

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 4, 2026 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (86322301565) - 6:00 P.M.

Present: Chandra Harrington, Chair; Liz Lyster, Vice Chair; Joseph Ferrara, Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Members; Florrie Darwin, Michael Rogove, Alternate Members

Absent: Kyle Sheffield, Yuting Zhang, Members; Scott Kyle, Alternate Member

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 6:06 P.M. She reviewed the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, noting that public questions and comments would be combined and limited to two minutes. She dispensed with the consent agenda procedure.

Public Hearing: Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Designation Proceedings

Wyman Road. Consider a petition of 100+ registered voters requesting the Commission to initiate an NCD designation study for the properties on Wyman Road.

Mr. Sullivan shared slides and described the petition submitted by over 200 voters requesting that the Commission initiate a NCD study for six houses located on Wyman Road, a short private dead-end off Sparks Street near Huron Avenue.

He described the location and context of the properties on the cul-de-sac. The subdivision was developed in 1926 by architect William Doogood and real estate partner George Martin, who subdivided the rear of 85 Sparks Street into six lots. Several of the homes were designed as Georgian/Colonial Revival center entrance forms and two houses (6 and 9 Wyman) had early American/post medieval intersecting gables. Some homes were built on spec (to be marketed and sold after construction) and some were designed to the requirements of specific clients. He went on to explain the study process for NCDs as provided in the ordinance. One key legal limitation was that the ordinance limits jurisdiction only to exterior architectural features visible from a public way. Because Wyman Road is a private way, visibility from streets is limited. Sullivan displayed views from Sparks Street and Huron Avenue showing the extent of public visibility. He concluded the staff presentation and invited the petitioner and Wyman Road property owners to speak.

Liza Oliver of 4 Wyman Road spoke as the Lead Petitioner. She described the development pressures on the 5,000+ sf lots on the street as exhibited by the active redevelopment application for 9 Wyman Road. She said such the development would replace a historically important home with “sardine can” studio units suited to graduate students. She argued that graduate students were not the intended beneficiaries of the multi-family housing ordinance. She highlighted the significance of many former residents of Wyman Road, providing examples such as:

- Harriet Boyd Hawes, pioneering archaeologist (#9)
- e.e. cummings, American poet (#6)

- Sumner Slichter, leading economist (#10)
- Frank Wilcek, theoretical physicist, Nobel Laureate (#4)

She described the architectural and landscape design of the street and argued that it was worthy of historical conservation rather than demolition and construction of concrete boxes. She criticized the staff report for focusing on architecture and ignoring the historical persons documented in the petition. She said there was “no rubric” for the architectural judgment and claimed the city had granted landmark status to properties of far less cultural significance than the Wyman Road residences. Prof. Oliver rejected the Commission’s prior suggestion of commemorating Harriet Boyd Hawes with a marker on the new development, citing news sources about the developer’s work on Greek Cypriot land which was contrary to Hawes’ support of Greek independence.

Ms. Harrington invited other property owners from Wyman Road to speak.

Jay Rosenberg of 10 Wyman Road said he supported the petition. He described the road as a historically cohesive development, built at one time by a single architect/developer, containing historic green space, and had been home to multiple significant residents. He said the proposed development at 9 Wyman threatened every quality of the neighborhood and would have been impossible if an NCD already existed.

Attorney Patrick Barrett spoke on behalf of his clients, the owners of 9 Wyman Road. He spoke in opposition to the petition and supported the staff recommendation to not initiate a NCD study. He repeated the argument that the statute allows regulation only of features visible from a public way; four of six houses on the road had no public visibility. He claimed the petition was centered around one project; the petitioners were reacting to the redevelopment at #9. Zoning concerns such as height and density should be resolved by City Council, not the Historical Commission.

Don Gentile, attorney of Lawson & Weitzen representing petitioners on Wyman Road, spoke in support of the petition and responded to Barrett. Many historic districts include properties visible only minimally and trees should not be counted as permanent screens to visibility. Gentile urged the Commission to act based on preservation criteria, not speculation about future actions of the City Council.

Following questions from commissioners, Chair Harrington opened the floor for public comment, reminding speakers of the 2-minute limit.

Phyllis Simpkins of 249 Huron Avenue said she and neighbors received letters stating demolition at 9 Wyman would occur within two weeks. She claimed that all houses on Wyman Road are visible from Sparks Street, a public way, and therefore jurisdiction exists. She supported the petition and emphasized the development’s neighborhood wide impact.

