

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 4, 2014 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures. He designated alternate Ferrara to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-115: 33 Richdale Ave., Hathaway Partners, LLC, owner. Consider staff recommendation regarding landmark designation study.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the case history and described the landmark designation study process. A certificate of appropriateness had been issued during the study period (March 2014) for preservation of the shell of the building and rooftop additions for a residential adaptive reuse. Interior demolition, lead and asbestos abatement had been completed. He summarized the preliminary study report. He explained that the issue before the Commission was to decide whether to forward the report to the City Council with a recommendation for designation. He recommended that the property be found eligible for landmark designation, per the criteria in the ordinance. The Commission could send the matter to the City Council right away or, alternatively, seek to protect the building under an extended study agreement with the owner until the current project is completed and then let the study lapse.

Dr. Solet asked if an easement was a third alternative. Mr. Sullivan answered that tax benefits were probably not available due to the extent of development of the site.

Ms. Burks described the minor edits made to the Study Report.

Mr. Irving moved to accept the report with the agreement that the property met the criteria for designation as a Landmark. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

The owners, Rob and Sam Wolff, offered to extend the study period through the completion of construction if the Commission chose not to forward to the City Council right away.

Mr. King opened the floor to public comment.

Oliver Radford of 24 Cambridge Terrace spoke in support of sending the recommendation to the City Council right away. It was important that the Commission's jurisdiction to review changes be extended in perpetuity.

Steve Gannis of 53 Upland Road also supported immediate action.

Steve Perry of 24 Cambridge Terrace noted that Rep. Marjorie Decker had submitted a letter of support for landmark status. He asked if the Commission was concerned that the current council would

not pass the measure. Mr. Sullivan said that he was confident they would. He noted that the Commission did not send such recommendations to the council gratuitously, but only when truly needed.

Gene Hull of 75 Richdale spoke in favor of designation.

Gordon Moore of 9 Rutland Street said the community had put a lot of time into the project and would like to see it through to the end.

Sam Wolff noted that once permitted and built, the property would be unlikely to change soon.

Mr. King noted that landmark status could appear in marketing materials. Dr. Solet agreed.

Mr. Sullivan read Ms. Decker's letter in support of landmark designation.

Dr. Solet moved to forward the study report to the City Council with a positive recommendation for designation. Mr. Irving seconded. The motion passed 7-0.

Case 3337 (continued): 30 Brattle St., by Thomas Hadley Trust, Jean D. Knapp, Trustee. Install signs for retail occupants including Citizens Bank, Leather World, and Bob Slate Stationer.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building. He noted that split-level retail was once encouraged in the zoning code, but it had turned out to be problematic in the few buildings that had been designed that way for reasons of access and visibility. The applicants had presented in October, received feedback from the commission, met with staff, and returned with an amended sign package.

James Wagner, attorney for Citizens Bank, introduced his colleague Anthony Bova, the bank representative, Steven Hess, and the building's other retail tenants, Laura Donahue of Bob Slate Stationer and Michael & Carol Noymer of Leather World. He described the difficulties of the lower level space and challenges of the building and then described the changes to the proposal. The goal was to decrease the overall effect of the signs, reduce the dominance of the Citizens Bank signs, and rationalize the sign locations while keeping the distribution of sign area equitable among the three tenants according to the size of the tenant spaces. He remarked that the revised proposal was creative, pedestrian friendly and respected the architecture of the building.

Ms. Donahue explained that with GPS systems, customers could only find the vicinity (within 100') of the store. The streets around 30 Brattle were unmarked and curving. Customers would get close and then call for directions because they couldn't find it.

Dr. Solet asked if there would be a time when some of the banners would not be needed. She suggested putting a map at the bank's old location. She asked if the smaller text on the Leather World sign was needed, because it was difficult to read. Mr. Wagner said that it described the store's products, making it clear that they sold more than leather goods. Mrs. Noymer added that all their other Leather World stores included that language on the signs. Her customers also had a hard time finding the store.

Mr. Ferrara commented that the recessed Bob Slate sign at the top of the window opening should be deep enough that it wouldn't look flimsy.

Mr. King asked for questions of fact from the public.

