

Approved 6/3/10

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

May 6, 2010 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Dr. Jo M. Solet; Mss. Shary Page Berg, Chandra Harrington, and Susannah Barton Tobin; Messrs. M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, and Frank Shirley

Members absent: Messrs. William King, Joseph Ferrara and Bruce Irving

Staff present: Mr. Charles Sullivan, Ms. Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

In the absence of the chair and vice chair, and with a quorum present, Mr. Bibbins, the senior member, called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and introduced the commissioners and staff. He described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases that a member of the public, commission, or staff would recommend for approval per the consent agenda for which it was not necessary to have a full hearing.

Mr. Sullivan advised that the applicants for Cases 2481 and 2490 had requested indefinite continuances, but that the other three cases should each receive a full hearing.

Mr. Crocker moved to grant the requested continuances for the following cases:

Case 2481: 1 Waterhouse St., by Niles Company, Inc. Install sign.

Case 2490: 11A Mt. Auburn St., by The Packard Humanities Institute. Replace windows.

Dr. Solet seconded the motion. Mr. Bibbins designated alternate members Tobin and Berg to vote on all matters, and the motion passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2498: 12 Berkeley St., by Anthony M. Unger. Change exterior paint colors.

Dr. Solet recused herself from voting on the matter because she was an abutter.

Mr. Sullivan described the altered Queen Anne house. The owners had consulted with Susan Maycock of the Commission staff to determine the proposed exterior colors. He explained that the only colors to be changed were on the third floor shingles (Benjamin Moore 1032) and the doors (Benjamin Moore Essex Green). He recommended approving the proposed palette and delegating any further adjustments to the staff.

There were no questions from members of the public about the application. Dr. Solet noted that the current door color was red.

Ms. Berg moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application, as applied, and to delegate the authority to review and approve further adjustments to the staff.

Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0, with Dr. Solet not voting.

Case 2499: 20 Berkeley St., by Peter Rogers. Replace natural slate on mansard roof with synthetic slates.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1856 Mansard house. He noted the concave shape of the early Mansard roof.

Peter Rogers, an owner, explained that the roof was leaking badly and needed to either be patched or completely resurfaced. The flashing also needed to be replaced. He did not know what the cost difference was for

real slate as compared to the proposed faux slate, but it must be substantial. The upper slopes of the mansard would be replaced with a membrane. The slates on the lower slopes of the mansard were badly cracked.

Mr. Rogers told Mr. Bibbins that the dormers were also covered with slate.

Ms. Harrington asked the other members for their professional opinions about synthetic slate. Mr. Shirley answered that he had never used synthetic slate on a Mansard roof, but had on other roof types. It was usually specified only when budget required it. The products did have a synthetic visual quality to them because of their homogeneity of color, size, and texture. He encouraged Mr. Rogers to get a quote for patching the existing slate roof. He noted that leaks were likely caused by problems with the roofing on the upper flatter portions of the roof or by problems with the flashing. It was worth investigating the cost comparisons between real and synthetic slate.

Mr. Sullivan agreed that synthetic slate products had a uniform appearance, but said the recent samples he had seen were more convincing than earlier versions. The Historical Commission had a long practice of encouraging the use of traditional materials in the Old Cambridge Historic District. He reported that he had spoken to the roofing contractor for the job and advised that if the existing slate was in good condition, it could be removed and re-hung. If it were not in good shape, he had recommended using new slates. The existing slates were laid with a narrow exposure, but with no elaborate patterning. He offered to meet on site with the applicant and his roofer.

Dr. Solet suggested filling in areas of damaged slates on the front and sides from the rear face and using new slates on the rear face. She encouraged the owner to seek other options other than the synthetic slate because the old house was very dignified and unlike some others on the street, retained its original roofing.

Mr. Bibbins noted that real slate weathers and changes color over time. The synthetic slate probably would not behave in the same way.

Mr. Rogers pointed out that many other houses on the street were covered with asphalt shingles. Mr. Shirley acknowledged this and agreed that the synthetic slate was better than asphalt in appearance, but said the loss of the slate roof would be regrettable. He said that, with the information available to the Commission at present, there was no compelling reason to approve the application. Mr. Rogers said he did not have time to get more quotes; the proposed treatment would look tidy and fix the leaks. He asked for an up or down vote.

