

Approved 2/2/12

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 5, 2012, 6:00 P.M. Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave.

Members present: William B. King, Chair; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Member*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair William King called the meeting to order at 6:01 P.M. and made introductions.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-106: St. Francis Church and Rectory, 315-325 Cambridge St./40-42 Sciarappa St./74-76 Gore St. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, owner. Consider initiating a landmark designation study.

Mr. King explained the effect of landmark designation, its use as one of several preservation tools in Cambridge, and the designation process. [Chandra Harrington arrived].

Charles Sullivan showed slides and reported on the November 21 order of the City Council requesting the Historical Commission to initiate a landmark designation study for the St. Francis of Assisi Church complex at 315 Cambridge Street and 40 Sciarappa Street. The order followed an announcement that the church would be closed. He reviewed the history and architecture of the main building, built as the Second Baptist Church in 1838, and the police and fire station built in 1871 on Sciarappa Street and its attached stable on Gore Street. He recommended that both buildings be studied for designation. He emphasized that designation would not regulate the use of the properties, prevent them being sold, or protect interior features.

There being no questions of fact, Mr. King asked for public comment.

Maria Elena Saccoccio, a St. Francis parishioner and a lawyer, described her family's long association with the parish. She had filed *rimostranze* (an appeal in Canon Law) on behalf of the parishioners to oppose the closure, sale, and profane use of the church property. She spoke about the history of the Baptist and Catholic congregations. She noted that before St. Francis was founded Italian-Americans were not welcome at Catholic churches in Cambridge and had to attend mass in the North End. Mr. King asked Ms. Saccoccio if the Archdiocese could sell the building during an appeal to the Vatican. She replied that it could not, but she could not predict the outcome of the appeal and recommended there be no delay in initiating a study.

Fred Fantini, a member of the School Committee, asked for a show of hands from members of the audience who were in support of landmark study. A large number of hands were raised.

Mr. King closed public comment and designated alternates Berg, Ferrara, and Tobin to vote two at a time, as needed, in rotation.

Dr. Solet moved to initiate a landmark designation study for both buildings. Bruce Irving seconded the motion, which motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting.

Case L-107/D-1235: 119 Harvey St., by Leonard Katz, Tr. Consider initiating a landmark designation study for a preferably preserved significant building.

Mr. King reported that the Commission had found the building significant and preferably preserved in July and that the demolition delay was about to expire.

Sarah Burks showed slides and reviewed the staff report about the house. She reported on the condition of the house, as observed on a staff tour. The ell was in worse shape than the front of the house.

Mr. King posed the question of whether the public would be better served by studying the property for landmark designation or by allowing the townhouse project to proceed.

Terrance Morris, an attorney representing the current and prospective owners, noted that the development site was an unusual shape with a long rear frontage on the bike path but a broken frontage on the street. The poor physical condition and zero side setback of 119 Harvey Street posed a threat to the owners of 115 Harvey Street. The design team had been sensitive to the neighborhood scale and had positioned smaller buildings along the sidewalk for a contextual design. He referred to the report of a structural engineer, Kenneth Woods, outlining the failures of the building. Though anything could be rebuilt, the cost of a rehab could not be justified. He noted that the owners of 115 Harvey Street were seeking zoning relief to enlarge their house. The development had already been approved by the Planning Board, and urged the Commission not to initiate a landmark designation study.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the style of the townhouses. Mr. Morris replied that the smaller buildings would use some period elements to complement the existing buildings on Harvey Street and the larger buildings to the rear of the site would be more contemporary.

Mr. Fantini said the neighborhood was very supportive of the development. It could have been twice as dense but the developer had worked with the residents to arrive at a design they could support.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the Commission had seen the latest design. Mr. Sullivan said the hearing's focus was the intrinsic value of the existing building and whether it warranted further study and protection.

Ms. Harrington asked if there were similar houses in the neighborhood that were landmarked. Mr. Sullivan replied that there were no landmarks in the Race Course neighborhood. The house at 119 Harvey Street was older than almost everything around it, predating the subdivision of the Race Course. He said the structural engineer's report was fair, and agreed it would require a large investment to rehab the building.

Ms. Berg pointed out that the setting of the house would change with the townhouse development.

Mr. Irving noted that the financial argument against rehab was one often used by a demolition applicant, and he did not find it compelling. The proponent's other comments were well received. Dr. Solet noted that the engineer's report was not directly relevant to the decision to study the property or not.

Mr. Irving moved to decline to initiate a study for the property. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0, with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1249 (continued): 8 Blanchard Rd., by George Kouyoumjian. Review unauthorized demolition of house (1953) and application for retroactive approval.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the history of the matter. At the last hearing, the Commission found the house had been demolished other than pursuant to the demolition delay ordinance, putting a two year moratorium into effect. The owners had submitted designs for the replacement building in hope that the Commission would find greater public benefit in allowing the project move forward than continuing the moratorium.

Norman Kherlop, the architect, said he had prepared a modified design. The original plans had developed out of the owners' ideas. He described the vernacular houses in the neighborhood, which were constructed of a variety of materials. Most lots had a steep slope abutting the golf course. The east elevation of this property faced the golf course and the west elevation faced the street. He distributed copies of the original design with a stone veneer and two dormers extending toward the street, and a modified design with a yellow brick veneer. He pointed out the more rectilinear fenestration and simplified ornamentation. He noted the Prairie style windows, hanging eaves and horizontal band with soldier coursing of the brick. The chimney had been removed and the dormers had been modified with hip roofs. He asked for feedback on the direction the design.

