

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

October 5, 2017 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*

Members absent: William Barry, Robert Crocker, Susannah Tobin, *Members*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:12 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures.

### Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-121 (continued): Harvard Square Kiosk. City of Cambridge, owner.** Consider final draft landmark designation report and make recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted that the hearing opened last month had been continued to allow for time for comments and edits on the draft report. He explained that a landmark property is designated as is at the time of designation and not as it was in some time in the past. The goal of designation was-is to protect and preserve the remaining original features and to guide proposed changes. A property owner could not be forced to make changes but when changes are proposed, the Commission would review them for appropriateness. The ultimate use of the kiosk is unknown, so the report could not prescribe specific future design details; that would happen when an application is made for any changes. He described the changes to the report that had been made since the previous meeting. He noted that match-ing wired glass was not commercially available, but any changes to fenestration would be reviewed, including the characteristics of the glass. While interior features were not subject to landmark regulation, the Commission could be influential in that regard since it was a city-owned building. He noted edits offered by James Williamson that had been incorporated into the new draft.

Mr. Irving opened the floor for questions of fact from the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the guidelines could recommend going back to the original muntin pattern if the windows are replaced.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue asked if the staff had contacted other departments about removing the clutter of freestanding signs, drink coolers, etc. Mr. Sullivan replied that he had not, but the matter could be explored with the tenant via the City Manager or the Law Department. Mr. Brandon asked the staff to raise the issue.

James Williamson of Jackson Place asked about the type of lightbulbs present and if there was a preferred type. Mr. Sullivan said the existing pendant lights were installed in 1990 and the fixtures were as close as was possible at the time to what had existed previously at the kiosk. He didn't have a preference about the type of bulb, but there were more options now. Mr. Williamson asked about the "Harvard Square" lettering on the arches and the handicap ramp. Mr. Sullivan reported that a color photograph from 1952 showed that the letters were back-lit red plastic and protruded from the face of the sign. The access

ramp could be removed as it was not original. Mr. Williamson asked if the neon “Out of Town News” signs could be protected. Mr. Sullivan said they were interior features, so not technically protected by landmark designation. Whether they stay or go would depend on the future use of the building.

Brad Bellows of 87 Howard Street asked about the guidelines for glazing. Could the existing aluminum system not be endorsed? Mr. Sullivan said that was covered in the report but he would see if it could be made more explicit.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period and requested that comments not exceed three minutes. He reminded everyone that the hearing was not about designing the kiosk but about whether to send the report on to the City Council with a positive recommendation for designation as a landmark. It was not known how the building would be used or designed in the future.

Ms. Meyer asked that the report be amended to strike the language about her being mistaken about the meaning of the inclusion of the Galante rendering in the report. She added that the language in the guidelines should be stronger. Soft words like “should” and “encouraged” should be replaced with “shall” and “preferred.” The future use of the building should not dictate the design. The design should come first and the use would have to accommodate.

Charlotte Moore of 9 Rutland Street asked for stronger language about restoration of the south elevation. Use should not dictate the form or preservation principles would be corrupted. Though she regretted the removal of the *Omphalos* statue from the corner, the view of the kiosk should not again be interrupted.

Vince Dixon, a Harvard Square tour guide and former resident, suggested that the kiosk be restored for use again as the subway headhouse. The modern headhouse could be removed. The kiosk was covered in ads and was being used as a general store rather than a news stand. It should be cleaned up. He spoke in support of landmark designation.

Abra Berkowitz of 253½ Broadway suggested edits to remove any disrespectful language toward Ms. Meyer and Ms. Blier. She spoke in favor of landmark designation.

Mr. Williamson thanked Mr. Sullivan for the study report and thanked the petitioners who had asked for the study. He suggested that the removal of the cashier’s booth be explicitly encouraged in the guidelines. He suggested that the report encourage retaining the Out of Town News signs and removal of the ramp, steps, and vents on the south side. He recommended an edit to the caption for the 1970 photo.

Tim Shaw of 147 Mt. Auburn Street read a statement in favor of landmark designation for the kiosk. It was a small, simple, well-thought-out building. He noted that the Galante rendering had upset people because of the heavy handedness of it, making the kiosk look like a spaceship.

