

Approved 5/2/13

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 3, 2013 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: none

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

Chair William King called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M. and made introductions. He dispensed with the consent agenda and explained hearing procedures. He designated the alternates to vote on cases in the following order: Susannah Tobin, Shary Berg, and Joseph Ferrara.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Cases L-100-101-102 (continued): Kendall Square Building, 238 Main St.--J. L. Hammett Building, 264 Main St. a.k.a. 290 Main St.--Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main St., by MIT Investment Management Co. Consider request to extend landmark designation study period and protections.

Charles Sullivan communicated a request from the MITMCO requesting a further extension of the landmark study period into July 2013, because of ongoing discussions about the future of Kendall Square.

Mr. King pointed out that the letter was missing an expression of intent to also extend the protection period of the three buildings that were the subject of the study.

Jo Solet moved to accept the requested extension of the study period on the condition that the protections for the three buildings be extended for the same amount of time. Bruce Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting as alternate.

Case L-106: St. Francis of Assisi Church, 315-325 Cambridge St., 40-42 Sciarappa St. and 74-76 Gore St, by Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. Consider landmark study and recommendation to City Council.

Sarah Burks showed slides of the church complex and summarized the preliminary landmark study report. She noted the additions and corrections that she had received from parishioner Marie Elena Saccoccio.

Mr. Sullivan explained to a member of the public that landmark designation would create a regulatory process for reviewing changes to the exterior of the buildings, but would not prevent sale or reuse of the property.

Darlene Bonislawski of 23 Regent Street spoke in favor of designation. She said her mother's family had emigrated from Avellino, Italy and lived in the North End before moving to East Cambridge and becoming original parishioners of St. Francis. Her great-grandfather, Luigi Totino, was a mosaic artisan who worked on prominent commissions such as the State House and the Gardner Museum. In the 1920s, there was severe discrimination against Italians. The backlash resulting from Sacco-Vanzetti case created an atmosphere of fear for the Italian community. The church represented the diversity of the community. She said the properties met the social, economic and political history criteria for significance.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place supported the staff recommendation for designation. He noted the photo taken of the 16th Infantry returning home during the Civil War, with the church in the background. Ms.

Burks noted that the 1866 history of the Baptist Church made note of the Civil War and Lincoln's assassination. Marie Saccoccio added that the Baptist Church sent missionaries to convert former slaves in the south.

Mr. King recommended that the Commission accept the preliminary report, authorize the staff to edit it based on the comments submitted, and forward a final report with a positive recommendation to the City Council.

Mr. Irving so moved. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. Ms. Berg voted as alternate.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2806 (Continued): Harvard Yard Fence, by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Install exhibition panels on the north side of the Harvard Yard fence.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and provided a history of the case.

Gary Hammer of Harvard Planning and Project Management indicated the location of the proposed panels. They would be 4' x 5' and would be removable. He proposed a 3-year trial period. The content would be curated by the office for the Vice President of Campus Services. The goal was to activate and enliven the overpass.

Scott Bishop, a landscape architect from STOSS Landscape Urbanism, explained that the model for the design was the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. He described the mounting details, which would not damage the fence. The proposed 19 panels would stretch the length of the overpass. No additional lighting was proposed.

Dr. Solet noted that when first presented last year she had asked if the panels could be different sizes, rather than all one size. Would the students have input on the content selection?

Mr. Bishop said the proposed size was consistent, not varied. The panels would be printed on aluminum and would be very durable. If vandalized, they could quickly be reprinted and replaced.

Mr. Hammer said that members of the university community could submit proposals for exhibitions. The exhibits would probably change two times a year, one exhibit per semester.

Mr. King asked how the installation would look from inside the yard. Mr. Hammer said that the backs of the panels would be black to match the fence pickets and there would be transparency between the panels.

Ms. Tobin asked about the dormitories closest to the panels. What did the residents think?

Dr. Solet asked how hot the panels would get. Mr. Bishop said no more than the fence itself.

Mr. King asked if wind would cause the panels to deflect, bend, or make noise. Mr. Bishop said they would be strong enough not to bend.

Mr. Sullivan suggested a mock-up of a couple of the panels and a site visit to answer questions of scale and proportion that were not clear in the drawings.

Mr. Williamson asked about lighting and policing. He asked if the student body had been consulted. Mr. Bishop said that the plaza renovation would increase the level of lighting near the panels. The plaza would be utilized more, which would deter vandalism. The materials were durable and easy to clean.