Ms. Meyer asked the floor-to-ceiling heights of the modified design. Mr. Kherlop replied that the first floor was 9.5' high and second floor was 8' high, 7'-6" at the eaves. Ms. Meyer asked the height of the original house. Mr. Kherlop replied that it was one story at the front and two stories at the back. The proposed design was 28'-9" from the front grade to the ridge, and he had kept the eave line as low as possible.

Harry Washburn of 5 Blanchard Road asked about the width of the house. Mr. Kherlop replied that it was 57'-2", the same as before. The original drawings had called for keeping the whole basement and three walls of the first floor, with a new addition at the back and second floor.

Ron Velarta (?), a neighbor on Blanchard Road, said the Kouyoumjians were great people. They were open about sharing the plans and sounded flexible about the design. He urged the Commission not to enforce the moratorium. It would be bad for the neighborhood to have the site vacant for two years.

Mr. King said the intent of the ordinance was clear, but the Commission realized that a two year moratorium could punish the neighbors as well as the owners. The Commission was trying to find an acceptable design that would swing the public interest toward waiving the remainder of the moratorium.

Robert Simha of 6 Blanchard Road said he represented his own family, Steve Samuels of 7 Blanchard Road, and Laura Bondi of 9 Blanchard Road. The neighborhood wanted to be welcoming to the Kouyoumjians. However, he had some concerns about the design that he had shared with Mr. Kouyoumjian and the Commission in a letter. The design took little advantage of the western view of the undeveloped farmland on the other side of Blanchard Road. There were missed opportunities to enjoy light and air. Most houses in the neighborhood were modest in scale and made good use of the topography. Banking a house into a slope had insulating value and would save energy. He urged simplicity of materials and ornament.

Dr. Solet encouraged the owners to meet with their neighbors and consider some of the design suggestions before coming back to the Commission with a revised design. Simpler was the right direction for the design.

Mr. King said the Commission should receive plans in advance of the meeting in order to be prepared to consider further action. He noted that the view from the municipal golf course was also a public view.

Mr. Ferrara said the presentation should have more information about the site, the neighboring buildings, dimensions, etc. The eave height was critical.

Mr. Irving said he did not agree with all of Mr. Simha's suggestions. The hip roofs were an improvement. He suggested simpler doors. The roofscape could be simplified. The roof shingles should be simple, calm, monochromatic.

Mr. Sullivan recommended using hip roofs on the side elevations as well as on the front. The materials on the front and sides did not relate. It would be better to be consistent or make the transition more logical.

Mr. Simha asked to see a full site plan and a landscape plan. He clarified his comments about capturing the southern views over the lower neighbor at 7 Blanchard Road.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He asked the proponents to let the staff know when they were prepared to come back to the Commission.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2819: 10-12 Farwell Pl. by Elizabeth Bartholet. Replace gutters.

Ms. Tobin recused herself from the matter because she knew the applicant well.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the 1870s double house. It had wooden gutters on the front and sides and a K-style aluminum gutter on the rear. He summarized the application to use a new K-style gutter at the rear and half-round copper gutters at the front and sides.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the application as submitted. Ms. Berg seconded. The motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting as alternates.

Minutes

Mr. King noted a few typos on the November 3, 2011 minutes. He asked if Bill Bibbins had really used the word "manipulative" on page 5. Ms. Burks said she could check with Mr. Bibbins and ask for correction or clarification.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as corrected and pending any further correction or clarification by Mr. Bibbins. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on an appeal of the Avon Hill NCD Commission's decision about a driveway at 37 Lancaster Street. He noted that the Preservation Awards venue had changed to City Hall. He proposed several dates and the Commission settled on May 17, 2012. He reported that Christ Church had put its unapproved three-sided sign back up, and the Commissioners agreed that this would preclude a grant. He reported that Occupy Harvard had erected a geodesic dome in the historic district, and the Commissioners agreed that this could not be ig-

nored; Ms. Tobin noted that the dome had been part of a negotiated settlement between Harvard and the protesters.

Ms. Tobin moved to adjourn. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 at 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 1/5/12**

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St #404
George Kouyoumjian	8 Blanchard Rd
Cyril Hughes	56 Eliot St, Watertown 02472
Norman Kherlop	21 Hough Rd, Belmont 02478
Rhoda Fantasia	93 Third St
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Betty Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Marie Wright	106 Trowbridge St
Rosemarie Rosenberger	335 Hurley St
Jennie Iantosca	12 Winter St
Joan DeGuglielmo	795 Cambridge St
Helen Iantosca	12 Winter St
Grace Foti	17 Cornelius Way
Anna Spera	12 Sciarappa St
Jean Spera	12 Sciarappa St
Fred Fantini	4 Canal Pk 203
Josephine Almeida	170 Gore St #418
Mary Grassi	391 Cambridge St
Nancy Mochi	22 Winter St
Rita Grassi	391 Cambridge St
Margaret Roberts	102 Henry St
O. R. Simha	6 Blanchard Rd
Danny DeGuglielmo	793 Cambridge St

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.