Mr. Brandon recommended using a historic photo of the kiosk on the report cover. The names and commenters on pages 7-8 could be deleted. He suggested strengthening the language of the guidelines

and making clear what was recommended to be restored on the building. Rooftop signs would not be allowed by current zoning, and should not be allowed in the landmark guidelines.

Mr. Irving asked if anyone present objected to the landmark designation of the kiosk; there was no response. He closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan said he took the recommendations seriously and would strengthen the language. He recommended allowing the staff to complete the edits as discussed and to forward the report to the City Council for action.

Dr. Solet moved to accept the report with the additional edits by staff related to public input and to send the final report to the Council with a positive recommendation for designation. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Mr. Sullivan said he would post a new red-lined draft next week and allow a week for further comment before finalizing the report and sending to the Council.

#### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 3779 (continued): 40 Cottage St., by Robin Chase & Roy Russell.** Alter front of the house, renovate and construct an addition to the ell, replace foundation, demolish garage.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reported on the previous hearings. He noted that all the commissioners present had been at the previous hearing.

Mark Boyes-Watson, the architect, described the building materials on the historic front compared to the new ell and addition. The intention was to differentiate old and new but still have them be compatible. The ell would have flush Boral siding to differentiate the ell from the clapboarded siding on the historic front portion. The garden room addition would have nickel-gap Boral siding and a 24" wide adjustable louvered aluminum sun shade at the top of the windows. The windows on the ell would be casements with no casings and the windows of the garden room would be streamlined double-hung sash. He showed the new, preferred egress location on the right side of the house and the preferred parking arrangement for one car, both of which would require a special permit. He indicated that the client also preferred lengthening the two shorter windows on the left side to match the two longer windows. He showed samples of the smooth finish Boral siding, which would be installed with metal end and bottom trim.

Dr. Solet asked why the windows would be lengthened on the side but not the front. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that the consensus was that they were not originally long on the front but the left side windows were a now mix and the owners preferred to have them consistent on that side. Dr. Solet noted that the door to the rear unit was not protected from the elements.

Ms. Burks asked if the fence could remain on the right side if the egress door was positioned on that side or if it had to be removed. Mr. Boyes-Watson indicated it could stay.

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

Ms. Meyer asked if the windows on the ell were narrower. Mr. Boyes-Watson said that the absence of casings might make them look narrower on the drawings, but they were not.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan read a letter submitted by abutter Charlie Allen expressing approval of the new egress door location but concern about removal of the fence, an objection to lengthening the left side windows because they likely were not long originally, and objection to a full replacement of the foundation.

Ms. Meyer asked for more definition of the ell windows. They read as small and narrow.

Mr. Irving closed public comment.

Dr. Solet noted that the absence of casings was similar in appearance to a house covered in artificial siding. Mr. Boyes-Watson said he believed the simplicity of the detailing made the design stronger.

Ms. Harrington preferred the absent casings on the new construction of the ell and garden room because it helped distinguish the new from the old.

Mr. Sullivan said the relocated egress door was far more appropriate than the previous location. He recommended approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for either the as-of-right or special permit designs, but with a strong preference to be communicated to the Board of Zoning Appeal for the latter.

Mr. Ferrara so moved. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

**Case 3844: Austin Hall, 1515 Massachusetts Ave., by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Install dormer on north side for mechanical ventilation.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the 1883 hall designed by H. H. Richardson. There were two existing eyebrow vent dormers on the rear main roof; one predated the district and the other had received a Certificate of Appropriateness in the 1970s. The proposal was for a new vent dormer on the rear elevation behind a chimney. The proposed dormer would be visible but only minimally.

Jonathan Austin, the architect, showed photographs from several viewpoints noting the location of the proposed dormer. The vent was needed because of HVAC upgrades in the Ames Courtroom. He described the proposed design as a simple shed dormer with flat-seam copper cladding and copper louvers. He had considered designing another eyebrow dormer, but decided it would devalue the other dormers, which were on steeper roofs than this one.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions or comments from the public, but there were none so he closed the public comment period.

