

Approved 3/1/12

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 1, 2011, 6:00 P.M. Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave.

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

Members absent: Chandra Harrington, *Member*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair William King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and made introductions. He designated alternates Shary Berg, Joseph Ferrara and Susannah Tobin to vote as needed and reviewed the agenda.

Cambridge Heritage Trust - Termination

Mr. King, himself a trustee of the Cambridge Heritage Trust, described the trust's early projects beginning in 1964 and explained that changes to the tax laws requiring annual distributions had depleted its assets. The trustees proposed making a final disbursement and terminating the trust. Having explained the background of the matter, he recused himself from any further discussion. Robert Crocker recused himself because of his position as an officer of the Cambridge Historical Society. Bill Bibbins explained that he was a non-voting advisor of the Cambridge Historical Society, so he would not recuse himself from the matter.

Bruce Irving, Vice Chair, assumed the chair. Charles Sullivan explained that the Commission was the beneficiary of the trust, so termination would require its approval. However, the trust did not need Commission approval to disburse funds. He reviewed the proposed motion and the Certificate of Termination of Trust.

Gavin Kleespies, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Society, explained that the Society had been approached about receiving the disbursement and described the Society's proposal for an internship program that would develop walking tours over the next ten years. The tours would be made available online and the intern would give a lecture on the topic of each tour. After ten years the tours would be compiled in a booklet.

Dr. Solet asked if Cambridge public school students could attend and participate in the tours. Mr. Kleespies answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked how large the distribution would be. Mr. Sullivan replied that it was approximately \$28,000.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the termination of the Cambridge Heritage Trust as set forth in the Certificate of Termination signed by the Trustees. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 with all alternates voting and Messrs. King and Crocker recused.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2717 (continued): 1131 Massachusetts Ave./1-5 Remington St., by Veritas at Harvard Square, LLC. Application for Certificate of Hardship for existing transformer, installed previously in violation of Case 1956.

Mr. Sullivan related the background of the case. The Law Department had pursued enforcement of the district procedures via the commission's complaint against the applicant after the unapproved installation of a

pad-mounted transformer. He showed slides of the transformer. The applicant had since retroactively applied for a Certificate of Hardship and the hearing had been continued several times in order to gather more information on the permit process and NSTAR's involvement.

James Rafferty of Adams & Rafferty spoke on behalf of the applicant. He reported on meetings with the city's Electrical Department, Electrical Inspector, and NSTAR. He provided a timeline of the transformer design and installation. It had originally been the plan to locate the electrical service for the hotel in an existing vault under Massachusetts Avenue. NSTAR indicated that the vault would not be large enough to provide sufficient capacity. Discussions then occurred between NSTAR, the contractor, and the Electrical Department. It was determined that a pad mounted transformer was necessary. A small pad was poured, but then NSTAR replaced it with a larger pad for a larger transformer. He reported on a site visit with NSTAR to determine if other locations were possible. Burying it was not possible due to the existing below-grade structures. A garage location was not possible because an NSTAR truck could not access it for servicing. Returning the original three transformers to the pole and installing a smaller pad-mounted transformer would cost an estimated \$300,000-\$400,000, which the hotel could not afford. He asked the Commission to grant a Certificate of Hardship for the existing transformer installation and to allow the proposed landscaping treatment as a screen.

Ms. Burks asked if the vault under Massachusetts Avenue would have been too small for the smaller sized transformer originally planned. Mr. Rafferty answered that he had met with Joe Nicoloro of ISD but did not know all the details of the decision.

Mr. Sullivan asked how much larger the existing transformer was in order to provide additional capacity for future needs. Mr. Rafferty did not know the answer, but he said the conduit plan showed three additional hook ups to the transformer. Mr. Sullivan asked if the easement specified a size for the transformer or pad. Mr. Rafferty said he had submitted the document at the last hearing. It identifies a location for the transformer on a plan, but it was non-negotiable. Mr. Sullivan suggested that one way to mitigate the situation would be to remove the extra capacity beyond what is currently being served by the transformer and install a smaller one.

Mr. King asked who owned the transformer. Mr. Rafferty answered that the owner was NSTAR. Mr. King asked the staff to consult with the Law Department about adding NSTAR as a co-defendant.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue asked if NSTAR had paid for the easement. Through the chair, Mr. Rafferty replied that he did not believe there had been any consideration other than a hookup of the electrical service.

