

Approved 7/2/09

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 4, 2009 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Vice Chair Irving; Mss. Harrington and Berg
Messrs. Crocker and Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and introduced the commission and staff.

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-86: 1797-1803 Massachusetts Ave. (former North Prospect Congregational Church), Lesley University, owner. Review draft amendments to standards, criteria, and guidelines in landmark study report.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the case history. In April, the Commission had determined that the property met the criteria for landmark designation and continued the hearing to discuss requested revisions to the guidelines and criteria sections of the report. He briefly described the site and history of the property. He reviewed the changes that had been made to the General Standards and Criteria and the Suggested Review Guidelines. He went over the proposed guidelines in detail, explaining the considerations that should be given to sightlines, architectural features, the significance of existing parts of the building, etc. He reported that the Ordinance Committee had a hearing the previous week and anticipated considering both the zoning and landmark proposals at the same City Council meeting.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, introduced members of the Lesley administration. The proposed concept for the Art Institute of Boston (AIB) relocation included three components: adaptive re-use of the church, a new structure, and a connector. He said they hoped that the criteria and guidelines would not preclude an outcome that might be found beneficial to the public in the future. He asked the Commission to maintain its discretion to consider all options in the future. He said the university had asked Dennis Carlone to review the proposed criteria and guidelines and to comment on them.

Mr. Carlone reviewed his comments on the criteria and guidelines and referenced his e-mail of June 3, 2009 that had been submitted to the Commission. He asked for different language in section 1a. of the Suggested Review Guidelines where priorities are described. He asked that the front setback limitations not be specified at this time. He described the urban design benefits of moving the church to lot 18, allowing for a transition of scale from University Hall to the smaller Mansard house to the south of lot 18. In section 1c., he said that the language seemed to preclude moving the church.

Mr. Sullivan said he had not intended the language in 1c to preclude moving the church. He made no objection to the proposed change to the language in 1a. Regarding the front setback, he said it was typical and appropriate for a church to have a somewhat deeper setback than the surrounding commercial buildings.

Mr. Irving asked for public comments.

John Howard of 8 Cogswell Avenue and member of the Lesley working group said he spoke for a group of people that had sent a letter to the Commission in support of the AIB project in general and in agreement with Mr. Rafferty's statement that it would not be appropriate to preclude any possibilities at this time.

Carol Weinhaus of 64 Oxford Street said she hoped the criteria would allow for restoration of the church's original massing and steeple. The building, if lowered closer to the sidewalk, would feel safer to pedestrians at night. The church was the only welcoming structure between Harvard Epworth Church and Porter Square.

Harriet Ahouse of 4 Newport Road said she would like to leave open the possibility of moving the church. She suggested that the integrity of the building be maintained but that there was room to compromise on the landscape surrounding it. She favored lowering the building and restoring the steeple.

Andrea Wilder of 12 Arlington Street said that landmark potential of the property was obvious. The church transcends its time and reaches back to the Civil War era and before. Its siting was part of that history. The Lesley design concept would overbuild the site and crowd the church. It needed paths and grassy areas for respite; it needed to enhance not destroy the environment.

Katherine Lapierre of 1 Frost Terrace asked about the relationship between zoning and landmark regulations. She objected to the current discussion between Lesley and the Commission about changing the language in the report. Mr. Sullivan explained that the Commission, per the landmark ordinance, could require conditions more restrictive than zoning. The landmark review process would be the same, regardless of the zoning district. He indicated that the Commission did not take the view that a landmark could never be changed, and hoped that it could be trusted to do its job.

Sarah Farrington of 18 Frost Street read written comments by Gordon Moore, who was out of town. The church did not need to be moved, though the University might claim otherwise. There was land behind University Hall for Lesley's needs.

Ruth Ryals of 115 Upland Road spoke as a resident of Avon Hill in favor of Lesley's proposal for the AIB relocation. She said many other residents of Avon Hill also supported it. She urged the Commission to protect the original part of the church. The building as it is now was ugly, didn't work, and didn't respond to the neighborhood.

Heli Meltsner of 74 Avon Hill Street spoke in support of the landmark designation proposal. She noted that a setback was helpful to view the church. In its original location, the building had sight lines across the Common. A good architect would apply design creativity to solve design challenges.

Marjorie Wunsch of 78 Washington Avenue agreed that the church needed breathing space around it. The concept for a glass enclosure adjacent to the church would be expensive to heat and cool. She also expressed concern about a new building built touching the church and how that would impact views of the church.