Mr. Ferrara noted it was an extremely significant building and any alterations deserved a critical eye. The proposal kept the dormer very minimal in its location, shallow slope, and materials.

Mr. Sullivan recommended approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the certificate for the dormer vent as submitted, with review of construction details delegated to staff. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

**Case D-1468: 175 Fayerweather St., by Lawrence R. Smith.** Demolish house (1930).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff memo about the house and the University

Park neighborhood north of Concord Avenue on property formerly occupied by the Bay State Brick Company that was developed for housing in the 1910s. She recommended that the house be found significant as a relatively rare example, for Cambridge, of a 1½-story bungalow, for its associations with the broad economic history of Cambridge as part of the University Park subdivision, and for its associations with the broad social and cultural history of the city for its relationship the African-American Dunbar and Smith families.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions or comments pertaining to the significance of the buildings. There were none.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant for the reasons stated in the staff memo. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

Lawrence Smith, the owner, explained his background in Cambridge as a native of this neighborhood. The existing house had 1,128 sf of living space and the new one would add approximately 350 sf. He noted that the total would be significantly below the zoning allowance of 745 sf but he wanted to be considerate of the size and scale of the existing house. He described the plans for the new house; the bay facing Field Street would increase the living room space; the rear bump out would increase the kitchen and allow room for a dishwasher. The south wall would be 2' closer to the property line and he would add a side entrance there. The enclosed front porch would be remodeled as a half bath, office, closet, and living room. The foundation would be rebuilt and the modular house would be trucked to the site, reducing the amount of construction time needed. He would finish the interior and exterior on site. He had met with many of his neighbors and they had been supportive of his project. He noted that the neighborhood had already been through a long utility and road construction project and he wanted to complete his project efficiently. The once predominantly minority make-up of the neighborhood was changing. Minority buyers couldn't afford the neighborhood and he wanted to be able to live out his life in the house.

Dr. Solet asked about the energy-efficient components of the design. Mr. Smith said it would be Energy Star compliant; he was considering adding solar panels to the roof. Dr. Solet asked about the materials. Mr. Smith explained it would be a wood frame, built in Pennsylvania. He was still studying the options for finish materials but his preference was for wood siding and wood windows. He wanted to keep the cost at under \$350,000.

Mr. Irving encouraged the use of wood, which would increase the resale value of the house. He asked why there were no windows proposed for the rear dormer. Mr. Smith said that wall did not have any windows at present and they weren't needed for the bedroom and bathroom. Dr. Solet also questioned the lack of windows there.

Beaver Spooner of Walden Street asked about the construction timeline. Mr. Smith answered that the large tree would be taken down first, then the house and foundation, which would take a few days. The foundation would take about one week to construct. The house would arrive and be put on the new

foundation in a day. Then the walls would be married, plumbing and electrical connected, and exterior siding added. The total project should take about four months.

Ms. Harrington asked how common modular construction was in Cambridge. Mr. Smith said the house at 19-21 Field Street was modular. The staff named some other examples including the new apartments in Porter Square and a house on Middlesex Street. Ms. Harrington said it was very important to be able to retain a Cambridge family in the city and not see them pushed out by rising costs.

Mr. Irving said the new house would offer qualitative improvements to the owner and allow him to stay, which was preferable to a new buyer wanting to demolish the house in favor of something bigger and less fitting for the neighborhood.

Ms. Harrington moved to find the house not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

New Business: Determination of Procedure: Alteration to Designated Property

**Case 3846: 40 Willard St., by Cambridge Skating Club.** Regrade bank at northwest corner and construct low (18") retaining wall. Install crushed stone at maintenance gate.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the existing conditions of the property.

Dr. Solet and Mr. Ferrara disclosed that they were members of the Cambridge Skating Club. Mr. Sullivan said he did not think it was a conflict of interest because they had no financial interest in whether the work went forward or not.

Andus Baker, President of the Cambridge Skating Club, explained that there was considerable erosion on the bank close to Willard Street, where several trees had been removed. The proposal was to construct a low timber retaining wall, not more than 18" high, along the edge of the tennis courts to retain the bank. Also, an area that was used for parking and maintenance was dirt and would be covered with crushed stone. The Club was studying some other work, but it was a long-term plan and wouldn't all be done at once. These improvements would include a new storage shed and lighting. He noted that the use of the property for skating in the winter and tennis in the summer meant that there were very small windows of time in the fall and spring to complete projects.