Carol O'Hare of 172 Magazine Street asked which signs were existing and how much they exceeded the regulations. How much sign area was proposed? Mr. Wagner showed the existing signs, which conform to zoning (138.5 sf existing; 145 sf allowed). The proposed total sign area was 518.69 sf.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked for more information about the banners and corner wall signs. Mr. Wagner answered that banners would be more visible to pedestrians than wall signs on this curving building. The height of the proposed corner bank sign was 24" and the height of the Leather World corner signs were 26". Bob Slate occupied 1/3 of the ~~2nd floor~~upper level, Leather World 2/3 of the ~~2nd floor~~upper level, and Citizens occupied the whole ~~ground floor~~lower level.

Mrs. Noymer noted that the banners had been installed at least ten years ago and the hardware was still present on the building; the banners had been removed during construction.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Ms. O'Hare commented that banners would be enough signage for the bank. The proposal was hugely out of compliance with what zoning allowed. The signs for the other tenants were tame and reasonable. But the sign proposal overall was like a carnival site and distracted from the architecture. Had the owner gotten zoning approval for the banners when they were first installed?

Adrienne Lamson noted that accessibility around the building and crosswalks needed to be improved. The curb ramp was out of code. She commended Leather World for holding down the corner for 10 years. The green band was not pretty and an open ATM was a pickpocket special.

Mr. Williamson commented that the upper bank sign was too large. The white bands under the Leather World lettering were not effective.

Ms. Gifford expressed concern about the brightness of the ATM. The large number of banks in Harvard Square caused them all to try to outdo the others with more signage.

Mr. Hess of Citizens Bank noted that the exterior ATM was required for accessibility since the interior ATMs were several steps down. The lighting would have a halo effect, would not be blinding, and would make customers feel safer.

Denise Jillson of the Harvard Square Business Association spoke in support of the proposal. Having the ~~ground lower-~~ level space vacant for ten years had been terrible for the Square. Homeless persons would sleep in the window wells. Since the three retailers were agreed on a plan, she would support it.

Mr. Wagner commented that more signs were needed because business was down 50% from the bank's previous location.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet noted that the issues were wayfinding and identification. She suggested security cameras and lighting for the ATM and additional signs upstairs for the ~~2nd floor~~upper level businesses.

Mr. King commented that he would prefer no signs on the brick band. The banners were excessive. He noted that the Commission did not have jurisdiction over color in the Conservation District.

Ms. Harrington recommended that all signs be lowered to within the storefront recesses and to reduce the green band. The banners were overkill.

Mr. Ferrara said he was sympathetic to the upper-level retailers. The signs should come off the brick. He suggested narrowing the width of the top bank sign and reducing the banners by six.

Mr. Barry said the split-level retail was a valid reason to exceed the regulations meant for other types of buildings. The architecture of Harvard Square was engaged with signage. Signs helped this particular building, and he did not agree with the idea of lowering all the signs below the brick band because it would leave a very mundane building. He suggested a dark outline around the green ATMs.

Mr. Irving agreed with Mr. Barry. The amended proposal was vastly improved. The building was massive and he had no objections to the proposal. The retailers were trying to make a living in the square, which was a commercial district. The proposal was reasonable.

Mr. Noymer said it would be impossible to please everyone. The proposal was better than where it started. Businesses need signs. They would be better than the signs on JFK Street. The business association was supportive. It was time to move on.

Dr. Solet suggested eliminating the green around the ATM and the white part of the Leather World signs. Mr. Wagner said the green around the ATM was critical for the bank; the ATM was the most important aspect of bank business today.

Ms. Harrington said it was important that the tenants had agreed on the proposal. Mr. King remarked that it still was too much signage, but the building and location were not typical.

Mr. Ferrara asked the Leather World owners if moving their signs down was a non-starter. Mr. and Mrs. Noymer indicated it was. Moving the signs down would be a killer to their business, but they would be willing to move the white box if the blue channel letters were larger.

Mr. Barry moved to approve the application as submitted, and Mr. Irving seconded. The motion passed 4-3, with Crocker, Irving, Harrington and Barry in favor, and King, Ferrara and Solet opposed.

