

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

April 3, 2025 – Hybrid meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (881 1008 9854) and in person at 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Ackermann Room - 6:00 P.M.

Present (online): Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Liz Lyster, Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate*

Absent: Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, *Alternates*

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

Public present (online and in person): See attached list.

This hybrid meeting was held online with remote participation pursuant to Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023 as well as in person at Cambridge City Hall. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform or in person.

With a quorum present, Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. She explained the meeting instructions and public hearing procedures and introduced commissioners and staff. She recommended Case 5273 for consideration as part of the Consent Agenda and explained the procedure.

Case 5273: 91 Brattle St., St. John's Chapel, by Lesley University. Modify south entry for accessible egress.

No one requested to have a full hearing of the case. Ms. Lyster moved to approve the application subject to staff review and approval of construction details. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sheffield and passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Zhang, Solet, Sheffield, Harrington)

Dr. Solet recused herself from participating in the next hearing because she was an abutting property owner. She said doing so could put her neighborhood at a disadvantage if she only had three minutes to speak during public comment. Ms. Burks changed Dr. Solet's Zoom setting from panelist to attendee.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5274: 12 Berkeley St., by 12 Berkeley LLC, Managing member, Edward Mullen. Remove deck and construct addition. Remove garage and construct new carriage house.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and displayed photos of the property in the Old Cambridge Historic District, noting which were views from a public way and which were not. He described the Queen Anne house, one of two homes built for Ernest W. Longfellow, the other being 108 Brattle Street. Twelve Berkeley was built in 1882 and was altered as early as 1889 to designs by Peabody & Stearns for the next owner, Mrs. Freeman Bumstead, a widow who had moved into the home by 1884. Mr. Sullivan pointed out original detailing such as the half timbering in the gable end facing the street, the windows and porches. It was not clear whether the stucco was original or added later over another cladding material. He showed a c. 1890 photograph of the house with the stucco already applied.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, introduced the architect, Frank Shirley.

Mr. Shirley explained that the new owners had a strong appreciation for the house but wanted to make the house suitable for twenty-first century living. The house had not been renovated for about thirty years. The proposed changes included two new windows in the left side of the front elevation, removing the stucco and cladding the house with shingles and clapboards, constructing an addition and an areaway,

and window changes on the west side. The proposed materials included cedar shingles, Accoya wood or Boral painted trim, brick veneer on the foundation of the addition, and half-round aluminum gutters. He described the site plan and the new carriage house that would have two garage doors and a second-floor studio apartment. The architecture of the latter would have the same Queen Anne vocabulary as the house but would be clearly subordinate to the house.

Ms. Harrington called for questions of fact from commissioners and then members of the public.

Mr. Sheffield asked about existing roof and gutter materials. Mr. Shirley said the roofing was asphalt shingle. Mr. Sullivan said the gutter on the front of the house was built-in as part of the cornice. Mr. Shirley said he would recommend a crown molding and a half-round aluminum gutter, a detail he typically uses in his projects. Mr. Sheffield noted that a fiberglass gutter could replicate the original wood gutter profile. Mr. Sheffield asked about the Marvin windows for the addition. Mr. Shirley said they would be insulated windows with putty-glazed muntin profiles. The existing windows could be restored, but it might require an energy code waiver from the commission. He described an iron railing at the new areaway. Mr. Sheffield asked about fences, paving, or other landscape features. Mr. Rafferty said they would submit a landscape plan for a future meeting.

Mr. Shirley told Ms. Lyster that the chimneys would be removed and the new window patterns would match the existing. They would be all wood, not clad, windows.

Mr. Ferrara asked about skylights. Mr. Shirley described where they would be located.

Mr. Sullivan asked if exploratory demo of the stucco had been done to confirm if it was applied later over earlier cladding materials. Mr. Shirley answered that they had not done so yet.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the door to the right of the front porch. Mr. Shirley explained it was a door at grade to enter an elevator. It would remain unchanged.