Tanya Iatridis, of Harvard Planning & Project Management, said that 22 focus groups with stakeholders including students had been held. A student will be included on the committee that will select the exhibits. She agreed to install a mock up for a site visit. The goal was to have the panels up by Arts First in late April.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked where else there were extensive open lengths of the fence. Would the panels block light into the Yard? Mr. Bishop answered that the light level in the Yard would not be altered.

Dr. Solet asked if the panels would contribute to problems between pedestrians and cyclists. Would there be separate paths? Mr. Bishop answered that the plaza would be an open environment.

Mr. Williamson recommended continuing the hearing to February so the Harvard community could be made aware of the matter. He expressed concern for the historic character of the Yard and the preservation of easements on the overpass for the public. He suggested that the Cambridge Arts Council, Agassiz Neighborhood Council, Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Association, and student government help select panel content. Harvard and the community should work together to make decisions on this public space.

Ms. Meyer expressed concern about blocking the views into the Yard. A three year trial was too long. The mock up should be on both sides of the gate.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet asked if zoning limited the size of the panels. Mr. Hamner answered that as long as the panels were not used for advertising or directional content, the city would not consider them to be signs.

Ms. Iatridis told Ms. Tobin that the panels would not advertise ArtsFirst performances.

Ms. Harrington noted that the same type of review would be necessary if the proposal was located on a fence on Brattle Street. Was the installation appropriate to the district? Mr. King said he was skeptical, but a trial period seemed reasonable.

Mr. Irving moved to continue the public hearing to February 7 and to schedule an informational site visit for January 17, 2013 at 4:00 P.M. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Case 2986: 126 Brattle St., by Brown & Brattle Realty Trust. Alter fence, construct retaining wall and terrace, install exterior lighting, change mechanical units and install screening enclosure.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted the change in the vegetation and view between the 1960s and 2012.

Wesley Wirth, of Thomas Wirth Landscape Architects, noted that the landscape had become overgrown over the last 30 years. Some plant material had already been removed. He described the existing fences including 4' at the front, 6' near the garage and 7' near the back. He reviewed the proposed lighting changes. The present condenser would be removed and two new units placed near the front corner behind a 4' picket fence.

Mr. Sullivan said the existing condenser was behind a 6' fence near the garage, a location from which it could not be seen from the street. It would be better not to have a mechanical installation in the front yard.

Charlie Myer, the architect, said the units were very quiet and several locations had been considered. Mr. Wirth said the 6' fence might be lowered and made more transparent in the future. Ms. Meyer said that road noise would help to mask the condenser noise. Dr. Solet noted that the units would become louder as they age.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving said he concurred with the architect and landscape architect, and moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. Ms. Tobin voted as alternate.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the December 6 minutes.

Dr. Solet indicated that on page 1, she had seconded the motion to pass the consent agenda.

Mr. King offered several corrections. Page 1: change “either” to “any” in the first paragraph. Page 3: “Dr. Solet asked that the geotechnical report.” Page 5: add a sentence to the 2nd paragraph, “Although the Commission had no jurisdiction over the interior design, the public use of the hotel would make this appropriate.” Add phrase, “in the context of the proposed replacement project,” to the 5th paragraph.

Mr. Irving corrected the names on page 5: Phil Costa and Mitch Nelin.

Dr. Solet clarified on page 6: that the “floodlighting blinded automobile drivers and pedestrians.”

Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting as alternate.

New Business. Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2993: 14 Craigie St., by Joseph & Carol Green. Replace 3 fixed windows with 3 awning windows.

Ms. Burks said she had received an e-mail from the owner requesting that the case be heard in February.

Dr. Solet moved to schedule the hearing for February. Mr. Bibbins seconded and the motion passed 7-0. Ms. Berg voted as alternate.

Mr. Williamson noted that the *Metro* newspaper had an article that day about the Emerson Lofts on Cottage Park Road. He gave copies to the Commission.

Dr. Solet remarked on a *New York Times* article about the biotech boom in Cambridge.

Mr. King noted that he had received a request to extend the life of the permit for 112-116 Mt. Auburn Street, approved in 2008. He proposed that he would write a letter back to the applicants suggesting that they investigate the applicability of the Extension of Permits Act of 2008 and 2010.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 1/3/13**

John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr
Billy Burke	56 Sixth St
Dot Vetrano	49 Gore St
MaryAnn Donofrio	120 Gore St
Marie Wright	106 Trowbridge St
Darleen Bonislawski	23 Regent St
Susan Pedro	180 Mt Vernon St, Malden 02148
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St, #404
Marie Elena Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Betty Lee Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Rose Marie Rosenberger	335 Hurley St
Jean Spera	12 Sciarappa St
Anna Spera	12 Sciarappa St
Rita Grassi	391 Cambridge St
Wes Wirth	
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.