Case 3319 (continued): 57 John F. Kennedy St. / 96 Winthrop St., by Crimson Galeria LP. Construct 3-story residential addition above existing 2-story retail building.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the case. An earlier application and design had been denied a certificate of appropriateness. This was a continuance of the October hearing on a new application.

Raj Dhanda, the owner, indicated that during the interval he had met several times with Pebble Gifford and her group of interested residents. Topics discussed in those meetings included windows, mechanicals, and colors. Many of their ideas had been incorporated into the revised design.

Peter Quinn, the architect, said the result was a highly refined solution. The existing base of the building had been rethought, as were rooflines, setbacks, and the addition's relationship to the park.

Annem Chan Waay of Peter Quinn Architects presented the revised design. She noted that banners were in line with the columns and helped establish a relationship to the park. The base of the building

would be improved and more pedestrian friendly. Green landscaping would be used on the terraces between the stepped levels of the addition to soften the massing. The sky was still visible. Many of the mechanicals would be 3' below the parapet height and a fence would surround others. The proposed colors (gray and greenish gray) would better blend with the surroundings. She described the materials, which would include a metal sign band (dark gray), high-density fiber cement (lighter gray), metal (green zinc), windows (clear), and the brick base.

Dr. Solet encouraged the proponents to consult an acoustical ~~consultant~~engineer. Mr. Dhanda agreed.

Mr. King noted that the renderings showed the corporate red band of Staples removed. Mr. Dhanda remarked that he had many discussions with Staples, which had renewed its lease, and he was working hard to get them to agree to remove the red.

Mr. Sullivan said he would expect the scale of signs to remain similar to existing, but placed on a uniformly colored sign band.

Mr. King asked if the shadow effects had changed with this revision. Ms. Waiy replied that there would be .5% more shadow in the months of November and December.

Mr. King opened the meeting to ~~public comments~~questions of fact from the public.

Ms. Lamson asked about the size of the windows and noted that office lighting was stronger than residential. Ms. Waiy noted that the glass would not produce a lot of glare. The green landscaping on the terraces would cover much of the windows as viewed from below.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street thanked the proponents for their hard work. She asked if a larger 4th floor would offset the possible removal of the 5th floor. Ms. Waiy answered that the shadows would increase with such a scenario.

Mr. Williamson asked about use of the terraces. Ms. Waiy indicated they were for the office tenants. He then asked about the Winthrop Street grade entrance to Staples. Mr. Dhanda answered that he had discussed it, and they would prefer to make it flush with the facade rather than recessed.

Dr. Solet asked if the internal light sources would be seen from the park. Mr. Dhanda said they would not.

Mr. Quinn reviewed the updated shadow studies.

Ms. Gifford asked if the elevator headhouse would cause shadows. Mr. Quinn said it would not cast shadows on the park because of the building in the foreground.

Kari Kuelzer of Grendel's Den asked about exterior lighting. Ms. Waiy indicated there would be lighting at the JFK entrance. Some of the signs might be lit from behind, noting that there were street lights on Winthrop Street.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Ms. Meyer said that she would prefer to see the 5th floor eliminated to reduce the height and bulk of the building. She noted that Jane Thompson could not be present because she was at another meeting.

Ms. Lamson remarked that she was researching air rights. The air space over the building benefited the public space of the park.

Mr. Williamson commented on design improvements such as color, glazing and signage but indicated that a 2-story addition would be better than 3.

Ms. Kuelzer noted a letter that she had submitted on behalf of the Winthrop Park Trust. She recommended that the Commission add a requirement that the owner continue to involve the Trust in working out issues like sidewalks, lighting, vehicles, construction, and hours of use.

Mr. Sullivan noted for the record the receipt of letters from Daryl Janes, Kari Kuelzer, and Carole Perrault. He summarized the goals and guidelines for the Harvard Square Conservation District.

Mr. Barry suggested that approval of materials, colors, lighting, and a landscaping plan be delegated to staff. Mr. Sullivan recommended that a sample panel of materials be reviewed on site by the full commission.