Mr. King closed public comment. He suggested that the hearing be continued for three months and that the staff be authorized to consult with the Law Department about adding NSTAR as a defendant and to notify NSTAR of the Commission's unhappiness that they had not been actively participating in these hearings. Mr. Rafferty consented on behalf of his client.

Dr. Solet so moved, Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting.

Case 2740 (amendment): 151 Brattle St., by Sikander Ilyas & Heidi Greiling. Amend plans for renovation project including changes to windows and doors, porches, fences, walkways, and garage door.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted that the Commission had approved a Certificate of Appropriateness in July for alterations including opening the porch, changing fences, removing a door, window changes, and changing the paint colors.

Daniel Steger of Vanecko Ltd. reviewed the proposed changes. He displayed the amended elevations, site plan, and landscape plan. He described a low fence at the sidewalk, gates, paths, rear fences, window modifications, removal of a door, and a new carriage house door.

Mr. Bibbins asked about the carriage house door. Mr. Steger replied that it would look like the older door but would operate as an overhead door.

Marilee Meyer asked if the windows, now with a mix of diamond paned sash and conventional sash, had originally been mixed. Through the chair, Mr. Steger answered that there had always been a combination of window types on the building as far as he could determine.

Mr. Sullivan asked how the fences would be painted. Mr. Steger said they would be a dark green. Mr. Sullivan pointed out that fences were typically painted the color of the house trim.

Michael Hanlon, the landscape architect, noted that there was a dark brown fence next door. Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission delegate approval of paint colors to the staff.

Mr. Irving moved to amend the Certificate of Appropriateness for the changes described, subject to the approval of paint colors by the staff, and to grant a Certificate of Nonapplicability for changes not visible from a public way. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting as alternates.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-105/D-1230: 60 Clifton St., by Gary S. Twombly o/b/o Emery Homes LLC. Consider whether to initiate landmark designation study.

Mr. King explained the landmark designation and demolition delay processes.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Commission had found the house at 60 Clifton Street to be a Preferably Preserved Significant Building on July 5, 2011. The demolition delay was at the five month mark. The house was one of the two oldest on the street, having been built in 1855 on Rindge Avenue and moved to Clifton Street in 1859. It was a North Cambridge brickyard worker's cottage, typically built by Irish immigrants that started to arrive in the 1840s, many of whom worked in the nearby clay pits. It was similar in size and style to the house at 66 Clifton Street, also built in 1855 and moved from Rindge Avenue. Houses of this type were highly significant to Cambridge history, but that they were often threatened because of their small size and layout. He said a landmark study could spur further discussion with the owner and possibly end in protection for the house.

Mr. King noted that a petition had been received in favor of a landmark study.

Mr. Bibbins asked if the wide spacing of the two cottages was original. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative. The house behind them at #64 was not built until the 1890s.

Cheryl Webb of 64 Clifton Street said the three houses had been there for over 100 years. She said 60 Clifton looked bad because the previous owner tried a new paint product that failed. Number 66 was an example of a good renovation that sold as an alternative to a condominium. The house had a huge backyard. The developer could build a separate house behind of a similar size or a little larger than #60.

Kevin Emery, a co-owner of #60, said he had met with Mr. Sullivan about ways to save the building. Those ideas did not work out for a number of reasons. The house had only 704 square feet.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place supported a landmark study. He noted that there was a lot of development underway in the neighborhood and there was a danger of piecemeal erosion of the historic character.

Richard Clarey, of 15 Brookford Street and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, said the property was one of the earliest in the neighborhood. Michael Brandon also spoke in favor of a study.

Dr. Solet suggested that the owners look at the even smaller cottage in Taylor Square that sold for a good price. Ms. Berg offered 107 Auburn Street as another model.

Eamon Fee, a co-owner, said they were stymied by the low height of the second story.

Mr. Irving moved to initiate a landmark study for 60 Clifton Street and to authorize the staff to look into designating similar properties. Ms. Tobin seconded and the motion passed 7-0, with Ms. Tobin and Mr. Ferrara voting.

Mr. King called for a recess at 8:15 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 8:25 P.M.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1249: 8 Blanchard Rd., by George Kouyoumjian. Review unauthorized demolition of house (1953) and application for retroactive approval.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reported on the sequence of events that led to the demolition of the 1953 ranch house at 8 Blanchard Road.

