

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

October 7, 2010 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William B. King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and made introductions. He reviewed the agenda items and hearing procedures. He asked members of the public to keep testimony to less than three minutes.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2531 (Amendment): 25 Mt. Auburn St., by BBC Trust, Inc. Amend design for select window openings.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides, reviewed the case history, and distributed an aerial view of the buildings.

Charles Reggio, the owner's representative, distributed new elevation drawings. He described the two window openings that were proposed for a change in design. He said they wanted to match the configuration of windows at the furnace room. The extra space would be infilled with brick.

Dr. Solet pointed out an error on the elevation drawing, where the windows were not all drawn the same.

Mr. King asked for public questions or comments, but there were none.

Mr. Sullivan recommended approval of an amendment to the certificate, subject to staff review of construction details including brick samples and window details.

Dr. Solet so moved. Mr. Irving seconded. The motion passed 7-0.

Case 2601: 10 Concord Ave., by Adams Realty LLC. Remove brick posts and wire fences.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the 1840 house. He described the existing brick posts and woven wire fences, which dated to the 1920s. He said there was nothing very significant about the posts and fences, and recommended approval of their removal.

Mr. King asked for public questions or comments, but there were none.

Mr. Irving moved to grant the certificate, as applied. Mr. Bibbins seconded. The motion passed 7-0.

Case 2603: 1426 Massachusetts Ave., by University Common Real Estate Co. LLP, owner o/b/o CVS, tenant. Alter storefront window bays, including removal of wood sill.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the conditions in a 1983 photograph, prior to the donation of a preservation restriction on the property. The restriction had incorporated a specific design for the storefronts, which was to be carried out as leases expired. The design, based on evidence in a historic view of the building, called for a standard wood and glass storefront system within the granite piers and lintels. The one exception that had been allowed by the Commission was at the Sovereign Bank, which had opened up its storefront and recessed the glazing and the entrance. He explained that CVS had rebuilt their storefront windows without the approved wood sill detail and without first applying to the Historical Commission.

William Starck, the architect, introduced CVS representatives Lisa Osterberg and Jeff Kern. Mr. Starck apologized for not having applied to the Commission before work was completed and explained that they had not been aware of the restriction. He showed photographs of the old glass windows with purple film that could not be

removed. Another piece of glass was broken. The sill had been removed in order to replace the glass. He displayed a rendering of the as-built condition without the sill. He said the single piece of glass established an openness consistent with the Sovereign Bank storefront. CVS was carrying out an initiative to make its urban stores more visible to the street and more inviting. He asked for approval of the as-built condition, without the sill.

Mr. King asked why the historic restriction was not investigated by CVS prior to starting work. Mr. Starck said it was an oversight because the work started out as just interior renovations.

Ms. Harrington asked why two windows were still blocked. Mr. Starck said that the cashiers sat with their backs to those windows, and it was standard practice to screen the cash drawers and behind-counter areas.

Jeff Kern of CVS said they had opened up about 50% of the windows that had been closed before. He apologized for the violation. When they saw that the glass had to be drilled for the sill installation, they thought leaving it off would be an improvement. The glass in all four openings had been replaced with tempered glass. The glass was in the same plane as before.

The Commission discussed the previous approval of changes at the Sovereign Bank, which had been billed as “the bank of the future” by the applicants at the time.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about advertising posters and whether it would be difficult to put the sills back. Mr. Kern said the posters were being eliminated from CVS stores because they had heard from their customers that they were tired of seeing them. The change in design had resulted in an increase in sales.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Starck said the Commission’s design for the storefronts was not exactly like the original. Mr. Sullivan agreed but explained that the design had been carefully planned at the time of the restriction and had been carried out in all the other leased spaces.

Mr. Bibbins spoke in favor of not replacing the sill. The restriction was more restrictive than the guidelines for the Harvard Square Conservation District. Mr. Shirley disagreed. The restriction was carefully constructed. The owner himself had been concerned about CVS’s change to the design. The remedy was easily achievable. All the stores that had glazing in plane with the granite piers had a sill. The sill should be returned. Ms. Harrington agreed. CVS had considered the design from the inside out.