Lisa Giersbach, the landscape architect, described the erosion control project including regrading and replanting to stabilize the bank. She showed pictures of the bank before the trees died.

Dr. Solet asked about the replacement trees. Ms. Giersbach answered that they would be ever-green, but a specific variety had not yet been determined.

Ms. Spooner asked if they would plant mature trees. Ms. Giersbach replied that they would not be too small at time of planting.

Mr. Irving said the retaining wall and gravel paving would not be inappropriate and would be a very innocuous change.

Dr. Solet moved to find the work appropriate and to approve the application as submitted, subject to the ten-day notice procedure to notify abutters. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

### Preservation Grants

**IPG 18-1: 1 Follen St., by Longy School of Music of Bard College.** \$100,000. For restoration of masonry perimeter wall and steps to Pickman Hall.

**PG 17-5: 74-78 Willow St., by Homeowner's Rehab Inc.** \$50,000. For restoration of decorative frieze. Deferred from May 2017.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building at 1 Follen Street, originally the home of Edwin H. Abbot. The Longy School had received previous grants to support roof repair, window restoration and masonry repointing. The last project was the brick wall around the perimeter of the property. It was made of orange, iron-spotted Roman brick with a brownstone cap and was severely deteriorated. The proposal was to take the wall down to the foundation and rebuild it using a mixture of salvaged bricks and new bricks. The grant request was for \$80,000 for the wall and \$20,000 to restore the masonry steps up to Pickman Hall.

He then described the second grant application for an affordable housing project on Willow Street. He explained that the agency had applied in May to remove siding, restore the exterior, and recreate the decorative applique that had once been present on the frieze. They matter had been deferred in May due to lack of funds. The exterior work had been nearly completed over the summer, but the agency still wished to receive a grant for that and for restoration of the swag and wreath ornaments on the façade. He said there wasn't any documentation about what the ornamentation originally looked like, but it was probably similar to other swag details on other buildings. He said the commission did not approve grants for work already completed, and he did not [believe that](#) re-creation of the decorative elements was a good use of scarce funds.

Mr. Irving and Ms. Harrington agreed.

Dr. Solet asked where the brick would be sourced for the Follen Street wall. Mr. Sullivan said the brick was available from a supplier in Ohio.

Dr. Solet moved to approve IPG 18-1 as described and not to approve a grant for PG 17-5. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

### Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes of September and July 2017.

Dr. Solet offered corrections on pages 1, 2, and 6 of the September minutes and then moved to approve them as corrected. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Mr. Sullivan reported that Mr. King had read the draft July minutes, the last meeting he had attended, and found no nits to pick. Mr. Irving was incredulous.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the July minutes as submitted. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Irving asked about the lawsuit in Acton over use of CPA funds for a church. Mr. Sullivan reported that using public funds in support of preservation of an historic religious building had been litigated in other states. The National Park Service and the Massachusetts Historical Commission had long given grants to religious institutions.

Dr. Solet asked if there was an update about sale of EDS property. Mr. Sullivan said he had no information on that. Dr. Solet noted that there were a lot of electrical upgrades happening on the campus. She asked about the bike lanes on Brattle Street in Harvard Square. Mr. Sullivan said the matter would come before the Commission at a future meeting.

Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed the Attendance List on October 5, 2017**

John Hawkinson	jhawk@mit.edu
Heli Meltsner	74 Avon Hill St.
Tim Shaw	147 Mt. Auburn St.
Charlotte Moore	9 Rutland St.
Francis Donovan	42 Irving St.
Elizabeth Gombosi	42 Irving St.
Andus Baker	22 Gurney St.
Lisa Giersbach	282 Moody St., Waltham 02473
Vince Dixon	60 Lake St., Unit N, Winchester 01890
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave.
Barbara Anthony	1580 Massachusetts Ave.
Jan Devereaux	255 Lakeview Ave.
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St.
Beaver Spooner	329 Walden St.

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.