Mr. King said the Commission should determine whether the procedures of the demolition delay ordinance had been violated, and then respond to the applicant's request for a retroactive demolition permit.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owners, said there was no question that a demolition occurred without a permit. It had happened to the great surprise of the owners. The contractor, Cyril Hughes, had called the building inspector out immediately after the work occurred. When the roof was removed, the end-wall chimney gave way and damaged the remaining three walls. He asked for a retroactive review of the significance of the house and a waiver of the two-year moratorium provided for in the ordinance. The contractor had made a mistake in clearing the site when the accident happened.

Mr. King asked if anyone wanted to make a case that there had not been a demolition otherwise than pursuant to the procedures of the ordinance. No one offered such an argument.

Mr. Irving moved to find that the building had been demolished otherwise than pursuant to a permit granted after compliance with the provisions of the demolition delay ordinance. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting as alternates.

Dr. Solet said it was irrelevant whether the house was significant or not. It was more than 50 years old and a demolition request should have been brought through the normal review process.

Mr. Ferrara noted that if the Commission had found the house significant during a normal review hearing it would have had an opportunity to comment on the replacement proposal.

Mr. King stated that the Commission had decided to shorten the two-year moratorium in three other violation cases, when it found that it would be in the public interest to allow a project to move forward rather than to require the site remain frozen for the full two years.

Steve Samuel of 7 Blanchard Road asked if the Commission had to determine if the demolition was voluntary. What if it was accidental?

Mr. Hughes, the contractor, said the plans had called for the removal of the roof, garage, back wall, and second floor joists. The chimney came loose and crashed into the joists. He had decided to take the remaining walls down because they were unstable. He called the inspector the next day to report what had happened.

James Williamson said a similar situation had occurred at Salem Street years ago. It was in the public interest not to allow people to demolish buildings in violation of the ordinance and then get away with it.

Mr. Samuel said it did not appear to have been intentionally done. It would be a punishment to the neighbors as well as the owners to require the full moratorium. He said the house had not been well built to begin with.

Susie White of 12 Blanchard Road agreed with Mr. Samuel's comments. She had been present when George Kouyoumjian, the owner, first saw the demolished house. She suggested that they be allowed to construct the building as was shown in the building permit plans.

Dennis Paul of 33 Winter Street asked if the owners could build the design shown in the permit plans. Mr. Bibbins noted that the plans called for a modified building that would not resemble the original house.

Dr. Solet said that if the project had called for removing most of the house, then the owners should have applied for a demolition permit prior to filing for a building permit. Mr. King agreed that the owners should have been required to apply for a demolition permit. However, if the project had come up under the regular review process he did not believe the Commission would have found the replacement design preferable to the original house. He proposed that the Commission enforce the moratorium and continue the hearing so the proponents could consider improvements to the design.

Mr. Sullivan said that in three previous cases of demolition violations (1564 Massachusetts Avenue, 6-8 Salem Street, and 56 Churchill Avenue) the moratorium was shortened when the previous building had been substantially replicated.

Dr. Solet asked the staff to investigate how the permit process had allowed this to happen.

Mr. Irving moved to continue the hearing to the January meeting. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0, with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting.

Case D-1250: 21 Sciarappa St., by Ronald L. Smith, 21 Sciarappa LLC. Demolish house (1854).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff report. She described the building's associations with the architectural and social history of the East Cambridge neighborhood.

Ron Smith, an owner, said he had purchased the house in July with the intent of renovating it. He said that the engineer's report and advice of the Inspectional Services Commissioner had helped him decide to propose demolition and construction of a more conforming building.

Paul Fiore of Foley Fiore Architects indicated that the empty lot, also part of the subject property, would not accommodate a zoning-compliant new building. The house had been obliterated inside and out, was in poor condition, and was up against the north property line. He reviewed the proposed replacement, a contemporary three-story double house with entry courtyards, decks and garages.

Dr. Solet asked if there were any other examples on the block of buildings with double garages facing the street. Mr. Fiore replied in the negative. The courtyards and decks would activate the front of the property.

Sara DiSimone of 66 Winter Street described her property, which abutted the rear wall of 21 Sciarappa Street. She opposed demolition because of the significance of the building, the change to the streetscape, and loss of privacy to her property. There was no outward evidence of the house being dilapidated.