Mr. Barry moved to approve the application for a certificate of appropriateness with the following findings and conditions:

1. That the design had improved and been favorably impacted by public input.
2. That the proposed building would be appropriate to its setting and the district.
3. That the proposed building would add to the vitality and diversity of the district.
4. That the proposed building mitigated the adverse effect of previous designs on Winthrop Park and would not adversely affect its use or vitality, despite the additional shadow that would be created.
5. That the owner must create a materials mockup on site for review by the commission at a public meeting.
6. That review and approval of lighting and landscape plan be delegated to staff

Ms. Harrington seconded Mr. Barry's motion, which passed 7-0.

Dr. Solet asked that the minutes reflect that the Commission encouraged the owner to engage with the Winthrop Park Trust and interested members of the public on construction and design matters.

Case 3364: 16-18 Eliot St., by 16-18 Eliot LLC c/o Charles River Capital, Inc. Construct 3-story residential addition above existing 2-story retail building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building, which was constructed in 1992 before the Harvard Square Conservation District was established. It had replaced a three-decker that burned down. It was a steel frame building with synthetic cladding on the front and corrugated metal on the sides and rear. He described the historic retaining wall at the back of the property that separated the house lots on Winthrop Street from the creek that ~~ran~~ previously had run along the path of Eliot Street. Construction should do no harm to the wall. He noted the adjacent Harvard Square Garage building of 1984.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, described the proposed addition of three stories for 15 residential units above the existing two-story commercial building. The project would need a parking

waiver from the Planning Board, but it was otherwise dimensionally conforming. He noted that there would be bicycle access and parking on site.

Peter Quinn, the architect, displayed a plan from 1989 by Ben Thompson for a 5-story building adjoining the wall of the Garage. The existing 2-story building had been framed to support extra floors. The site plan maintained access to the historic wall, although it would be fenced off. He described the design for the approximately 12,000 sf addition and renovations to the lower floors. The proposed materials were high density fiber cement panels on the front, high density fiber cement clapboards on the sides, and corrugated metal siding where existing. He reviewed the shadow study.

Dr. Solet commented on the existing arched entry and asked about construction vibrations and whether the wall would need to be protected. Mr. Quinn indicated that vibrations could be monitored.

Mr. King asked for questions of fact and comments from the public.

Mr. Williamson suggested that there could be public access to the wall and that the design of the lower stories should not be altered. The proposed addition was too tall.

Ms. Meyer asked for clarification about design elements and asked if smaller, punched windows had been considered. Mr. Quinn said that the windows transitioned from the larger openings of the Garage and the smaller openings of the older building on the north side.

Ms. Gifford indicated that the previous owner had described the building as temporary. She asked if the whole building could be re-examined and differently conceived.

John DiGiovanni of Trinity Property Management commented that the proposal was appropriate in scale for the mid-block site and met the guidelines for infill construction. The alterations to the lower floors were appropriate. He discouraged public access to the rear of the building for safety reasons.

Dr. Solet indicated that the design needed further refinement, including more texture, more interest. She questioned if living above restaurants was desirable.

Ms. Waiy noted that there were existing restaurant tenants in the building. She said they could look at retaining the archway and articulation of the materials.

Mr. Ferrara suggested that the design have a base, middle, and a top. It should be more dynamic. The top of the Garage's stair tower was not a compelling reference point by which to justify the proposed height. The existing building had little architectural merit, so he advised against keeping that design as the base. It would be better to unify the existing with the addition.

Mr. Barry indicated that the existing building was quirky but had character.

Mr. Sullivan commented that the design by Ben Thompson for Robert Banker had accommodated access to the wall by preserving an alley on the west side, but the project had not gone ahead because of opposition from the Harvard Square Defense Fund. He had originally hoped for access to the wall and a through-block passageway on the left side of the present building, but it had not been built that way.

Mr. Rafferty consented to continue the hearing and indicated that the proponents would return in February with revisions.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to a date not later than March 5. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case 3365: 164 Brattle St., by 164 Brattle Realty Trust. Install electrical transformer near the northwest corner of the house.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the past applications for a transformer at the property.

