

Approved 11/3/11

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

September 8, 2011, 6:00 P.M. Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Jo Solet, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Members absent: Chandra Harrington, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM and made introductions. He designated alternate member Susannah Tobin to vote on all matters. He reviewed the agenda and noted that there were two items for which requests had been received to withdraw or postpone.

Case 2685 (continued): 0 Garden St., by Christ Church Cambridge. Alterations at sanctuary entrance for accessibility including grade changes, sloped walkways, raised beds, paving, and alterations to doors; install lights.

Ms. Tobin moved to accept the applicant's request to withdraw the application without prejudice. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case 2717 (continued): 1131 Massachusetts Ave./1-5 Remington St., by Veritas at Harvard Square, LLC. Application for Certificate of Hardship for existing transformer, installed previously in violation of Case 1956.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a continuance to Oct. 6. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Mr. King described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were cases which members of the staff, Commission, or the public thought could be approved without a full hearing. The following cases were identified for the consent agenda procedure, and no objections were registered:

Case 2773: 3 Church St., by First Parish in Cambridge. Install temporary banner.

Case 2774: 30 Holyoke St., by the Owl Club. Install wooden fence atop existing brick wall.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve Case 2773 per the consent agenda procedure and to delegate to the staff future approval of similar temporary banners in the same location on the church and using the same hardware. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Mr. King said he would abstain from voting on Case 2774 because of his membership many years prior. Mr. Irving assumed the chair. Dr. Solet moved to approve Case 2774, per the consent agenda procedure and subject to approval of construction details by staff. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Mr. King resumed the chair.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2772: 64 Dudley St., by AA Flori Realty Trust. Construct dwelling; landscape and parking alterations.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the site. The Trotting Park Hotel on Cedar Street had been designated a city landmark in 2000 and this lot on Dudley Street was part of the landmarked property. He briefly described the history of the racecourse and the 1850s subdivision. He suggested the commission consider the context of Dudley Street as well as any impact on the landmark building.

Bill Hubner, the architect, displayed the site plan and context photos. The site was currently paved and used for parking. A previous permit review had designated the lot as parking for 11 cars. The three-story resi-

dence would be approximately 31' high. He compared it to the nearby three-deckers. He described the materials, including bevel siding, broad painted trim, and simulated divided light windows with wood trim.

Mr. King asked the height of the former hotel (39 Cedar Street). Mr. Hubner replied that it was 4-6' taller than the proposed building. The new building would be subsidiary to the old.

Mr. Irving asked about parking. Mr. Hubner answered that there were currently 11 spaces on the site. Two more would be added and designated for the new building.

Ted Regnante, attorney for the applicants, explained that a license for the other two buildings on the commonly-owned property specified that 11 parking spaces be provided.

Mr. Bibbins asked how the parking lot had originally been used. Ms. Burks answered that it had been an extension of McLean Place, an L-shaped private way connecting Cedar and Dudley streets behind the hotel.

Carolyn Magid of 71 Reed Street said she could not remember there being through access from Cedar to Dudley streets through this property. There was a fence there and she could remember it being grassy.

Mr. Regnante said the fence was of recent vintage and would be removed to allow a one way drive from Dudley Street to McLean Place. Mr. Sullivan noted that when the area was subdivided in 1875, McLean Place was an L-shaped way, uninterrupted around the former hotel.

Mr. Hubner said the existing building contained 15 units and the new building would be a two-family. There were not presently enough parking spaces for every unit at 39 Cedar Street. Mr. Regnante explained the zoning applications on file and to be revised.

Michael Brandon of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee (NCSC) asked when the back of the lot had been fenced off and equipment stored there. He asked if the proponents would be willing to continue the hearing so that they could present to the NCSC. Mr. Regnante replied that it was within the last five years. He would be willing to continue the hearing.