Mr. Irving moved to deny the application for a certificate of appropriateness on the grounds that the modified design does not conform to the provisions set forth in the 1983 preservation restriction for College House. He further moved that the property owner instruct the tenant to remedy the current violation and replace the wood sills, subject to the approval of construction details by the Executive Director. Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed 6-1, with Mr. Bibbins voting in opposition.

Mr. Sullivan complimented the CVS team on removing the posters and opening up the interior arrangement of the store so as not to block off all the windows. The result would be more active and inviting storefronts.

Mr. Kern said the wood sills were still in storage and could be reinstalled.

Dr. Solet suggested using the blocked windows for community displays, as was done at the Cambridge Trust. Mr. Bibbins agreed.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2578 (Amendment): 45 Mt. Auburn St., by George & Janet Demers, o/b/o Daedalus Restaurant, tenant. Amend design of the second floor of the façade.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the exterior alterations approved at the last meeting.

Patrick McDonagh, the contractor, described the amended proposal. The pediment and columns would be removed. Red painted cedar clapboards with a 4" reveal would be installed from the second floor to the top of the parapet. The metal Daedalus logo would be reinstalled on top of the clapboards.

Dr. Solet asked if the electrical wires would be cleaned up. Mr. McDonagh replied in the affirmative.

Mr. King asked for public questions or comments, but there was none.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the amendment, subject to the ten-day notice procedure. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 2621: 14 Concord Ave., by Continental Gardens Trust. Replace sliding windows.

Dr. Solet recused herself because she is an abutting property owner.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the 1963 condominium building, designed by Arthur Brooks, was included in the Old Cambridge Historic District to round out the protected area around Arsenal Square. The building was designed in red brick with aluminum trim. The applicant had originally specified aluminum replacement windows but had been told that only vinyl would qualify for stimulus funds. The white vinyl windows had already been purchased. The building did already have some replacements in white aluminum. The proposed Harvey window would become a standard for each condominium owner to use in the future. About half the windows would be replaced in the first phase. The difference in appearance between the white vinyl and the anodized aluminum was subtle.

Mr. Shirley suggested that the sliding windows presented a hardship because the owner could not install a high quality storm window to achieve energy savings in the same way that an owner of double hung sash windows could do.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a Certificate of Hardship for the reasons given by Mr. Shirley, subject to the ten day notice procedure. Mr. King observed that the alteration would not cause substantial detriment to the public welfare and would be without substantial derogation from the purposes of the district because of the uniqueness of the building. Mr. Irving amended his motion to include this reasoning for granting the certificate of hardship. Mr. King designated alternate member Berg to vote. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Dr. Solet returned to the table.

Preservation Grants

Mr. Sullivan distributed an updated list of all Preservation Grants to date. He reported that the City Council had approved an 80-10-10 split of the Community Preservation Act funds for FY11, with 10% dedicated to historic preservation programs and projects. The available balance for grants was \$355,000. He reviewed the following applications and asked how the Commission wanted to proceed.

PG 11-01: 25 Wendell Street, by Homeowners Rehab, Inc. Mr. Sullivan said that this project had received \$46,750 for aluminum siding removal and exterior restoration at the August meeting. The owner now requested an increase of \$13,499 for window replacement.

PG 11-02: 49-53 Columbia Street, by Homeowners Rehab, Inc. Requesting \$100,000 for masonry, roofing and window restoration. Mr. Sullivan said that this application should be considered a placeholder; additional information would be required.

IPG 11-01: 536 Massachusetts Avenue, by The Dance Complex. Requesting \$51,200 for roof and partial window replacement; total project cost \$102,288.

IPG 11-02: 60 Gore Street, by Cambridge Family & Children's Services. CFCS received \$50,000 outright in FY 10 for a new handicapped ramp. Requesting \$50,000 for roof replacement; total project cost \$115,700.

Mr. Sullivan said that several other projects had been discussed, including Lowell School waterproofing, Cambridge-Ellis School masonry, Mercy Corps carpentry, Mass. Ave. Baptist Church waterproofing, the Immaculate Conception Church exterior, and CCTV future home conversion.

