

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 5, 2014 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, *Alternate*

Members absent: M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Member*, Joseph Ferrara and Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He made introductions and designated Ms. Berg, an alternate, to vote on all matters. He described hearing procedures and reviewed the agenda. He described the Consent Agenda procedure and recommended cases 3256, 3260, and 3265 for consideration. He asked if any commissioners, staff, or members of the public desired to have a full discussion on any of those cases. James Williamson, of 1000 Jackson Place, indicated that he wanted discussion on case 3260 so that was removed from the consent agenda list.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve the following two cases per the Consent Agenda procedures, subject to Ten Day Notice to abutters for Case 3265, and subject to the approval of construction details of both cases by the Executive Director:

Case 3256: 99 Brattle St., by Lesley University. Replace exterior lighting fixtures on campus buildings and five pole lights.

Case 3265: 155 Brattle St., by Jack Meyer. Replace existing posts and handrails at front entry.

Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. (King, Barry, Crocker, Harrington, Solet, Berg)

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3257: 8 Willard St., by G. Mead and Ann S. Wyman. Remove existing railroad ties and replace with concrete block retaining wall along Willard Street.

Ms. Burks showed slides of the existing low retaining wall made from two courses of creosoted railroad ties.

Mead Wyman, an owner, said the existing wall was approximately 25 years old and in a state of decay. He said he had studied several materials for a new wall including new RR ties, stone, and concrete masonry units (CMUs). He said the CMUs would function better than RR ties and be more economical than stone. He described the proposed CMU as a pure gray "Granite" color. The wall would extend 100' along Willard Street and would be about 2' high (probably 2 courses above grade with a cap stone) in a running bond pattern.

Dr. Solet noted the terrible condition of the roadway on Willard Street.

Mr. Barry asked if the AB Europa blend (a rusticated variety) was the variety of CMU proposed. Mr. Wyman said he had changed his preference to the more refined style, which was also less expensive.

Mr. King asked if there was precedent in the historic district for CMU walls. Mr. Sullivan said he was not aware of one, but it was a very commonly used material in contemporary landscape design. He

noted that the CMU need not try to replicate a natural material but could serve as a contemporary material.

The Commissioners considered the pros and cons of a rusticated CMU block versus a more refined style. Mr. King noted that there were a number of different wall materials used in the district. Mr. Sullivan noted that there were two historic concrete block walls in the district, both over 100 years old, so it was not a new concept for a masonry material. He said he did not consider the proposed material to be incongruous to the district.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the wall on the condition that the AB Europa (rusticated) style of CMU be used. Mr. Wyman did not consent to the change. The motion was not seconded. Mr. King ruled the motion to be inappropriate since the applicant did not agree to amend his application.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve the application, with the material and construction details specified by the applicant. [Mr. Irving arrived]. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. The commission voted 3 in favor (King, Berg, Crocker), 2 against (Solet, Barry), and 1 abstaining (Harrington). Mr. Irving did not participate since he had just arrived. The motion failed.

Mr. Wyman said he would now consent to a change in material to the AB Europa CMU.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application with the substituted material described. Mr. Barry seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 in favor (King, Berg, Crocker, Solet, Barry) and one abstaining (Harrington).

Case 3258: 91 Winthrop St., by Laurelwood, LLC. Exterior alterations related to new restaurant tenant including porch windows, glass canopy, entry door, banners, lighting, shed dormer for elevator machine room.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application.

Jim Coven, the owner's representative, introduced himself saying that he handled the development of the assets of the owner. He described the new restaurant, to be called Parsnip, which would be opening in the space (formerly Upstairs on the Square). He said they wanted to retain the character of Winthrop Square and the building. He described specific changes including an awning at the main entrance, more efficient condensers, and new porch windows that would open all the way for open air dining.

Vince Pan, the architect, made a Powerpoint presentation of the application materials. He described in more detail the proposed glass awning, new elevator machine room dormer, new porch windows, banners, new condensers, new entry door, lighting, paint colors, and signs.