Mr. King said a significant amount of time had been spent on the matter already and he would rather not continue the hearing. He opened the floor to public comment.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place was concerned about the impact of the larger developments. The physical aspects of the neighborhood's history were at risk. Ms. Wasilewski agreed. Large developments were threatening historic buildings. The broader issues should be addressed.

Mr. King noted that this was not a demolition case. He was pleased to see that the new building was of similar scale to the old buildings in the neighborhood and not taller.

Mr. Brandon said the openness around the landmark building was an important part of the context. He asked for a continuance to allow NCSC to explore the issues.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Regnante requested a continuance to the Commission's November 3 meeting.

Mr. Irving said the applicants had a good project. The proposal made sense.

Mr. Irving moved to accept the applicant's request to continue to November 3. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-100: Kendall Square Building, 238 Main St. (1917, William Mowll, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Case L-101: J. L. Hammett Building, 264 Main St., a.k.a. 290 Main St. (1915, Densmore & LeClear, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Case L-102: Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main St., (1920, John Spofford, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Mr. King said he would forego an explanation of the landmark designation process because the MIT Investment Management Co. and the attorney representing 45 Fayerweather Street were familiar with the procedure.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the buildings and their context in Kendall Square. He noted that the Commissioners had viewed the buildings in July. He described the industrial past of the area, changes in transportation, and the area's redevelopment in recent years. He explained that the MIT Investment Management Co. (MITIMCO) proposed to demolish the Suffolk Engraving Building (a.k.a. MIT Press Building) in conjunction with a large redevelopment project. He noted that city staff had been discussing the proposal with MITIMCO for over a year. The city had hired Goody Clancy to act as a consultant on the matter.

Steve Marsh, MITIMCO Managing Director, explained the goals of the proposal and the overall plan to advance important research issues of the day. Kendall Square needed to evolve. The physical infrastructure needed to be conducive to social interaction with the MIT community. The Institute needed a gateway and improved wayfinding.

Michael Owu, a MITIMCO staff member, noted that the proposal would enliven the area and provide retail amenities. He explained the goals of the project.

David Manfredi of Elkus Manfredi Architects reviewed the urban design goals of the re-zoning proposal. The project would splice the commercial area of Main Street and the Infinite Corridor. He described the proposed new building on the Suffolk Engraving Building site with retail on the first floor and science labs above, and the proposed plaza between the buildings. The first 20' of the Hammett building would be retained and a new building inserted behind. The Kendall Square Building would be unaffected. He described alternatives to the preferred proposal, including an "infill only" option, which would keep all three buildings. The "courtyard" option would maintain all of the Hammett Building and demolish the Suffolk Engraving Building. It would mean the loss of 40,000 square feet of retail space from the project.

Mr. Owu said that MITIMCO was trying to balance competing needs but might not be able to satisfy everyone. The zoning petition had been filed in April and they wanted a timely resolution.

Dr. Solet asked if MITIMCO had seen Mr. Sullivan's presentation before. Mr. Marsh replied that they had seen parts of it. They appreciated the historic nature of the buildings, but there would likely be trade offs.

Mr. King said many people and boards would be involved with the planning process and the CHC should be among them. The Commission's participation would be more useful now, rather than later in the process when momentum would be strong in only one direction.

Ms. Wasilewski agreed with Mr. Sullivan that the three buildings together made a strong statement and that if one were to go, the streetscape would unravel.

Mr. Williamson supported a study. He noted that Noam Chomsky once occupied the Hammett Building.

Mr. Owu said that MIT had worked collaboratively with the Commission without needing the landmark process to do so. Mr. Sullivan agreed that the CHC and the Institute had worked well on a number of projects. He asserted that the Kendall Square project was a high-stakes situation and the Commission should be involved sooner rather than later. The buildings could still be altered in appropriate ways. The Novartis conversion of the NECCO building was an example of how that type of building could be successfully adapted for science labs.

Mr. Irving moved to initiate a landmark study. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. King called for a recess at 8:30 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 8:40 P.M.

