edited by CHC staff for accuracy and form.

Members of the Public Present on January 8, 2026

Ed Kania	175-177 Brattle St.
Diane Gray	Harvard Planning & Design
Gene O'Connor	Harvard Law School
Jonathan Austin	Jonathan Austin Architects
Martha Eddison	84 Magazine St.
Thomas Sieniewicz	84 Magazine St.
Paul Toner	24 Newman St.
Elizabeth Foote	29 Surrey St.
Joan Wing	703 Green St.
Lacey McCafferty	108 Bickerton Way
Pam Toulopoulos	694-702 Green St.
Alan Joslin	36 Banks St.
Cecelia Halle	260 Pearl St.
John Hawkinson	Cambridge
James Williamson	Churchill Ave.
Cynthia LaBonte	219 Concord Ave.
John Trumpbour	Ctr for Labor, Harvard Law School
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl.
Stephen Jerome	2 Mt. Auburn St.

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