Ms. Harrington inquired about the lighting proposed around the balcony railings. Mr. Pan said the railings would be washed with light. Ms. Harrington and Dr. Solet asked about the new entry door. Mr. Pan described the new door, with glazing. The existing door was not original.

Dr. Solet asked if the elevator change would be more efficient. Mr. Pan said the dormer was necessary to meet changes to the code for head height in the mechanical room. Dr. Solet said noise of the

equipment should also be considered. Mr. Covenò noted that the speed and size of the elevator were not changing. The changes to valves would be interior.

Dr. Solet questioned the appropriateness of the contemporary lights at the entry.

Ms. Berg said the lighting rendering was concerning since there were so many different kinds of lights proposed. The quality of the linear lighting was very modern. The light would trespass into the park.

Mr. Irving asked if the lights would be on 24 hours. He said he did not object to Fixture A at the entry. Mr. Pan said the lights were dimmable, and would be controlled as to time and season.

Mr. Barry asked about the choice of bi-fold windows rather than casements. Mr. Pan said the necessary clearance at the egress stairs was solved with the choice of bi-fold windows.

Dr. Solet agreed with the addition of a canopy over the entrance, which was the accessible entrance, to provide cover from rain or snow. She indicated that the existing door with the round window was funky and fun.

Mr. Williamson asked about the dimension of the stile of the windows, the color of the lighting, and the lettering on the railing. Mr. Pan answered that it was 3". The light would be a warm white, but not yellow. The lettering on the railing would change to read "Parsnip."

Carole Perrault, of 9 Dana Street, asked about masonry repairs and if dining would be added to the roof deck above the porch. Mr. Covenò answered that the engineer had not found any major problems, but repairs or repointing would be done if necessary. The deck dining was not moving forward as it was complicated by access and fire safety issues.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Mr. Williamson said he despaired about the character of Winthrop Park. He did not want it to become a casino but to be a place for retreat and quiet repose. He expressed concern about the lighting on the railings and how the porch dining would interact with the outdoor dining of Grendel's Den.

Denise Jillson, of the Harvard Square Business Association, said she supported the proposal. The Winthrop Park Trust spent a lot of time making sure the park was kept in good condition. The proposal did not have a negative impact on the park.

Ms. Perrault said she could tell a lot of thought had gone into the design. She expressed reservations about the lighting. She objected to the fully glazed door.

Mr. King said he also would be sorry to see the existing door go.

Mr. Barry said the concerns about the lighting were probably due to the exaggerated representation of the lighting on the drawing. The building was not actually being modified much. The proposed new door lacked whimsy but perhaps it was not inappropriate. The canopy made sense though may be uninspired in its design. He said overall that there would not be a negative impact.

Dr. Solet said she was reassured that the lights could be adjusted.

Mr. Irving said the entrance served as the storefront to the business and the Commission generally was very flexible with storefront design. He moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application, as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. Dr. Solet proposed an amendment that would allow the owners to retain the existing door if they want to. And Mr. Barry suggested adding that construction details be delegated to the staff. Mr. Irving agreed to the modifications to the motion, as did Ms. Harrington. The motion passed 7-0.

Case 3259: Garden St. between Mass. Ave. and Peabody St., by City of Cambridge. Install public toilet, reconstruct portion of sidewalks, relocate fence.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the proposed location for the public toilet. The area had been redesigned in the 1980s. The roof of the bus tunnel was about 2' below grade. The public toilet proposal had been studied for many months by a committee of city staff. The location in MacArthur Square would serve multiple user populations in the least obtrusive location.

Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, said the topic of a public toilet in Harvard Square had been discussed for over 20 years. Over 850 responses had been submitted in a survey.