Case L-103: 45 Fayerweather St., (1940, Walter Bogner, architect), owned by Sigmund E. Herzstein, Jr., Tr. of the Fayerweather Trust.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the house designed by architect Walter Bogner for mathematician Garrett Birkhoff and his wife Ruth in 1940. The foundations of an earlier house had been incorporated into the landscaping. Bogner was a Harvard graduate and professor who bridged the Beaux Arts and modernist eras at the GSD. The house was substantially intact, except for the replacement of the original steel casements with aluminum windows several years ago. He had learned that the property was about to go on the market and that an abutter was said to be interested in razing it. Several modern houses had been torn down in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood. The Commission could wait for a demolition application, but they would risk the house being altered inappropriately. Alterations might include enlarging the windows, constructing an extra story above, or building out the back. He noted the Commission's lack of success in protecting modern buildings. This house appears to have been soundly constructed and built to last. He recommended initiating a landmark study.

James Rafferty, speaking on behalf of Steven Koster, the successor trustee for the Fayerweather Trust, explained that Mrs. Herzstein, a co-trustee, had passed away recently. A landmark study would complicate the appraisal and marketing of the house. This type of home would not appeal to speculative developers; it was already protected by the demolition delay ordinance. He asked if the Commission would consider deferring initiation of a study. The trustee would commit to not making any alterations, disclosing the CHC's interest in the property to any potential buyer, and notifying the CHC at the time of conveyance.

Dr. Solet asked about the advantage to deferring the study. Mr. Rafferty said it would be in valuing the property for estate purposes and for sale. He had suggested a preservation restriction on the property.

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

Mr. King noted that a letter from Monique Spalding of 15 Gurney Street supported a landmark study.

Mr. Irving said an advantage of deferring the study would be to delay the limited protection period. The Commission could wait until the time of conveyance.

Dr. Solet suggested presenting the study and the significance of the house to potential buyers as a positive instead of a negative. A future owner could offer a preservation restriction and possibly achieve tax benefits.

Mr. Bibbins moved to initiate a study. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1236: 11 Brookford St., by Jean Reynolds o/b/o Emery Homes. Demolish 2-family residence (1894).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo. The neighborhood was farmed until after the Civil War, when the Henderson family developed it. The area became more desirable when the Massachusetts Avenue horsecars were electrified about 1890. The house at 11 Brookford was built in 1894. It was purchased by Joseph Coutier, a waiter and chef of French-Canadian background. The house was expanded in 1905 and again in 1921. The developer proposed to demolish the house and build a new two-family house.

Kevin Emery, a co-owner, explained that the house was non-conforming. Any addition of 10% or more would require a variance or special permit. He had spoken with the neighbors and met with the NCSC. He reviewed the design, which was similar to the other double houses he had built in North Cambridge, but modified to fit the zoning requirements. Details such as door design were open to change, as long as ~~it did not trigger~~ they did not trigger the need for zoning relief. The existing house was approximately 24' wide and the proposed would vary between 17' and 20'. The curb cut and driveway would remain in the same location.

Mr. Emery told Carolyn Mieth of 15 Brookford Street that the plans had not been reviewed by ISD.

Richard Clarey of 15 Brookford Street asked if the proponents had presented to the Conservation Commission. Mr. Emery said the property did not fall in the flood plain, so it was not subject to ConCom jurisdiction. Mr. McCray thought the flood plain extended further. Mr. Clarey said his house next door was in the flood plain.

Bill Reynolds, the son of the previous owners, said there was never a drop of water in the basement of the house. The house was sinking in the middle, which he attributed to the MBTA vibrations.

Dr. Solet asked if more of the lot would be paved. Amon Fee, a co-owner, answered that less of the lot would be covered because the garage would be demolished.

Ms. Burks asked for a height comparison. Mr. Fee said the existing house was about 27' high and the proposed house was about 34' high. The houses he built on Harvey Street were approximately 31' high.

Mr. McCray asked about the condition of the house. Mr. Emery said it could be restored.