Peter Lang of 1 Frost Terrace spoke in support of landmark designation. He supported renovating the church and adaptively reusing it so that it would be open to the community. He referred to a letter with 82 signatures in support of the AIB relocation and the landmark designation, but taking issue with the overlay zone.

Gabby Friedler of 4 Newport Road said she had signed the letter protesting the overlay zone. She said she opposed the AIB proposal because of its density, massive size, and use of the church yard.

Jean Farrington of 24 Frost Street said the landmark report was fair and did not cut out any possibilities. There would be more discussion about the specifics of a proposal when Lesley filed an application.

Sandy Doran, General Counsel for Lesley University, asked for revision of the phrase, "in no case," on page 18, 1a., second paragraph.

Mr. Sullivan said he did not think a setback of 10' would be appropriate. He agreed to striking the phrase "in no case." He asked the Commission to delegate the final wording to himself, the chair, and vice chair.

Mr. Carlone indicated that the setback formula was used again on page 19.

Frank Shirley recommended that the guideline regarding setbacks be clear, for the benefit of the owner and architect. The church needed some space around it or else the complexion of the building would be changed.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed all the proposed changes to the language in the report but requested delegating final edits to himself, the chair, and vice chair. The final proposed language would be posted on the Commission's web site by Tuesday noon. Further opportunity for discussion could take place at the City Council meeting.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to adopt the report, substantially as written and subject to minor technical revisions by the Executive Director, Chair, and Vice Chair in the spirit of the description given by Mr. Sullivan and to have it posted on the Commission's web site by Tuesday noon. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Irving called for a recess at 7:30 and reconvened the meeting at 7:40. He asked the representative for Case 2346 if he would mind taking Case 2355 out of order. Doug Okun agreed to let the other case go first.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2355: 1 Plympton St., by A. D. Club. Review previously-removed and modified chimney.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of existing conditions. He had noticed that a chimney had gone missing last year and learned that the A.D. Club had contracted with a roofer who recommended taking it down. The permit that was issued and approved by the staff was only for replacement of the roofing materials, without noting the change to the chimney. Per the Commission's procedures for violations, the owner had been asked to apply for the work retroactively and explain the situation.

Gary Waite, the building manager, showed photographs of the pre-existing condition of the chimney. While the roofer was fixing roof leaks, he had noted the poor condition of the chimney. The club then found a masonry contractor, who recommended the chimney be removed. ISD told the contractor to get signatures from DPW and Traffic and Parking, but not Historical. He was not told he needed a building permit. The permits for temporary street closure and blocking the sidewalk were obtained. The chimney had been leaning toward the street and would not have made it through the winter. He submitted a letter from the insurance company saying that the chimney should come down.

Mr. Sullivan asked if any material had been saved.

Mr. Waite said the copper baffles were saved. The cost estimated to restore the chimney was \$30,000 compared to cutting it off and capping it, which had cost \$8,000. It had been a non-working chimney for 50 years and the club could not justify the extra expense for a non-working feature. Other pressing maintenance needs like plumbing and electrical repairs were the focus of fundraising efforts. The bottom of the original chimney remained and had been capped with a sandstone slab.

Ms. Berg said she had not noticed the change to the chimney.

Mr. Waite said the chimneys on the other side of the roof and at the rear had been cropped and capped in the same way when the building underwent a substantial renovation in 2001.

Mr. Irving said he wanted to see what was approved by the Commission in 2001. That information was material to his decision in this matter.

Mr. Waite agreed to continue the hearing to July 2.

The Commission instructed the staff to look into the 2001 approvals.

Case 2346: 8 Follen St., by Susan & Terry Ragon. Modify and construct addition to garage.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the site. The garage was set back approximately 100 feet from the sidewalk, behind the porte cochere.

Doug Okun, the architect, said he was representing the Ragons. The owners wanted to convert the garage roof to a Mansard and use the second floor for storage. The new garage would use the same door and the detailing would be the same as on the house, with a slate Mansard, double-hung windows, and matching trim.

Mr. Irving said the proposed door was inconsistent with the Mansard design. Mr. Okun said the door could be modified to have square lights along the top instead of the arched windows.

Ms. Berg asked about visibility and how the scale of the garage compared to surrounding buildings.

Mr. Okun displayed photographs and described the height of the adjacent apartment building.

