

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

September 6, 2018 - 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge City Hall, Sullivan Chamber - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Joseph Ferrara, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield *Alternates*

Members absent: Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Gavin Kleespies

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. He made introductions, reviewed hearing procedures, and noted that public comment would be limited to three minutes per person.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3987: 10 Church St., by Kirche, LLC. Demolish existing theater building and construct new mixed-use building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff report on the history of the site, the 1925 theater, and subsequent alterations. He explained the Commission's jurisdiction was to consider the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for both demolition and new construction within the Harvard Square Conservation District. He read excerpts from the Harvard Square district goals and guidelines. He noted the abutting buildings: a former book bindery, College House, and the bank. He showed slides of the visibility of the site from all angles, including the Old Burying Ground. He said the theater played a major role in the cultural life of Harvard Square for many years. The original marquee facing Massachusetts Avenue was long gone. The theater's exterior had no architectural pretensions.

Anthony Galluccio of Galluccio & Watson LLP, attorney for the applicant, introduced the project. He explained the anticipated permitting timeline. The proponents had held community meetings in May 2017 and June 2018. The history of the theater was important to the public. The project included ground floor retail and basement theaters. He noted complications of the existing building with shared utilities and party walls. Structural and excavation issues had been carefully studied. He anticipated that discussion of this project would take more than one hearing. The new uses would activate the district and the new building was appropriate in scale and materiality. He acknowledged that the "expressive façade" with the LED lighting was a new concept and begged the Commission's indulgence to allow the idea to be explored. The project team would listen to feedback and try to respond to any concerns about precedent for the building technology and lighting, which he said would conform to city ordinances, have limited hours of operation, a controlled level of illumination, and would not be advertising or promotion for the interior use, and would not meet the definition of a sign per the zoning code. The layout and program of the building included approximately 9500 sf of theater in the basement, 5800 sf of ground floor retail, and 9,000 of offices per floor on four upper floors. The height above 60' in the overlay district required a special permit. A small portion of the building would exceed 60'. Additional relief would be for the basement FAR and a parking waiver. The new building's volume would be 8% larger than the existing.

Nathan Wong of Kirche LLC, the owner's representative, introduced the architecture firms

engaged for the design of the building (Promontorio and Merge Architects), the engineering firm (Beals & Thomas), and the lighting consultant (iArt). He showed pictures of recent preservation projects by the owners, including 115 Mt. Auburn Street, 40 Bow Street, and 24 JFK Street. He noted that food and beverage businesses were important to the owners and cited Night Market and Parsnip as examples. The north facing front elevation was in shadow much of the time. The brick wall was inactive, and the mechanicals were unsightly. The right of way for the alley off Palmer Street was not part of the theater lot; the dumpsters and one of the egress stairs did not serve the theater building.

Elizabeth Whitaker of Merge Architects showed slides highlighting the goals of the Harvard Square Conservation District and described how they had been working toward meeting them in the design plan. She noted the maintenance of the street wall, the addition of ground floor storefronts, the courtyard, enhanced accessibility, transportation issues, and the absence of a loading dock.

Luís Teixeira of Promontorio showed slides and described their intention to create an iconic and unique design. The streetscape would be activated. He showed renderings of the existing and proposed streetscape. The building site was very deep, so a carved-out courtyard would bring light to the office spaces on the upper floors. The building code would only allow 15% of the back wall (alley side) to be glazed. The new marquee would align with the two-story extension at the back of College House. The off-white color of the terracotta cladding material would lighten up the dark north side of the street. The Women's Community Cancer Project mural by Be Sargent would be replicated inside the cinema lobby. The ground floor would be transparent and there would be a view from the street into the courtyard. He showed renderings of the alley, the view from the Old Burying Ground and interior view from the offices.

Ms. Whitaker described the sustainability goals for construction. They would attain a minimum of LEED Silver status. The modest office entrance would be on the far right side of the front elevation. She displayed samples of the terracotta glazing and a 3D-printed sample of the custom facade. The LED lights would be embedded into the tile and would cast indirect lighting on the interior surfaces. The fixtures and LED lights would not be visible. The headhouses would be 66' 10" but most of the building would be below 60' high. The generator would be located behind the marquee. A roof terrace would be set back from the façade and a solar array would be located at the back of the roof. There was a 4' grade change from Church Street to the alley. She showed section views and described the shadow studies.

Mr. Wong showed a drawing of the tile shape. He said the façade would be beautiful whether the LED lights were on or off. He said the lights would not be on all the time; he proposed 8:00AM-8:00PM.