Kathy Watkins, the City Engineer, said the goal of the design was for an accessible toilet that could be used by many potential user groups. The site had to be reached by utilities. The design was not a faux history building but was a contemporary design called the Portland Loo because it was designed and manufactured in Portland, Oregon. The 6' x 10' structure would be big enough to take in a bicycle, stroller, shopping cart, or wheelchair. She described the louvers, skylight, and outside sink. The pavement would be modified with wire cut brick, new bike parking installed, and fence would be relocated.

Dr. Solet asked about the material and if it would be heated. Ms. Watkins said it would be stainless steel and not heated. Dr. Solet asked about facilities for the parents and children of the tot lot in the Common. Ms. Peterson answered that there were portable toilets in the parks in the warm weather months. The new toilet would be close to the Common but would also be serving a larger user group and especially those people who could not afford to purchase something in a restaurant in order to use a private restroom. She noted that businesses, the MBTA, and churches around the Square had long borne an undue burden of providing and maintaining toilet facilities for the area.

Ms. Jillson explained that when Christ Church had to close off its toilets to the public, there were incidents of homeless people defecating and urinating in outdoor locations in the Square. She said she was excited for the pilot program.

Mr. Barry asked about the height of the unit. Ms. Watkins answered that it was about 9' tall.

Dr. Solet asked if it would use UV sanitization. Ms. Watkins said it would not be a self-cleaning unit but cleaning crews would be responsible for keeping it clean.

Mr. King said it was more attractive than a plastic portable toilet, but it would be a new type of structure to introduce to the Square and the historic district.

Mr. Barry asked if the Portland Loo had been tested in cold climates. Ms. Watkins said it had been used in Canada and Alaska.

Ms. Perrault asked what criteria for appropriateness the Commission would consider.

Mr. Sullivan cited Chapter 40C criteria. The Commission considered size, setting, materials, etc. in determining the appropriateness or incongruity of proposed changes in the historic district.

Mr. Williamson asked why more units were not proposed. What locations were considered and rejected? Who would decide if advertising would be installed. What would be the timeline for evaluation of the pilot? Ms. Watkins said that the unit would work in the Square, but the pilot would be to decide if it could become a larger citywide program. Ms. Peterson said other locations considered included the Common and Dawes Island. Utility costs would be double at Dawes Island. Mr. Sullivan said a permanent structure in the Common would be difficult to survey by the police. The proposed location was neutral and could serve multiple user groups. He said he considered the location and unit to be the most appropriate option. A provision for no commercial advertising could be required.

Mr. King called for public comment.

Mr. Williamson said the location was not very accessible. Further up the Common would be better.

Richard Parker, a member of Christ Church and teacher at Harvard, asked the Commission to approve the application. It was an important amenity for the homeless, tourists, and citizens alike. The project needed to move forward.

Ms. Perrault said she was concerned about the safety issues of reaching this location and its visual impact.

Kim Courtney, of 955 Massachusetts Avenue, suggested a walk signal on the west side of the island. Ms. Watkins said the crossing was already signalized.

Juliet Carey, a member of the advocacy group Advocates for a Common Toilet (ACT), said she was grateful and supportive of the proposal for a public toilet.

Ms. Berg suggested approving a Certificate of Hardship for the installation. It was the right thing to do (install a public toilet facility) but it was not a beautiful structure.

Mr. Irving said he thought it was tastefully designed and not inappropriate.

Dr. Solet asked what people had done historically to solve the problem. Mr. Sullivan answered that he was not aware of any previous public toilet facility in the Square. He recommended that the application was for a certificate of appropriateness and that should be voted on first before considering a certificate of hardship.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for the application, as presented. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. Mr. King noted that the historic district included a lot of public space. Public space could appropriately be used for a public necessity. He suggested that a certificate be issued

on a temporary basis and be revisited at the end of the trial period. Mr. Irving disagreed, saying that it would not be less appropriate in 5 years. The motion carried 6-1 with Mr. Barry voting opposed.

Dr. Solet reported to Ms. Watkins that the timing of the super crosswalk in Harvard Square was still poorly timed and dangerous.