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

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission deny the application on the grounds that the proposed synthetic material was incongruous with the character and context of the building in the historic district.

Mr. Shirley so moved. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case 2500: 1374 Massachusetts Ave., by Cambridge Savings Bank. Replace windows on upper floors.

Mr. Bibbins recused himself because of his position as a incorporator of the bank. He left the table.

Dr. Solet assumed the chair.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1924 bank building. The upper floors had conventional wood windows. He summarized the application to remove them and install new aluminum windows.

Dan Martell of the Cambridge Savings Bank explained that some windows had rotted through and were beyond repair. They were not energy-efficient. The proposed aluminum windows would be maintenance-free.

Larry Wilcox of the Cheviot Corporation described the proposed windows. They would have interior and exterior muntins, clear low-E high performance glass, fixed sash, and true mullions.

Mr. Shirley asked what the energy savings would be per window per year. Mr. Martell said the bank had hired a consultant to figure that out, but did not have those figures.

Mr. Shirley asked how the energy costs would compare to the existing windows with an internal energy panel, which would give the same R value. Mr. Martell did not know.

Mr. Wilcox said the windows warranty was 20 years, but they should last longer than that.

Ms. Harrington asked if the existing windows were original to the building. Mr. Martell said he did not think they were.

Dr. Solet noted that many people were choosing operable windows so that the air did not have to be conditioned in all seasons. Mr. Martell said that would be impracticable for the bank offices because the employees never agreed on having the windows up or down or on a temperature for the office. Mr. Wilcox said sound dampening was another reason the bank wanted to have fixed sash.

The Commission reviewed window details such as muntin profile, color, and reduction in glass area.

Ms. Berg asked if approval would set a bad precedent. Mr. Sullivan answered that the bank was located in the Harvard Square Conservation District (HSCD), not the Old Cambridge Historic District. The HSCD guidelines encouraged the preservation of windows on upper stories, but allowed more flexibility for replacement of materials on the ground floor. He noted, however, that the type of window proposed had long been approved by the National Park Service for commercial properties in the certified rehabilitation tax credit program. The issues regarding their appearance were a metallic finish, changes to the reflectivity of the glass, and the muntin profile. He recommended that the Commission could approve the replacement windows as suitable for a commercial building in the HSCD.

Ms. Berg objected to the muntin details.

Mr. Shirley said the side lights were too narrow to absorb the changes to the dimensions of the window components and loss of glazed area. The elevations were not complete. Mr. Wilcox said the mullion dimensions could be adjusted to compensate for the frame of the replacement windows and eliminate the loss of glazed area.

Ms. Burks asked if the glass could be switched out of the proposed windows when the seal fails or if a whole new window unit would be required. Mr. Wilcox said the glass could be replaced.

Mr. Shirley requested section drawings to better understand the daylight issue and muntin profiles.

Ms. Harrington said that although it was a commercial building, the historic character of the design was very important. The proposed replacements were not sufficiently similar to the existing windows.

Mr. Martell granted permission to continue the hearing and said he could provide further detail.

Ms. Tobin moved to continue the hearing to the next meeting, with the owner's consent. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Preservation Grants

IPG 10-2: Christ the King Presbyterian Church, 99 Prospect Street. Increase grant from \$50,000 to \$57,575 to allow complete replacement of tower roof.

Mr. Bibbins returned to the table and assumed the chair.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the proposed supplemental grant of \$7,575 to cover the additional costs of replacing the roofing on top of the church's tower.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the proposed supplemental grant.

Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Community Preservation Act (CPA): Municipal project recommendations

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the potential municipal projects that were submitted for consideration for CPA funds by city department heads. He said the total expected CPA disbursement for historic preservation was \$955,750 for the next year. He did not ask for a vote on the projects at the present time.

Minutes

Mr. Sullivan said that Mr. King had e-mailed recommended corrections to the minutes.

Ms. Berg noted a change in font size on page 5.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the April minutes, as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on several matters including the resolution of a lawsuit over the Immaculate Conception church building, the Philip Johnson House, Preservation Awards, Prince Hall Monument, and Shady Hill Square.

Ms. Tobin moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Shirley seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 7:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 5/6/10**

Dan Martell 1374 Massachusetts Ave
Larry Wilcox 55 Fourth Ave, Needham Heights 02494

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.