Riccardo Lardi of iArt described the ethereal appearance of the light displays. He noted the firm's project at the Kunst Museum in Basel. He displayed video renderings of two lighting design examples: clouds and a child's drawing. The illumination at night would be only 1% of the LED's capability.

Mr. Wong said the goal of the lighting was to excite, delight, and engage the community. They wanted to engage with Cambridge school children, possibly teaching them how to code and to design

their own lighting designs that could be shown on the building. They didn't want images to move quickly, flicker, or be bright. The designs could be black and white or in color.

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

Mr. Ferrara asked for a description of the materials to be used on the other facades. Mr. Teixeira answered that a dark gray brick would be used on the other elevations. Ms. Whitaker showed a sample.

Dr. Solet asked how the curved tile façade would perform in winter conditions. Would snow and ice get stuck in the grooves and freeze? Mr. Teixeira said there would be vertical channels so water and snow would run down the façade. Mr. Lardi said dust can accumulate in the tiles. In Basel, the façade gets cleaned once a year. Mr. Wong said the curved glass walls would also require cleaning. The owners were committed to providing the required maintenance.

Ms. Paris asked how the women's mural would be replicated. Mr. Teixeira said that it could be reproduced as a painting. Ms. Whitaker added that a photo reproduction on canvas was another option.

Mr. Irving asked how far the railing of the roof terrace would be from the front wall and how the terrace would be used. Mr. Teixeira said the setback would be at least 10'. Ms. Whitaker said the terrace would be for the use of office tenants.

Mr. Barry asked for an explanation of why the existing building could not be adapted for this new use. The street wall expression and volume were similar to the proposed. Mr. Galluccio answered that the theater use did not activate the façade, so it was better located in the basement with retail on the first floor. The existing building would have to be chopped up too much to adapt it. Mr. Barry asked for elaboration on the appropriateness of the scale and materiality. Mr. Wong said the materials were difficult to visualize with only a rendering. They would have a mock up with full-size material samples and lighting. Mr. Galluccio said the marquee would transition from the two-story extension of College House to the new building. The façade was broken up with vertical bays and the courtyard. Ms. Whitaker added that the rhythm of the theater's pilasters was echoed in the fenestration and wall material of the new building. The terracotta was artful but restrained. It had both an old and a new quality. Mr. Barry asked how deep the excavation would be. Mr. Teixeira said it would be 20-25' deep. Kyle Baker of Merge Architects said the existing building had a partial basement 12-15' deep. Mr. Barry asked if the marquee could angle out for better visibility. Mr. Teixeira said that would change the proportions of the sign area.

Mr. Sheffield asked for more information on the proposed retail signage. Mr. Wong said the rendering was a placeholder, and sign design was still in progress. Mr. Sheffield asked if the scale of the building as seen from farther away had been studied. Mr. Galluccio said they could take photos from additional locations. Mr. Sheffield asked about the message the lighting design was trying to convey. Mr. Galluccio said they wanted to engage residents and schoolchildren through use of the lighting capabilities.

Mr. Sullivan noted that earlier design studies had the top floor set back and glazed. Why the change? Mr. Galluccio said two floors were set back in the preliminary design. It was reduced to four

floors of office evenly distributed. Mr. Sullivan asked if they had considered putting the courtyard at the street level. Mr. Galluccio answered yes, but there was only 5,800 sf of retail space to begin with and the courtyard would greatly reduce that. Mr. Sullivan asked about the glazing system. The rendering showed no spandrels or mullions. Mr. Wong said there would be mullions. They were working with a façade consultant to develop the details. Mr. Teixeira said that vertical mullions were hidden behind the metallic frame for the terracotta. The glass would break at each floor. The glass would be hung on the frame.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions of fact.

Charles Teague of 23 Edmunds Street asked about a transformer, street trees, and street furniture. Mr. Wong answered that the transformer would be on the alley side where the plan was labeled electric utility service. Mr. Galluccio said they would work with DPW about placement of street trees.

Carole O'Hare of 172 Magazine Street asked what limits to time, brightness, velocity of change, and energy usage could be placed on the lighting. Had they looked at health studies for the effects of this type of lighting? Mr. Galluccio suggested 8AM to 8PM. He said a mockup would be used to determine an appropriate level of brightness. The velocity of change could be stipulated in permit conditions.