Ms. Lyster inquired about the size of the addition. Mr. Shirley provided the square footage.

Chair Harrington asked for questions of fact from members of the public.

Shanti Fry of 8 Berkeley Street asked how dust and toxins would be controlled during stucco removal. Mr. Shirley said that the contractor would have to follow safety regulations set by the state.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the basement would be excavated or the house raised. Mr. Shirley replied that the house would not be raised.

Maxwell Solet of 15 Berkeley Street asked what the percentage increase of usable floor area would be. Mr. Shirley said he would be happy to calculate it and send the information. Mr. Solet asked how many dwelling units were proposed. Mr. Shirley answered that there was a single-family home and there would be an apartment above the garage.

Dr. Solet asked the date of the historic photo. Mr. Sullivan said most photos from that collection were from the 1880s and 1890s. Dr. Solet asked if the stucco had been tested for asbestos. Mr.

Shirley said it had not been tested. Dr. Solet asked if they would leave the stucco if it did test positive for asbestos. Mr. Shirley said he would have to speak to his client.

Gail Roberts of 13 Berkeley Street asked if the exterior heat exchanger would be moved, noting that the existing equipment was installed without approval in violation of the district procedures. Mr. Shirley supported that idea. It would be detailed on the landscape plan. Ms. Roberts asked about construction vehicles and a dumpster, noting that both streets were heavily traveled.

Michael Glenmullen, the owner's representative, said they would work with the neighbors to manage construction vehicles.

Maria Tatar of 16 Berkeley Street asked who the owner was and if they would reside in the house. Mr. Rafferty answered that the owner intends to renovate the property for resale. Ms. Tatar asked about the project timeline. Mr. Shirley estimated that construction would start in the fall.

David Hattis of 393 Broadway asked if the proposed FAR would have been allowed under the previous zoning. Mr. Shirley replied in the affirmative.

The chair called for public comment, limited to three minutes.

Ms. Fry said the carriage house would be inconsistent with the other garages on Hastings Avenue and expressed her strong objection.

Ms. Meyer complimented the architect. She said the hearing had been very informative and thorough in discussion about architectural features. She did not support removal of the chimneys.

Mr. Hattis spoke in favor of the project because it would add a dwelling unit to the site.

Dr. Solet was glad the mechanical equipment would be moved to the back. She encouraged testing the stucco. She would like to hear about the test reports.

Ms. Harrington asked if there were letters received on this matter. Ms. Burks replied in the negative and she closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sheffield advocated for western red cedar side wall shingles or mahogany for trim materials. He suggested a fiberglass gutter matching the profile of the wood. The collector boxes should be replicated. Red or zinc-coated copper should be specified where in contact with aluminum. He supported a waiver if needed to restore the historic windows. He suggested repurposing the six windows that would be removed for the addition. He suggested replacing the elevator door with something more in keeping with the historic architecture. He recommended keeping skylights out of sight and keeping the flared belt course by setting back the addition. He suggested keeping or replicating the chimneys. The addition mated nicely with the existing house. He did not object to the proposed carriage house.

Mr. Ferrara concurred. He recommended keeping the integral gutter profile, retention of the chimneys, and a change to the elevator door. He agreed that the carriage house was well designed. It

was fresh but related to the house. More detail was needed about the site plan and landscape. Ms. Lyster also recommended keeping the chimneys. The roofline of the back of the house looked heavy.

Mr. Sullivan recommended a continuance to allow time to develop the details and additional information requested. Mr. Rafferty said the owner was willing to continue the hearing and to sign an extension consent form.

Ms. Lyster moved to continue the hearing to a future advertised meeting of the Commission. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Zhang, Tobin, Sheffield, Harrington)

Ms. Harrington called for a brief recess at 8:32. The meeting reconvened at 8:37. Ms. Burks changed Dr. Solet's Zoom setting back to panelist.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1721: 26 Jay St., by 26 Jay St. LLC c/o Mike Tokatlyan. Demolish 3-decker converted from 1858 house in 1993. Consider revised design for replacement building.