Micheline Federman of 25 Sciarappa Street said she had never considered the house to be dilapidated. It was not uncommon to have sloping floors. Her house had many of the same issues. The proposed building was more than 30% larger than allowed by zoning. She suggested the existing house be renovated and the side yard be made green. Mr. Fiore said the new building would be 25% larger than allowed FAR.

Dennis Paul of 33 Winter Street said he had toured the house when it was for sale and had been impressed with how plumb and level it was. It made a positive contribution to the neighborhood. He noted that there were two drums in the basement labeled sodium cyanide. They were filled with gravel, but the ground might be contaminated.

Mr. Smith said the engineer had indicated that the rear brick wall was a veneer on a wood frame and was moving. It was not safe.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting.

Mr. King said the new design was interesting, with the exception of the garages. Mr. Bibbins said the contemporary style was not a problem, but elements of the design were problematic. It was an attractive design, but it was too dense in an already dense neighborhood.

Mr. Irving said a transition from the building with the modern addition at the corner to the more traditional design of #25 was needed. Mr. Ferrara said the massing was too dense, but it was acceptable stylistically.

Mr. Sullivan said it would be a mistake to let this house go. Houses just like it had been renovated successfully. It might be possible to resubdivide the property and build on #23 with zoning relief.

Mr. Irving moved to find the building preferably preserved in relation to the proposed replacement project. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2806: Harvard Yard, by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Install up to 19 exhibit panels on the fence along the north side of the Yard between Bradstreet and Holworthy gates.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the location of the proposed panels on the north side of the fence between the Bradstreet and Holworthy gates. The fence is within the Old Cambridge Historic District. He noted that the top of the underpass is a public way (formerly part of Broadway).

Jennifer Gravel of Harvard University Planning and Project Management described the proposed removable panels. She described that the exhibits would change in the fall and spring and would not be displayed during the summer. The University wanted the first exhibit to be about the 375th anniversary of the founding of Harvard.

Cathy Braasch of Stoss LU landscape architects described a similar installation in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. The design team had considered the size and proportions of the panels for Harvard Yard. The frames would be black and the panel thickness would be ¼". The image would be printed directly onto the panel and could not be scratched off. Neoprene pads would protect the fence from damage. The panels could be reprinted and replaced easily. The installation was fully removable.

Mr. King asked about the impetus for the project. Ms. Gravel replied that it was to encourage interaction between the students and to celebrate the 375th anniversary.

Dr. Solet asked if any students had commented on the design. Tom Lucey of the University replied in the negative. Dr. Solet noted that a larger percentage of the fence was covered by panel than in the Paris example.

Ms. Tobin asked about the process to determine exhibit content for each semester. Ms. Braasch said that process had not yet been determined. Mr. King noted that the Commission had made it a practice not to review content of signs, but only to review their physical characteristics.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the panels conformed to the sign regulations. Ms. Gravel said that the panels would not be considered signs if they did not advertise "Harvard University." They would be considered artwork.

Mike Shapiro of 41 Madison Avenue said that not much thought had been given to the content. Ms. Gravel indicated the themes could be scientific, historical, or artistic.

James Williamson asked which department had initiated the project. Ms. Gravel replied that it was a joint project of the Planning Office and Campus Services.

Mr. Sullivan described the history of the fence around Harvard Yard, which began construction in 1893. The gates were closed once a year for commencement and to preserve the University's right to control its property. The plaza was owned by Harvard, but the City held a perpetual easement so it remained publically accessible.

Mr. Irving expressed concern that the panels might get repeated in other parts of the campus where college property faces a public way.

Marilee Meyer asked how the university would guard against graffiti. Ms. Braasch answered that the panels could easily be cleaned or reprinted.

Bree Grady of 371 Huron Avenue noted that the panels would block views into the yard and cause the fence to be more like a wall.

Mr. Williamson wanted more information about the proposed design. The panels would obscure the view into the yard and of its buildings and structures. He noted that the gates were currently closed and the public was excluded. It was dangerous for pedestrians walking around the Yard because cyclists raced by. The Occupy Harvard protest was a significant event and he objected to anything blocking the public's view of it. Faculty members had written the President registering their objections to the locked gates. He recommended continuing the hearing until the gates were reopened.