Heather Hoffman of 213 Hurley Street asked if there was a technical reason why the lights were more powerful than they needed to be. Mr. Lardi said there were not many types of LEDs that were low level only. A certain diameter of the bulb was needed. Ms. Hoffman noted that people do live in Harvard Square. How many homes would be able to see the lighted façade? Mr. Baker said the light levels would be less than comes from a window at night.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked how far the retail windows were recessed. Mr. Teixeira said the first-floor windows were set back 1'. Ms. Meyer asked why a light terracotta color was selected. Mr. Teixeira said it related to the church building and would lighten up the dark side of the street.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked about the width of the opening to the courtyard and the difference in height between existing and proposed. Mr. Baker said the opening was about 12' wide and the primary height difference was about 14'. Mr. Williamson asked how the lighted messages would be regulated. Was community engagement changed to youth engagement? Had the design been discussed with Harvard? Mr. Galluccio answered that the owners felt strongly about youth engagement and educational engagement. Harvard was aware of the project but had not commented on it.

The owner of Lizzy's Ice Cream asked how long the demolition and construction would take. Mr. Galluccio answered that it would be a 24-month construction project.

Ken Taylor of 23 Berkeley Street said it was an exciting project. He asked if fiber optic lighting had been considered instead of LED. Were the LEDs dimmable and what was the maximum brightness? Mr. Lardi said they had not used fiber optic in this type of situation before, but he could investigate it. LED had been the most energy-efficient and price-effective solution found thus far. The LEDs could be dimmed to almost nothing and were able to power up quickly.

Pebble Gifford of 15 Hilliard Street asked to be added to a notification list for future community meetings and suggested the owners meet with interest groups. She was disappointed that the courtyard would not be publicly accessible and said the retail design was grim. She was concerned about shadows and asked if they could be mitigated by eliminating the top floor. Mr. Galluccio said that was not feasible.

John Hawkinson of *Cambridge Day* asked about the illumination levels at night and during day. Mr. Galluccio said they would get a technical response to that for the next hearing.

Mr. Irving asked for comments from the Commission.

Mr. Sheffield said it was an interesting approach to a complicated problem. He noted that the public was used to seeing the back of the theater building. The punched window openings on the east looked haphazard. The Palmer Street side was an opportunity to activate that small street. Could people exit out the back? More information on retail signage was needed. He expressed concern about the massing on Church Street. If the intended messaging of the illuminated façade could be explained it might make the request more compelling.

Dr. Solet said she could see the vertical pilasters of the existing theater building in the new design. She said it had the potential to be a world-class design. The sidewalk treatment needed more study. The art options for the lighted façade were interesting. Where could people stand to best see it? The street was narrow. A 3-D video rendering could be helpful.

Ms. Paris suggested that Club Passim might be able to use the theater spaces sometimes because their own space was quite small. She suggested working with the MBTA to draw people to the location from the Church Street exit from the subway.

Mr. Barry said the slot from which the courtyard could be viewed was not working. It provided a glimpse to a place that the public could not go. If the street wall was reinterpreted, the slot might not be necessary. The façade was bold and elegant, but the quirkiness of the area would be replaced with a very polished look. Maybe that was part of the diversity of building types, but he wasn't sure.

Mr. Irving said he intended to continue the hearing because there were other cases on the agenda, but he gave James Williamson opportunity to comment. Mr. Williamson said he would be content with the existing brick wall. A public subsidy for theater use could be achieved. This was a failure of civic imagination in how to re-use the existing building. Scale was related to the economics of the project and therefore relevant. The rear elevation was an opportunity to do something more creative as per the guidelines.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that when hearing resumed the applicants should be prepared with a 3-D printed mockup at least 6' square with the lighting installed. He asked the applicant to propose some control parameters or operating restrictions for the lighting. The storefront design needed more detail. An analysis of the views of the building from further away was also needed.

Mr. Taylor suggested that renderings of the building at night be produced. 8:00 PM might be too

early to turn off the light display if it was at the right level of illumination.

Mr. Barry said he could imagine this building being a destination point and a place to take visitors to the city. He noted that the projects by the ownership at 115 Mt Auburn Street and 40 Bow were celebrations of surface materials and texture. He liked the idea of the activation of this building's surface with light. But it had to be done right. It had to be fine-tuned.

Mr. Galluccio agreed to continue the hearing. Dr. Solet moved to continue to another advertised date within 90 days. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1485: 13-15 Vincent St., by Matt Hayes. Consider revised plans.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1924 duplex house and the street. The commission had found the building significant for its architecture and historical associations in June and then in July determined that it was preferably preserved in the context of the replacement design. The owner was returning to present a new proposal for the Commission's consideration.