Case 3260: Mt. Auburn St. between JFK St. and Holyoke St., by City of Cambridge. Reconstruct sidewalks, widen sidewalk on north side, install new acorn street lights, resurface roadway, install bike parking and street trees.

Mr. Williamson, who had requested discussion on the case, said he did not need the full presentation but wanted to express his strong preference for molded brick over wire cut brick for paving of sidewalks. The access code requirements could still be met with molded brick.

Ms. Jillson said the Harvard Square Business Association supported the proposal. Property owners and business owners that she had spoken to were excited about the project.

Mr. King closed the public comment, adding that he also preferred molded brick sidewalks.

Dr. Solet asked if wire cut brick absorbed more salt.

Ms. Watkins answered that the amount of efflorescence depended on the de-icing product used.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application, as submitted. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1338: 20 Madison St., by Todd Goulet and Konstantin Linnick. Demolish house (1929).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff memorandum about the history and architecture of the house. Built in 1929, it was an interesting example of the Garrison Colonial type of house with highly articulated materials.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owners, made introductions. He explained that the new owners currently resided in the neighborhood in a home designed by Campbell Ellsworth. Their growing family needed more room. He said they did not take issue with the staff finding of significance of the existing building. He indicated that renovation and alteration of the existing building had been studied prior to submitting the demolition application. He noted that there was a mix of building types, styles and sizes on Madison Street, Holly Street, Garden Terrace, and Gray Gardens West. He stated that the lot was undersized and there were non-conforming setbacks for the existing house. The existing house was atypical of its surroundings which included three deckers on the opposite side of Madison Street and grand homes on Garden Terrace. The proposed replacement building was consistent in volume to the three deckers and would be a significant contribution to the street. The lot was a hybrid due to its siting adjacent to the observatory parking lot.

Campbell Ellsworth, the architect of the proposed new house, described the additions he had considered making to the existing house (either up, or out the back). He said that in either case, the

framing would have to be largely redone and little would have been left of the existing house. He described the footprint, materials, and site plan of the proposed new house. It would be approximately 34.5' tall (existing is approximately 30' tall) have conforming setbacks, extend further to the rear, retain a rear yard, and be clad with wood siding and corrugated metal. They would try to retain the front yard tree.

Mr. King asked how tall other single family houses on the street were. Mr. Ellsworth gave 28 Madison Street, approximately 32-33' high, as an example. Mr. King noted that the north side of Madison Street was crowded but some houses had nice yards. He agreed there were a mix of styles on the street but said the proposed design would be starkly modern. Mr. Ellsworth agreed, saying that his clients wanted a modern design.

Dr. Solet asked about materials, deck railing safety, and mechanicals. Mr. Ellsworth answered that the boiler would be side venting and there would be a couple of air conditioning condensers.

Mr. Irving asked what was wrong with the existing building. Mr. Ellsworth said there was nothing wrong with it other than it was worn, made of 2 x 4 construction, had low ceilings on the third floor, and relocating a stair would require extensive reframing of the building.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Jackie Potus, of 15A Madison Street, said there were no modern style houses in the neighborhood. The proposed new house was overtly modern.

Jeffrey Libert, of 11 Garden Terrace, stated that there were three other single-family houses on the street. He said he would not object to a rear addition but the proposed design did not fit in with the neighborhood.

Dr. Solet said single family houses were hard to find. The new house would be breathtaking.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing house significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. Mr. King noted that the craftsmanship of the house was very interesting. The motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Irving said it would be difficult to justify allowing the existing house to be demolished. He commented that the design of the new house was very good but the site was the wrong location for it.

Mr. King said the lot was the least adversely impacted lot on Madison Street but agreed that it was unnecessary to tear down a house not in ruinous shape.

Ms. Harrington noted that both neighbors who attended were not happy with the design of the proposed new house.

Mr. Barry said the Commission did support contemporary design when it responds to its context. This proposal did not seem to engage its surroundings.