There being no members of the public wanting to speak, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the design as modified with respect to the garage door. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Case 2356: 14 J.F. Kennedy St., by 1834 Realty, Inc. Replace display windows with operable windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building, which was part of the Read Block. The existing storefront openings had been recreated when the block was restored ca. 2000. The proposal was to change the type of window sash, but to leave the existing openings the same.

Dan Fraine, the owner's representative, described the proposed accordion style café windows. The restaurant space was vacant and several people had inquired about using this type of window, which was fairly common in Harvard Square. The windows would not protrude into the public space. The type of glass would be the same as on the second floor. He gave examples of other restaurants in the vicinity that had this type of window.

Mr. Shirley spoke favorably about the change. It would enliven the streetscape to have operable windows at the sidewalk. He moved to approve the application as presented. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2359: 10 Concord Ave., by Adams Realty LLC. Replace storm windows; replace casement windows with double hung windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the house, built ca. 1836. The inappropriate addition on the side of the house had a lot of casement windows, which were in very poor condition. The application was to replace the casement windows with new wood double hung sash with storms.

Mr. Irving said he was impressed that the application was for single glazed windows with storms, as preferred in the Commission's guidelines.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve the application, as submitted, subject to ten-day notice procedures. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Review funding requests from city agencies.

Mr. Sullivan distributed a table of city project proposals for CPA funding. He reviewed each request and his recommendations for funding.

Ms. Berg suggested adding a sentence conveying the Commission's concern about the decaying condition of the Cambridge Common sidewalks. It was the sense of the meeting that the Commission agreed with Mr. Sullivan's recommendations.

Preservation Grants

IPG 09-7: Castle School, 298 Harvard Street #3. Repair/replace gutters, repair foundation, turret, and dormer. Estimated project cost: \$39,500. Recommended grant: \$20,000 matching.

Mr. Sullivan described the building and summarized the request for an additional grant to repair the gutters, foundation, turret, and dormer. He recommended approving a matching grant of \$20,000.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the grant as recommended. Ms. Harrington seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

IPG 09-9: Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, 145 Brattle Street. Replace wood gutter, window trim, shutters. Estimated project cost: \$22,000. Recommended grant: \$25,000 outright.

Mr. Sullivan described the gutter and other repairs proposed. This was the first request from the church. He recommended an outright grant of \$25,000.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the grant as recommended. Ms. Harrington seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

Minutes

Ms. Burks pointed out a correction on page 8, where "Berkeley Street" should read "Follen Street."

Ms. Berg noted a typo on page 4, which should read "any."

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported about the fire at the Mormon Church on Longfellow Park. The church planned to rebuild.

Mr. Shirley remarked on an article on the Sierra Club web site that recommended replacing windows for energy conservation. He said he planned on writing a letter to the organization. He also asked about 164 Brookline Street, a vacant building owned by M.I.T. At a community meeting, M.I.T. planners had said they could not do anything with the building until they had a tenant. He expressed concern over the fact that the institute was not maintaining the building.

Ms. Berg moved to adjourn. Mr. Shirley seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:49 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 6/4/09**

Harriet Ahouse	4 Newport Rd #2
Carol Weihaus	64 Oxford St #14
John Howard	8 Cogswell Ave
Doug Okun	156 Mt. Auburn St
Gary Waite	1 Plympton St
George Smith	29 Everett St
William Doss Suter	29 Everett St
Andrew Exlund	29 Everett St
Henry Moss	130 Prospect St
Jason Forney	130 Prospect St
Stan Trecker	21 White Pl, Brookline 02495
Sandy Doran	29 Everett St
Birgitta Ralston	1 Newport Rd
Ron Kadomiya	9 Frost St
Andrea Kadomiya	9 Frost St
June Ellen Mendelson	24 Arlington St
Andrea Wilder	12 Arlington St
Katherine Lapierre	1 Frost Ter
Peter Lang	1 Frost Ter
Sarah Farrington	18 Frost St
Jean Farrington	24 Frost St
John Farrington	135 Oxford St
Scott Doughty	37 Arlington St
Wylie Doughty	37 Arlington St
Daniel Fraine	1374 Mass Ave
Peggy Curtis	1775 Mass Ave
Ruth Ryals	115 Upland Rd
Ann Austin	47 Avon Hill St
Ann Freeman	25A Hillside Ave
Jim Freeman	25A Hillside Ave
Rebecca Ramsay	5 Exeter Park
Marjory Wunsch	78 Washington Ave
Heli Meltsner	74 Avon Hill St
Gaby Friedler	4 Newport Rd \$4
Astrid Dodds	73 Wendell St

Note: Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.