Mr. Sullivan explained the demolition review process. On March 6, 2025 the Commission had found the existing house to be both significant and preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project, thereby delaying demolition for up to a year. The applicant had revised the design and returned to see if the Commission would reconsider its preferably-preserved finding. Commissioners would consider the revised replacement project from the perspective of whether the public interest would be better served by seeking a preservation solution or allowing the new project to go ahead. An historic district level design review would not be necessary.

Evan Stellman of KDI Architecture presented on behalf of his client, Mike Tokatlyan. He shared his screen and showed the revised site plan and elevations for the project. He had made further tweaks to the design since submitting the paper plan sets and asked if he could show the most recent iteration. Mr. Sullivan suggested he show both. Mr. Stellman showed the March plans, April submission, and the latest version. He described each elevation noting that he had simplified the siding patterns and cleaned up the windows. The contemporary styling had been toned down and made more contextual to the neighborhood with the siding and window selections. The front section was two stories and then stepped up to three.

Ms. Harrington asked for questions from the Commission.

Mr. Sheffield asked if the front entry porch could be centered over the door and have a full roof rather than a trellis. Mr. Stellman said he would give that consideration. Mr. Sheffield noted that the color and placement of the siding helped to differentiate the three units. Was that the intent? Mr. Stellman answered affirmatively.

Dr. Solet asked if the materials had different textures. Mr. Stellman answered that they did not. Dr. Solet pointed out that the stair railing was still very modern, though other design elements had been made more traditional.

Ms. Harrington called for questions of fact from the public.

Kathy Richman of 31B Jay Street asked why the rendering showed grass on the adjacent lot. She asked if there was a photo simulation that would show the context of the neighboring buildings. Mr. Stellman said the software program defaulted to green but noted that the area was brick pavement.

Ms. Meyer asked about the walls around the basement windows. Mr. Stellman explained that they needed to be taller because the location was within a flood zone.

Janet Sonenberg of 30 Jay Street asked if 28 Jay Street would remain in place. Mr. Stellman replied in the affirmative. Ms. Sonenberg asked how much bigger the new building would be than the existing. Mr. Stellman said it would be a little less than two times the size.

Juliet Stone of 29B Jay Street asked if the owner had reached out to the neighbors, if he was concerned about sustainability and where the parking would be located. Mr. Tokatlyan said he had not contacted the neighbors but did take the comments from the last meeting and from staff to inform the changes to the design. He said the design had the required amount of open space.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the applicant could describe what the new zoning regulations would allow on the site compared to his proposal. Mr. Tokatlyan said his project was for a three-story building, but he could build four or up to six stories as of right. Mr. Stellman explained that the required setbacks were 5' and six stories were allowed with 20% affordable housing. No parking was required, but three spaces were provided. No maximum or minimum number of units was proscribed. Thirty percent open space was required but some of that could be above-grade space. Mr. Sullivan noted that deliberations concerning the public interest should reflect the fact that the City Council had established housing construction as an important public need in Cambridge.

Ms. Harrington opened the public comment period, with a three-minute limit.

Ms. Meyer commented that the proportions of the design were better. The windows and cornice in the new design were contextual to the street.

Ms. Stone said the proposed building was massive with not a lot of light or open space. The proposal did not show that it would meet the public interest for a community asset.

Mr. Hattis said the city needed more housing of all types. These would be larger units so a family or roommates would desire these units. The new building looked better than the existing.

Ms. Sonenberg said the tone of the Berkeley Street hearing was different from this one and the conversation was more detailed.

Ms. Richman said the new building would add one unit. They would not be affordable, even for middle-income households. The existing house was well maintained and could be updated. The proposal would cut the open space in half. The houses in the neighborhood had been built before the Civil War and were home to workers, Black families, and activists like the former owner, Abby Schirmer.