Jana Odette of 176 Larch Road supported the petition, stating the development would have a “huge” impact on Huron Avenue and that public visibility should not be downplayed.

Jacinda Barbahan of 67 Sparks Street opposed the petition. She favored more housing in West Cambridge and believed the petition was an attempt to block needed development.

David Halperin of 14 Valentine Street opposed the petition. He emphasized that the multifamily zoning was designed to produce more, smaller units and enable inclusionary housing. He highlighted the importance of new affordable units in West Cambridge, which historically has had few.

Carrie Saunders of 9 Ellery Square spoke in favor of the petition and asked jurisdictional questions about NCDs, future development and private ways.

James Zahl of 203 Pemberton Street opposed the petition, recalling that 9 Wyman was previously found not significant. If every old house connected to a notable person was designated a historic property, a huge percentage of Cambridge housing would be frozen.

Linda Kabulian of 23 Highland Street supported the petition. She argued that residents have few tools to oppose zoning-driven redevelopment and that the Council itself was reconsidering aspects of the zoning.

Michael Yogman of 14 Wyman Road said the Historical Commission had been put in an untenable position as the only venue for objections to multifamily zoning. He argued that the Council is likely to amend the ordinance eventually, but by then the Wyman project would be irreversible.

Josh Resnick of 4 Wyman Road supported the petition. He said the slides omitted views of Wyman Road from Sparks Street, arguing that nearly all properties are visible. He urged the Commission to authorize a study to fully understand jurisdiction rather than relying on preliminary interpretations.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Mr. Kleespies acknowledged that neighbors felt deeply frustrated but emphasized that jurisdiction is limited. He noted that buildings on private ways like Kennedy Road were not included in the Old Cambridge Historic District. He concluded that zoning frustration, not historic preservation, was driving the request.

Ms. Darwin expressed interest in the visibility from Sparks Street. Timing should not invalidate the petition. She asked Sullivan if a study began, would the project at 9 Wyman likely proceed before any district could be created. Mr. Sullivan confirmed that was correct.

Mr. Rogove asked about the demolition permit status and whether the NCD petition could delay the project. Mr. Sullivan responded that no action by the Commission at this point could impede issuance of demolition or building permits for 9 Wyman. He added that a NCD study requires City Council approval of a study committee. The process includes administrative and legislative steps and typically takes months or years.

Ms. Lyster said the Commission must focus on whether the neighborhood itself merits an NCD study. Wyman Road is extremely small, mostly out of public view. She expressed discomfort with remarks made about who might live in the new building or how much units would cost. She noted the high value of properties in the neighborhood. She concluded that Wyman Road does not rise to the level requiring a Conservation District study.

Prof. Oliver started to respond but the chair reminded her that it was time for commissioner deliberations. Staff changed her role in the webinar to that of attendee.

Executive Director Charles Sullivan offered his final analysis and recommendation. He shared a view of Wyman Road from Sparks Street. The area of the proposed district is too small to form a coherent NCD. He acknowledged that important figures lived on the road, but NCDs are not created based on famous individuals. Attempting jurisdiction over a private way could expose the City to litigation due to unsettled private way law. The redevelopment dispute belongs in the political arena, not in historic regulation. He recommended that accepting the petition would be inappropriate and ineffective.

Ms. Lyster moved to deny the petition to initiate an NCD study of Wyman Road. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington, Darwin, Rogove).

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Property

Case 5388 (amendment): 17 Berkeley St., by Huien Huang and Hui Gao. Consider revised design for porch and landscape plan.

Charles Sullivan explained that most proposed alterations at 17 Berkeley Street had been approved at a prior hearing. What remained to be considered were changes to the front porch and changes to the landscape plan. The applicant had returned with revised designs.

Architect Brett Loverin made the presentation. The existing front porch is deteriorated, sloped, and the wood is rotting. They propose to demolish and rebuild the porch in the same style, including restoring the second-floor porch. The homeowner's *feng shui* master requested a covered entry. The previous circular projection was replaced by a small 2-foot square projection integrated into the porch. Roller screens may be added later but would be fully retractable. The new landscape plan includes:

- a low brick retaining wall with bluestone cap topped with a wrought iron railing no higher than 18 inches,
- grading adjustments for a level lawn,
- a bluestone walkway and minimal landscaping,
- the driveway and existing walkway would remain in its current location.