Dan McLaughlin of S+H Construction reported that they had explored alternative sites for the transformer after hearing the Commission's concern about placing it near the sidewalk. An arborist from Bartlett Tree Company had determined that a vault would be extremely disruptive to the trees on either side of the property. NSTAR had agreed that the transformer could be moved away from the street if it remained at least 10' away from the house. He described the proposed location near the northwest corner of the house; the unit would be 32" high and would be screened by existing mature plantings. In response to Dr. Solet, he confirmed that according to NSTAR the transformer would not buzz. The connection would come from the street and follow the granite curb on the left side of the driveway.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve a Certificate of Hardship for the installation, as described, on the basis of the finding that there was no better location available for the transformer given NSTAR's installation specifications and the potential detrimental impact of other locations to the mature trees on the property, and further on the finding that the activity involved could be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the purposes of the district. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3363: 57 180 Brattle St., by Gerald B. O'Grady, III, Attorney-in-Fact for Anna Street Jeffrey. Alter rear of house for accessibility including a new walkway, modifications to the porch landing and steps, and installation of handicap access lift and generator.

Mr. Sullivan reported that he had administratively approved the temporary installation of a handicap ramp to the front door of the house because it was temporary and fully reversible. He showed slides and described the more extensive alterations proposed for lift at the rear entry.

~~Mary Lou Masterpole~~ Catherine Olender Neijstrom, attorney for the owner, stated that it would be a hardship to the owner to not be able to access the home from the driveway via a lift to the back door. It would also provide a second means of accessible egress for the owner. The generator would provide emergency backup for heat, an interior lift, electricity, and the rear lift. The alterations would not create a substantial detriment to the public welfare because they were located at the back of the house. She noted that subsequent owners typically remove lifts such as this if they were not needed.

Dr. Solet asked if there would be a roof ~~on~~ over the lift. She encouraged the applicants to look into the accessibility requirements. She moved to approve a temporary Certificate of Hardship for the installation, with construction details delegated to the staff, on the basis of the physical handicaps of the

owner, and further on the finding that the activity involved could be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the purposes of the district, but with the condition that the Certificate would expire at such time that the house was no longer occupied by the owner. On that occasion, the owner must restore the property to its prior condition or seek further approval for the alterations. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

Case IPG 15-4: 51 Antrim St., by First Reformed Presbyterian Church. Request for \$62,444 grant to restore exterior and stained glass windows.

Case IPG 15-5: 1555 Massachusetts Ave., by Harvard Epworth ME Church. Request #3; for \$25,000 to restore window sills.

Case IPG 15-6: 323 Cambridge St., by St. Francis of Assisi Church. Request for \$100,000 grant to repair brick lintels and restore stained glass windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides for each of the properties and described the architectural features needing restoration and the scope of work proposed in each case. He recommended grants of \$62,444, \$7,500, and \$75,000, respectively. Dr. Solet so moved, Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Minutes

Dr. Solet asked about the reference to a 15-month academic year in Case 3335. Ms. Burks indicated that was how the construction schedule was organized for each of the Harvard House renovations.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on December 4, 2014**

Mary Lou Masterpole	60 Birmingham Pkwy, Boston 02135
Catherine Neijstrom	Tyler & Reynolds, PC, 77 Summer St, Boston 02110
Joe Buennostro	2310 Washington St, Newton 02462
Joe Sullivan	79 Upland Rd
Gene Hull	75 Richdale Ave., #5
Laura Donohue	Bob Slate Stationer, 30 Brattle St
Elizabeth Edwards	10 Buena Vista Pk
Rick Levy	64 Richdale Ave.
Steve Perry	24 Cambridge Ter
Oliver Radford	24 Cambridge Ter
Steven Hess	30 Brattle St
Anthony Pova	30 Brattle St
James Wagner	Conn Kavanaugh, 10 Post Office Sq, Boston 02109
Alison Moore	4 Cambridge Ter
Gordon Moore	9 Rutland St
Charlotte Moore	9 Rutland St
Pebble Gifford	15 Hilliard St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Carol Cohen	40 Porter Rd
Joseph Twohig	Cambridge
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr.
Steve Gannis	53 Upland Rd
Peggy Phillips	75 Richdale Ave
Marjorie Sagan	75 Richdale Ave
Sam Wolff	19 Maple Ave
Carol O'Hare	172 Magazine St
Jacqueline Pivet	79 Upland Rd
Kari Kuelzer	19 Copley St
Dan McLaughlin	1109 Boylston St
Peter Miller	46 Porter Rd
Michael Noymer	30 Brattle St
Carol Noymer	30 Brattle St
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.