Matt Hayes, the owner, explained that the Commission had recommended that he explore an option that would move the existing house to make the setbacks conform and to build an addition for a second dwelling unit. He had done so and wanted to present it along with a preferred option tonight.

Peter Quinn, the architect, displayed the existing site plan, noting the setback non-conformance. He showed a site plan with the front 2/3 of the house moved over and a new unit built on the back. The entry to the rear unit would face the street. He also displayed a design for demolition of the existing house and new construction in a traditional style front and back. For reference, he showed the original proposal for all new construction with a transitional style unit in the front and a modern style unit in the back.

Dr. Solet asked for clarification of plan A-0. Mr. Hayes answered that it showed the relocated house with the addition and the existing footprint shown in dashed red lines. The sunken courtyard at the back was no longer proposed. Parking would be arranged with one space on the side and one space in the front, which was the trade-off for this scheme. The narrower all-new traditional building would allow for side-by-side parking spaces on one side of the house. Dr. Solet asked about the window spacing. Mr. Hayes answered that the windows were spaced far apart because of the location of the stairway.

Mr. Irving asked if there were public questions or comments but there were none. He noted the receipt of four letters including one from Robert Glass of 11 Vincent Street expressing opposition to moving the existing house and preference for the original proposal presented in June/July; another letter from Nancy Ayoub of 74 Orchard Street expressing opposition to both the demolition scheme and the house-moving scheme; a letter from Mary Ayoub of 9 Vincent Street expressing concern about demolition or moving and the related problem of rats in the neighborhood; and a letter from Daryl Janes of Linnaean Street opposed to demolition.

Mr. Ferrara asked about the site plan of the all new, traditional style design. Mr. Hayes said it

would be like the first proposal.

Ms. Paris asked why the house-moving option pushed the house back on the lot. Mr. Quinn said it needed to go back to provide space beyond the front setback for parking one car. Ms. Paris said she could not get a good sense of the context in the renderings.

Mr. Ferrara suggested the new traditional front house and the modern back house from the original proposal. Mr. Sheffield agreed that the massing of the new traditional front house was good. But the cutout roof deck was too aggressive for a traditional design. The juxtaposition of the traditional and contemporary needed a break of material between the two. An elevated parking space in the front was not a good design element. Ms. Burks asked if the front parking space could remain at street level by carving out the front part of the lot and supporting it with a retaining wall.

Dr. Solet expressed preference for the traditional design.

Mr. Barry said that if the construction was all new, he would rather see all contemporary design or an all traditional style, but not a faux old house combined with contemporary. Mr. Ferrara agreed.

Dr. Solet asked if there was support for landmarking the existing house that was importantly associated with Fire Lt. George Byars.

Mr. Irving said he did not consider the building a potential landmark. He did not think the severely truncated mass of the existing house in the house-moving scheme was a good thing. There was no logic to a faux old and contemporary combo so his preference was the all-new traditional. He thanked the owner and architect for bringing the requested house-moving option. The Commission had to see that in order to reach this point.

Ms. Tobin moved to decline to waive the remainder of the delay but to encourage the applicant to return with an all-traditional new-construction design, with the alterations discussed and in a fully-realized set of design drawings. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

Dr. Solet suggested a change in paragraph 6 on page 5 of the July 12, 2018 minutes. It should read, "He said there..."

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Director's Report

Dr. Solet asked who the members of the Community Preservation Committee were because they were not listed on the report. Mr. Sullivan said the report was issued by staff to the Committee and what he distributed was an excerpt of a larger report. Dr. Solet asked about the status of the St. John's Road properties. Mr. Sullivan said he understood the first deal fell through and that EDS was going with the second bidder. He did not know the details.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The

meeting was adjourned at 10:54 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on September 6, 2018**

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Dick Lundgren	7 Central St
V Stanford	17 Vincent St
G Hibbard	23 Ellsworth Ave
Douglass Payne	24 Sherman St
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl
Charles Teague	23 Edmunds St
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
John Hawkinson	
Kenneth Taylor	23 Berkeley St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St
Philip Rizzuto	88 Park Ave
Ronald Rizzuto	88 Park Ave
Kimberly Dauber	114 Elm St #1
David Ricardo	42 Fayette St #2
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Cameron Layne	16 Vincent St
Nancy Ayoub	9 Vincent
Carol O'Hare	172 Magazine St
Beaver Spooner	329 Walden St
Pebble Gifford	15 Hilliard St
Dillenseger, M.P.	140 Foster St
Ron Rizzuto	88 Park Ave
Deb Biba	20 Newell St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.