Brendan Hickey of 54 Concord Avenue said he did not consider the existing building to be significant because it had been so modified from its original design. It would be demolished, either now for a three-story replacement or in twelve months for a six-story replacement.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet asked if green space had been added. Mr. Stellman said it had not, but each unit would have access to the rear yard and each had private open space at the third-floor decks. Mr. Tokatlyan noted that many people no longer want to maintain a grassy lawn and prefer more deck space. Dr. Solet said green space was valuable for families with young children.

Ms. Lyster remarked that the City Council had decided this type of project was wanted for Cambridge. Every building had a developer at some point, unless built by the owner. The revised design fitted better in the neighborhood context than the March design.

Mr. Ferrara said he appreciated the design improvements and massing. The front and side yards could be improved with more green landscaping. Ms. Zhang agreed that the design had been improved. She made some suggestions about fenestration on the right side. Mr. Sheffield suggested the Commission vote on the latest design, as presented to the Commission at the current meeting, with the front porch centered over the door.

Ms. Lyster moved to make a new finding that the existing building was no longer preferably preserved in the context of the revised design proposal as presented. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Sheffield, Harrington)

Dr. Solet asked the staff to post the latest plans on the CHC website.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 25-1: 55 Dana St., by Homeowner's Rehab Inc. Previously approved \$50,000 grant for masonry repairs; requesting an additional \$25,000.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed photos of the brick rowhouse. The eligible homeowner could not afford the cost of the project. Bids had come in at \$105,000.

Dr. Solet moved to approve an increase to the grant by \$25,000. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Sheffield, Harrington)

Minutes

Dr. Solet asked questions and offered corrections to the March 6 minutes. She moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Sheffield, Harrington)

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that the City Council had ordered a further period of study of the Half Crown Marsh NCD to assess the impact of the new multi-family zoning. He described how the amendments had impacted the real estate market and the number of queries he had received about demolition.

Preservation Awards

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of twenty projects nominated for awards. The Commission discussed the projects, asked questions, and settled on the final fifteen winners.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

(Ferrara, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Sheffield, Harrington) The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Present on April 3, 2025**

John Hawkinson	Cambridge
Kathy Richman	31B Jay St.
James Rafferty	Adams & Rafferty
Michael Glenmullen	
Frank Shirley	Frank Shirley Architects
Sue Wyeth	Centerbrook Architects, Centerbrook, CT
Joanne Kossuth	Lesley University
Michael Tokatlyan	26 Jay Street LLC
Evan Stellman	KDI Architecture, Somerville, MA
Janet Sonenberg	30 Jay St.
Shanti Fry	8 Berkeley St.
Alberto	55 Ellery St
Juliet Stone	29B Jay St.
Michele Klopner	29A Jay St.
Sheila Butler	19 Garden St.
Adrian King	602 Broadway, Everett, MA
Gail Roberts	13 Berkeley St.
Betty Saccoccio	55 Otis St.
Dr. Jo Marie Solet	15 Berkeley St.
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St.
Todd Andrews	67 Main Street Centerbrook, CT
jeff Zinsmeyer	8 Berkeley St.
Patrick Magee	877 Cambridge St.
Adam Sonnenschein	19 Berkeley St.
Marc Levy	3 Potter Park #1
Lisa Galvin	30 Jay St Apt 4
Maria Tatar	16 Berkeley St.
Maxwell Solet	15 Berkeley St.
Ashley Leake	28 Jay St.
Michael Rogove	65 Sparks St.
Susan Carter	41 Holden St.
Suzanne Ogden	23 Berkeley St.
David Hattis	393 Broadway
Maggie Dee	1100 Mass. Ave.
Lauren Blum	16 Berkeley St.
Ned Melanson	Allston St.
Justin Saif	Hurley St.
Brendan Hickey	54 Concord Ave.
Aram Harrow	19 Ellsworth Ave.

Note: City is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.

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