Ms. Lyster asked about the porch screening; the applicant reiterated that permanent screens were removed in favor of retractable hidden screens.

Mr. Ferrara asked about materials. Mr. Loverin answered that the center path would be bluestone, the side walkways would be gravel, the driveway would remain asphalt, and the low wall would be brick.

Ms. Harrington opened the public question and comment period.

Maxwell Solet of 15 Berkeley Street complimented the collaborative process they had experienced with the new owners. He asked if there was historical precedent for the walkway to widen near the street. Mr. Loveran said the design was prompted by *feng shui* principles to avoid a straight narrow path toward the entrance. He provided clarification about the iron railing on top of the brick wall and indicated that the new elevator would not extend above the roofline.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked for further clarification about the fence types. She asked if the second-floor porch would be accessed by the door. Mr. Loverin confirmed it would. The railing height would be 36-inches high, the minimum required by code.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Commissioners broadly praised the revised design. Mr. Ferrara expressed interest in narrowing or shaping the walkway slightly to reduce its width relative to the driveway; applicant said they would examine possibilities within *feng shui* constraints.

Ms. Lyster offered a motion to approve an amendment to the certificate of appropriateness for the project, delegating final details to staff. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington, Darwin, Rogove). The chair called for a brief recess then reconvened the meeting.

Preservation Grants

Mr. Sullivan shared slides and presented five grant applications. He noted that approximately \$895,000 remained in the grant budget for the fiscal year. A recent outreach campaign to nonprofits had resulted in new applications. The grants requests ranged from \$33,000 to nearly \$300,000. Sullivan stated that there were sufficient funds to cover the grant proposals. Ms. Paris announced she would recuse herself from voting on the application from First Church Congregational but could vote on the others.

Case IPG 26-11: 49 River St., by Cambridge Zen Center.

- Work: Roof replacement on the 1820 corner house.
- Estimate: \$33,000–\$47,000 for roofing work.

Mr. Sullivan recommended \$40,000 outright, the midpoint of estimates, noting that first-time applicants are eligible for up to \$50,000 outright.

Commissioners asked a few clarifying questions about the roof structure, including an unusual flat area. Sullivan remarked that the roof's shallow pitch was peculiar but original. He recommended approving an outright grant of \$40,000. Mr. Kleespies moved to approve \$40,000 outright. Ms. Lyster seconded. The motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington, Darwin, Rogove).

Case IPG 26-12: 17 Farwell Pl, by Christ Church.

- Work: Repairs to gutters, downspouts, rotted trim, and replacement of deteriorated rear egress structure.
- Estimated project cost: \$72,000–\$102,000.

Mr. Sullivan recommended \$50,000 outright and \$18,500 requiring a match, totaling \$68,500. Commissioners asked about the building's use; Mr. Sullivan noted the first floor contains a second-hand charity shop, but he was unsure about the upper story. Ms. Lyster moved to approve the recommended amount. Mr. Rogove seconded. The motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington, Darwin, Rogove).

Case IPG 26-13: 12 Garden St., by First Church.

- Work: Major structural repairs. The stone belfry is failing; steel bands were installed to keep the structure intact.
- Estimated cost for full belfry reconstruction is \$944,000. Request was \$291,000.

Mr. Sullivan recommended a \$250,000 matching grant to support the first \$500,000 phase. Mr. Kleespies asked whether a large grant was appropriate given the unresolved future of the cockerel weathervane. Mr. Sullivan clarified that the weathervane is in archival storage, the Commission had approved installation of a replica which has not yet been implemented, but the structural work must be done first. Ms. Darwin moved to approve the recommended matching grant of \$250,000. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 5-0-1 in a roll call vote. (Darwin, Harrington, Ferrara, Lyster, Rogove voting in favor; Kleespies abstaining).

Case IPG 26-14: 536 Mass. Ave., by Dance Complex.

- Work: Extensive façade restoration including parapet reconstruction, masonry repair, leaded transom window restoration, and balcony repairs.
- Total project cost: approximately \$2.6 million.