Mr. Rafferty asked for design direction if there was to be a delay. Mr. Irving noted that the house at 47 Raymond Street had a traditional exterior and an exceptionally modern interior.

Dr. Solet suggested that the design could be less sharp and more textured.

Mr. Linnick, an owner, said there were two modern buildings at the Department of Astronomy. They house had to be modern and have a flat roof. The intent was to improve the neighborhood.

Mr. Goulet, an owner, indicated that they had hosted a neighborhood meeting and received general support from those that attended.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing house preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1 with Dr. Solet voting opposed.

Mr. Rafferty asked if the delay would be cut short if the Commission understood that the owners intended to proceed with their plans. Mr. King said it had been done before. Ms. Burks noted that one of the reasons for a delay was to allow time for a preservation option to come forward, whether it was an amended proposal or a new preservation-minded buyer. She pointed out that the house had sold for significantly over asking price, so there were likely other buyers who would be interested in owning the existing house and preserving it.

Mr. King left the meeting. Mr. Irving assumed the chair.

Proposed Preservation Restriction

50 Fayerweather St., by Dr. Jane Rabb

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building, a former carriage house converted into a dwelling. He described original features of the carriage house that were extant including wood paneling on the walls. He explained that the owner, Dr. Jane Rabb, had approached him in 2010 about donating a preservation restriction on the property because of her concern that a future owner would gut the house in a renovation. She had also approached Historic New England about a restriction. She had returned to the Commission wanting to donate a restriction that would cover features of both the interior and exterior. He noted that interior restrictions often required annual inspections to see the protected features. There were only two properties in Cambridge with restrictions that covered interior features.

Dr. Rabb addressed the Commission. She explained how she had seen several other houses in her neighborhood undergo massive alterations and gutting of the interior unnecessarily. She said she was worried about the future of her house and its unique charms. She invited the Commission to tour the house to see for themselves.

Mr. Barry said he would support a restriction.

Mr. Irving moved to authorize the staff to re-engage in discussions with the property owner and draft a preservation restriction identifying the significant features to be protected. Mr. Barry seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0. Dr. Solet said she would be delighted to take Dr. Rabb up on her offer of a tour of the house.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 14-7: 23-25 Athens St., by Homeowner's Rehab. To strip and re-side building.

Case PG 14-8: 27-29 Athens St., by Homeowner's Rehab. To strip and re-side building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the twin double three deckers owned by Homeowner's Rehab. He said the houses needed constant maintenance and frequent painting. The request was for \$30,000 to replace the cedar shingles and trim to match the existing details.

Mr. Irving asked why the paint jobs did not last longer than 3-4 years. He moved to approve a grant of \$30,000 for the replacement of the cedar shingles on the condition that the wood trim be preserved, stripped bare, and repainted. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Barry moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on June 5, 2014**

Vince Pan	165 Fayerweather St #2
Brian Amaral	281 Newbury St #3, Boston 02115
Jim Coveno	151 P St #1, Boston 02115
Ann Wyman	8 Willard St
Mead Wyman	8 Willard St
David Bortell for Jack Meyer	155 Brattle St
George Smith	29 Everett St, Lesley Un.
Mina Makarious	15 Madison St #1
Brian McLane	147 Hampshire St
Kathy Watkins	147 Hampshire St
Jeff Libert	11 Garden Ter
Martha Brown	11 Garden Ter
Vital Albuquerque	22 Bigelow St #1B
Juliet Carey (ACT)*	92 Cushing St
Valerie Shulman (ACT)	79 Antrim St
Madeleine Fletcher (ACT)	155 Grove St
Kim Courtney (ACT) (ACT)	955 Mass Ave #259
Leslie Bliss (ACT)	127 Raymond St
Richard Parker (ACT)	535 Quincy Mail
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Jackie Potus	15A Madison st #3
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St #41

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.

* ACT = Advocates for a Common Toilet, www.cambridgeact.com