The Commission discussed options to reduce the maximum grant amount, so the available money would go to more projects. Mr. Bibbins remarked that some buildings were more architecturally or historically significant than others. Mr. Irving commented that he would rather vote to support window restoration than replacement.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the buildings at 60 Gore Street and 536 Massachusetts Avenue had active roof leaks. Roofing and waterproofing were a building's first line of defense and should receive priority attention.

Colleen McCray of Cambridge Family and Children's Services explained that the roof leaks in the building were severe. The roofing had been repaired many times and now needed full replacement. Russell Hanson of CFCS said other funders were being sought to provide the matching money.

Mr. Sullivan said the building was a singular example in East Cambridge of a postwar Modern elementary school. It retained the integrity of the architect's original design and met the criteria for the program.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a grant of \$30,000 to CFCS. Mr. Shirley seconded and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Shirley suggested postponing discussion of 25 Wendell Street and 49-53 Columbia Street until more information was available.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a grant of up to \$30,000 for roofing at 536 Massachusetts Avenue. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Commission Policies

Preliminary discussion of amending the Commission's Preservation Restrictions Policy and discussion of a possible new policy for temporary church signs.

Ms. Burks remarked that the draft Preservation Restriction Policy had been largely re-written to reflect current procedures and to provide clarification. Mr. King said there were incorrect citations to the City Code and the fee description was not applicable any more.

Dr. Solet asked how often a restriction is required as a condition of a grant. Mr. Sullivan said it hadn't been required recently, but it should be an option. Many of the buildings getting grants were otherwise protected.

Mr. Irving moved to adopt the August 6, 2010 language as the current Preservation Restriction Policy, subject to Law Department approval. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Regarding the Temporary Sign Policy, Mr. King noted that churches were repeat applicants for temporary signs. The existing policy was very old and not well suited to the kinds of signs that applicants request today. He

suggested that the staff advertise a public hearing on the policy and invite all churches in the Old Cambridge and Harvard Square districts.

Dr. Solet suggested that the churches be sent a questionnaire before advertising the matter as a public hearing. Mr. Bibbins said the Commission did not have to be so solicitous.

Mr. King said he had testified at the Ordinance Committee that a proposal put forward for church signs was inappropriate because it was very specific to one sign at one church.

The Commission reached a consensus to authorize the staff and/or the chair to send out a questionnaire with the existing policy to the churches asking what changes might be needed.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported about 10 Dana Street, which was planning roof and window repairs. It was unnecessary at this time to initiate a landmark study. The board members had been responsive to staff suggestions. Mr. Bibbins suggested nominating the property to the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Sullivan reported on his progress with M.I.T. about rooftop mechanicals at 640 Memorial Drive. The size of the acoustical screening wall had been reduced to half the originally proposed size.

Ms. Harrington suggested sending Jim Shammon a holiday card.

Minutes

Mr. King corrected the recorded vote on page 1 of the September 2 minutes. Mr. Bibbins corrected the date of the Colonial Revival style changes at Christ Church on page 2 of the September 2 minutes.

Dr. Solet corrected the error to her title on page 2 of the August 5 minutes.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the August 5 minutes, as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 4-0, with Messrs. King and Bibbins, Ms. Harrington, and Dr. Solet voting. The others did not vote because they had not been present.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the September 2 minutes, as corrected. Mr. Bibbins seconded. The motion passed 6-0, with Messrs. King, Irving, Bibbins, and Shirley, Dr. Solet, and Ms. Berg voting. The others did not vote because they had not been present.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn, and Mr. Shirley seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 10/7/10**

Charles Reggio	25 Mt. Auburn St
Patrick McDonagh	45.5 Mt. Auburn St
Brendan Hopkins	45.5 Mt. Auburn St
Steve Hebola	1 CVS Dr. Woonsocket, RI 02895
Lisa Osterberg	1 CVS Dr. Woonsocket, RI 02895
William Starck	126 Cove St
Jeff Kern	126 Cove St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Russell Hansen	60 Gore St
Colleen MacRae	60 Gore St

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.