Mr. Sullivan reported the non-profit had raised \$1.75 million, with a shortfall of \$850,000 of the total project estimate. The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority's Forward Fund was prepared to loan \$600,000 if the Historical Commission can contribute \$250,000. He recommended approving a matching grant of \$250,000. Mr. Kleespies moved to approve the matching grant as recommended. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Darwin, Harrington, Ferrara, Lyster, Rogove, Kleespies, Paris)

Case IPG 26-15: 66 Winthrop St., by University Lutheran Church.

- Work: Roof replacement, waterproofing, masonry repairs, failing concrete steps, replacement of primitive handicapped ramp, and window trim repairs.
- Total project cost: \$500,000+

Mr. Sullivan explained the project, type of masonry repairs and that the church had requested a grant of \$100,000. He recommended an outright grant for the first time applicant in the amount of \$50,000 and another \$50,000 on a matching basis. Ms. Paris moved to approve the grant amounts as recommended. Ms. Darwin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Paris, Darwin, Ferrara, Lyster, Rogove, Kleespies)

Director's Report

After the grants, Chair Harrington asked Sullivan for updates. Mr. Sullivan provided additional clarity about the following matters: the Winthrop Square Marker project, which would come before the commission at the next meeting, the Ann Remington Ellery plaque, the Quincy Street marker, and the completed project at 2 Garden Street.

With all business concluded, Gavin Kleespies moved to adjourn. Florie Darwin seconded and the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. Chair Harrington closed the meeting with reminders of upcoming dates: on June 11 (preservation awards) and June 18 (special meeting). The meeting adjourned at 8:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks

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 June 4, 2026

Liza Oliver	4 Wyman Rd
Don Gentile	Lawson & Weitzen
Huien Huang & Hui Gao	17 Berkeley St
Duo Yu	HEXi Architects
Brett Loverin	HEXi Architects
Katherine Merseth	54 Lexington Ave
MICHAEL YOGMAN	14 Wyman Rd
Charleen Jue	11 Hutchinson St
Abby Shuman	87 Chilton St
Timothy Mansfield	108 Lexington Ave
Karen Falb	245 Brattle St
James Zall	203 Pemberton St
Kathleen Murphy	24 Park Ave
Phyllis Simpkins	249 Huron Ave
Jennifer Landgren	235 Huron Ave
Jonathan Greenleaf	1 Royal Ave
Edward Kerslake	102 Appleton St
Yune Kunes	5 Wyman Rd
Jana Odette	176 Larch Rd
Linda Kaboolian	23 Highland St
Robert Laubacher	47 Vassal Ln
Jay Rosenberg	10 Wyman Rd
Wenxin Du	25 Grozier Rd
Y Li	25-27 Grozier Rd
Kate Cleary	83 Larch Rd
Cary Saunders	9 Ellery Sq
Peter Sturges	98 Lexington Ave
Maureen Foley	47 Vassal Ln, #1
Gail Roberts	13 Berkeley St
Luke Smith	8 Sharon Dr
Jack Grainger	34 Hutchinson St
Jody Schindelheim	2 Hutchinson St

Dean Eaton,	87 Chilton St
Patrick Barrett	9 Wyman Rd
Maxwell Solet	15 Berkeley St
Josh Resnick	4 Wyman Rd
Erik Thorkildsen	253 Norfolk St
Jennifer Markell	10 Wyman Rd
David Halperin	14 Valentine St, Unit 3
John Hawkinson	—
Susan Sachs	11 Appleton Rd
Annette LaMond	7 Riedesel Ave
Isabel Hardy	29 Brewster St
Christine Brown	182 Appleton St
Gail Caldwell	89 Larch Rd
Cathie Zusy	202 Hamilton St
James Hutchison	88 Sparks St
Matt Tierney	153 Appleton St
Ender Saricay	155 Middlesex Turnpike,
Jacinda Barbehenn	67 Sparks St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St, 404
Megan George	25 High St
Alexandra Levering	70 Mount Vernon St
Brendan Hickey	54 Concord Ave
Eric von Hippel	72 6th St
Daniel Hidalgo	79 Norfolk St
Gerburg Wulf	4 Buckingham St
Tyler Etzel	
Elizabeth Gilmore	47 Reservoir St
Dean Eaton	87 Chilton St
Janet Lloyd	235 Lexington Ave
Justin Saif	72 Thorndike St
Jon Chen	87 Amory St
Lacey McCafferty	16 Kirkland Rd
Jacqueline Marie Musacchio	4 Shady Ln Framingham MA
Colin Flavin	6 Wyman Rd

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