

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

October 29, 2010 - 1991 Massachusetts Avenue - 8:30 A.M.

Members present: William B. King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, *Members*; Shary Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: M. Wyllis Bibbins, Jo Solet, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Properties Under Study for Designation

Case 2445: 1991 Massachusetts Ave., by Saint James's Episcopal Church and Oaktree Development. Meet Met on site to review materials mock-up panel and landscape plan, these items remaining to be approved by the Commission following its conditional approval of the project on July 1, 2010.

The Commission convened inside the church and Chair King called the meeting to order at 8:35 A.M. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review a mockup of building materials and to review the landscape master plan as required by the conditions of the Commission's decision of July 1, 2010 to approve in principle a Certificate of Appropriateness for the mixed use condominium project at St. James's Episcopal Church.

[Mr. Shirley and Mr. Irving and ~~Mr. Shirley~~ arrived].

Mr. Sullivan reported that a new set of drawings had been received.

Ricardo Dumont, architect of Sasaki Associates, reviewed the landscape plan on a PowerPoint presentation. He described the desire to replace the elm trees that once flanked the main entrance of the church, a planted area along Beech Street at the corner of the building, a memorial grove of crabapple trees, stone walks in dark grey paving stones in three sizes, low stone walls and benches, stone carpets at the doors to the parish house, peastone edging along the buildings, trees at the perimeter of the site at the residential units, and the asphalt garage ramp with brick paving extending from the sidewalk to the surface parking spots. He described efforts to enhance the health of the existing pin oaks and the transition point from brick sidewalks to concrete at the end of the new building on Beech Street.

Mr. King asked for questions on the landscape plan, but there were none.

Vinicius Gorgati, architect of Sasaki Associates, described the architectural materials of the new building including the charcoal-colored stone at the base that was a reflection of the charcoal-colored slate on the roof of the church. He described the Nichiha panels on the new building in a warm grey/beige color and copper/brown color, paired with glass and stone.

Mr. King asked for questions on the materials, but there were none. He opened the floor for comments.

Elaine Callahan, speaking on behalf of Jacqueline Kelly, said the linear design of the new building looked like the building at 1779 Massachusetts Avenue. She asked how the Commission could justify approving the new design when it was so similar to another design it hated. She commented that the International Style was antithetical to the historic architecture of the church. There was no harmony in the design of the church and the new building.

Mr. King clarified for the record that the project at 1779 Massachusetts Avenue never came before the Historical Commission. He closed public comment for that part of the presentation and asked for questions or comments from the commission members.

Mr. King asked if the landscaping was still planned in phases. Mr. Dumont replied in the affirmative. The later phase would be on the Porter Square side of the church.

Ms. Berg said she had no problem with the schematic drawing distributed to the Commission by mail and that she looked forward to reviewing the updated construction documents.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the review of the landscaping drawings be delegated to staff and Ms. Berg or that the Commission defer voting on the matter until the November 4 meeting.

John Howard of 8 Cogswell Avenue commented that he liked the proposed trees at the corner of the old sanctuary and the ground cover there, but said he was not pleased with the design of the courtyard. It had no shrubs and was not in the same spirit as Nolen's design. The historic Knights Garden was not being preserved. Ms. Callahan agreed. The new design felt like a grassy yard. It was not the tranquil greenery that Nolen had wanted.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the landscape plan as submitted in the schematic drawings and to delegate approval of the details to the staff and Ms. Berg. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

The Commission moved from the church sanctuary to the exterior of the building, where a mockup of building materials had been placed along Beech Street.

Ivelisse Otero, architect at Sasaki Associates, described the materials and where they would be placed. She noted that the windows would be pushed back a few inches from the wall plane, providing a sense of depth. She described the two different types of Nichiha panels, one of a residential scale facing the neighborhood and another larger size for the street elevations. The intent of the material choices was to provide a background for the historic sanctuary but not to mimic its materials.

Ms. Callahan objected to the brown color of the trim and panels. It was not harmonious with the red, rose, and salmon colors she saw on the historic sanctuary building. She asked how the brown could be characterized as red by the architects.

[Mr. Irving and Ms. Berg left the meeting].

There being no other public comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Ferrara said the manufacturer's finish on the Nichiha panel called "Autumn Brown" was a cooler color and preferable to the painted attempt to match the color.

Mr. Shirley commented that he liked the materials scheme and Autumn Brown Nichiha panel. He viewed the new building in a similar relationship as a cloister to a church. He commented that the dark brown color was a failure, with no complexity or richness. The colors did not have to directly reflect those on the sanctuary building but should be a quiet backdrop to it.

Mr. Sullivan noted that Susan Maycock, of the Commission staff, could resolve slight differences between colors for windows, trim paint, etc. if the Commission approved a general color.

Mr. King agreed that the brown needed improvement. He suggested approving the mockup with the understanding that the brown would be adjusted in consultation with Ms. Maycock.

Mr. Shirley, Ms. Harrington, and Mr. Ferrara indicated that they would like the opportunity to approve the final color selection.

Mr. Ferrara moved to issue the Certificate of Appropriateness, as previously described, based on the mock-up and landscape plan, with the understanding that the brown color choice would return to the Commission for approval and the landscape details would be reviewed by the staff and Ms. Berg per the previous vote. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0 with all remaining commissioners voting (King, Crocker, Harrington, Shirley, and Ferrara).

Mr. Shirley moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Harrington seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:38 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 10/29/10**

John Howard	8 Cogswell Ave
Phil Terzis, Oaktree	129 Mt. Auburn St
Ricardo Dumont	26 Blossom St, Lexington 02421
C. M. Callahan for J. Kelley	of 42 Blake St
Holly Antolini	1991 Mass Ave
Mike Bermier	65 Weber Park, Newton 02458
Jeff Spencer	22 Blake St
Jeff Zinsmeyer	8 Berkeley St
Art Klipfel, Oaktree	129 Mt. Auburn St
Gwen Noyes	129 Mt. Auburn St
Roger Boothe, CDD	344 Broadway

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.