Ms. Meyer commented that the panels were too large, almost like billboards. The installation was obtrusive. It would be okay for the anniversary year, but not if it was an ongoing installation.

Mr. Shapiro said it seemed like a deliberate attempt to keep the protest out of the public's view.

Manuel Lopez of 24 Peabody Terrace spoke in opposition to the proposal, saying it was an artistic failure given the historical setting.

Eric Welling of 73 Gore Street said the decision should be made in the context of Cambridge, not what was appropriate in Paris.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet said the public's interpretations of the installation should be considered by Harvard. The goals of the project were not very clear or compelling. Reprinting the panels due to graffiti would be expensive.

Mr. Sullivan said the panels were one aspect of a new landscape design for the overpass. If Harvard presented it in the context of the larger project it might help the Commission better understand it.

Ms. Gravel gave consent on behalf of the university to continue the hearing. She said the intent of the project was to engage the public and the Harvard community.

Mr. Bibbins said the size of the panels could vary, so they did not look structural.

Mr. Lucey said the design for the panels and the overpass plaza was part of the "Common Spaces" effort, which aimed to foster a sense of community on campus. He also agreed to the continuance.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to the February meeting. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Ms. Tobin voting as alternates.

Case 2811: 146 Brattle St., by Jennifer Gelfand Church. To repair roof balustrade replacing certain areas of wood with Azek composite material.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application to repair the roof balustrade with Azek (PVC) or a like material. He noted his experience with modern wood materials, which just did not last very long. He proposed that the Commission allow the use of Azek in instances where the wood meets the ground or in rooftop locations, such as this one.

Mr. Bibbins noted that Azek has different expansion properties from wood and can sometimes leave obvious gaps. Mr. Irving noted that installation of Azek requires serious adhesive and screws. The Commission discussed the lifespan of the product.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting as alternates.

Mr. Sullivan said the staff would draft a policy on substitute materials and advertise it on a future agenda.

New Business

L-106: St. Francis Church and Rectory, 315-325 Cambridge St./40-42 Sciarappa St./74-76 Gore St. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, owner. Consider initiating a landmark designation study.

Mr. Sullivan said the Archdiocese had informed parishioners that the church would be closed. The City Council had passed an order asking the City Manager to ask the Historical Commission to initiate a landmark designation study. He briefly described the history of the church and related buildings. Originally the Second Baptist church, the building was constructed in 1838 and modified in 1938 after being sold to the Catholic Church. The complex also included a rectory, a former police station, and a stable. He recommended scheduling a hearing on the matter for January.

Ms. Berg so moved. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara and Ms. Tobin voting as alternates.

Dr. Solet noted that the contractors at 24 Berkeley Street had removed all the clapboards and trim and were replacing them with new materials.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting. The meeting adjourned at 11:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/1/11**

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St #404
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Daniel Steger	80 Trowbridge St
Gavin Kleespies	24 McTernan St
Eric Welling	73 Gore St
Islanda Khan	159 Brattle St
Sara DeSimone	66 Winter St
Joseph DeSimone	66 Winter St
J. Tocchio	DTM, Hingham
R. Monagle	1131 Mass Ave
George Kouyoumjian	38 Livermore Rd, Behmont 02478
Zepour Kouyoumjian	38 Livermore Rd, Belmont 02478
Cyril Hughes	56 Eliot St, Watertown 02472
Norman Kherlop	21 Hough Rd, Belmont 02478
Michael Shapiro	31 Madison Ave
Ronald Smith	93 Willow St, Tewksbury 01876
Harry McShane	10 Washington St, Charlestown 02129
Cheryl M Webb	64 Clifton St
Robert Neer	9 Riedesel Ave
Rosabella Alvarez-Calderon	35 Oxford St
Melissa Simonetti	35 Magus Ave, Somerville 02143
Somayeh Chitchian	35 Oxford St
Chris Coper	48 Quincy St
Micheline Federman	25½ Sciarappa St
Manuel Lopez	24 Peabody Terr #1802
Richard Clarey	15 Brookford St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St
Eleanor Duckworth	16 Lee St
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Peter (Lindsay) White	12 Blanchard Rd
Steven Joshua Samuel	7 Blanchard Rd
Susan S. White	12 Blanchard Rd
Jen Gravelle	1350 Mass Ave

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.