Mr. Clarey said the proposed plan was not zoning-compliant because the lot narrowed to less than 50' wide at the back and was in the FEMA 100-year flood plain. Mr. Emery said he had consulted Sean O'Grady of Inspectional Services about the zoning requirements.

Mr. King noted an e-mail from Varsha Kukafka of 24 Magoun Street, who spoke against demolition.

Mr. Williamson encouraged the Commission to do what it could to preserve the scale of the buildings on the street. He recommended finding the house significant for its historical associations, but to request more information about its condition and the nature of the proposed replacement.

Phillip Bard of 2552 Massachusetts Avenue stated that he had renovated his own home. The design of the proposed building did not fit in with the neighborhood.

Ms. Wasilewski said the existing streetscape had a lot of consistency of setback, roof form, and massing.

Mr. McCray provided some background on the history of North Cambridge since the extension of the T to Alewife. He was not generally opposed to new development if it was in conformity with the North Cambridge context. Massachusetts Avenue had become an alley of tall buildings. This house should be preserved.

Mr. Reynolds said the family had jacked up the center of the house several times because it continued to sink into the clay. It would not be worth the money to repair it.

Mr. Brandon thanked the owners for coming to the NCSC. He recommended the CHC find the house significant and preferably preserved. He was concerned that the heritage of the neighborhood was disappearing.

Dr. Solet moved to find the house significant for the reasons in the staff report and as defined in the ordinance. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Dr. Solet said it would be difficult to find the house not preferably preserved. Mr. King said a modern building would not fit in as well on Brookford Street, as it might with the eclectic Harvey Street.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Mr. Bibbins abstained.

Mr. Emery asked if a revised design could be approved. Mr. Bibbins said the narrowness of the lot was the cause of the design problem. Mr. Emery said the CHC and BZA should discuss the zoning deterrent to expanding nonconforming houses, so that fewer houses would be torn down.

Minutes

The commission reviewed the minutes of June 2, July 7, and August 4.

Mr. King offered corrections to the June 2 minutes, deleting "on" and "its" in the fifth and fourth paragraphs of pages 4 and 5, respectively. Mr. Irving moved to approve the June 2 minutes, as corrected. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 with Messrs. King, Irving, Bibbins and Ms. Tobin voting. Dr. Solet and Mr. Crocker abstained because they had not been present at the June meeting.

Mr. King offered corrections to the July 7 minutes, deleting "of" and adding "Mr." to the eleventh and seventh paragraphs of pages 6 and 7, respectively. Dr. Solet moved to approve the corrected minutes. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 with Messrs. King, Irving, Bibbins and Ms. Tobin voting. Dr. Solet and Mr. Crocker abstained because they had not been present at the July meeting.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the August 4 minutes as submitted. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 6-0. Though they had not been present, Messrs. Irving, Bibbins and Crocker voted out of necessity.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that he had received a letter from the Weld family asking the Commission to initiate a landmark designation study on their house at 28 Fayerweather Street. He recommended that the Commission schedule a hearing in October. Dr. Solet so moved, Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 9/8/11**

Muriel Sluz 105 Ravine Rd, Medford 02155
Bill Reynolds 21 Forest Hill Ave, Lynn 01904
Marcy Wasilewski 39 Clifton St
Darren Baird 400 Atlanta Ave, Boston 02110
Atty Theodore Regnante 401 Edgewater Pl, Wakefield 01880
Arthur Flori 76 Pigeon Ln, Waltham 02454
Melissa Demers 76 Broadway, Arlington 02474
Bill Hubner 55 Gold Star Rd
Marcia Yousid 90 Dudley St
Thayer Donham 77 mass Ave, NE49-2100
John McQuaid 238 main St
Carolyn Magid 71 Reed St
Skip Freeman 30 Holyoke St
Michael Brandon 27 Seven Pines Ave
Carolyn Mieth 15 Brookford St
James Williamson 1000 Jackson Pl.
Michael Owu 238 Main St
Amon Fee 6 Richard St, Winchester

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.