

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

February 1, 2018 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, *Members*; Paula Paris, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3871: Schlesinger Library, 3 James St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Exterior restoration, replace entry door, install material lift.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the library on Radcliffe Yard and summarized the application.

Kate Loosian, of the Radcliffe Institute, introduced the project. It would be one of the last exterior envelope projects for Radcliffe Yard in this cycle of maintenance and renovations. She said the scope of the project allowed opportunity to also implement some programmatic changes inside the library such as expanding the exhibition space. Exterior alterations proposed included glazing the front doors and installing a materials lift on the rear side of the building to bring materials stored off-site into the building directly to the basement vault.

Shawna Meyer, of Kennedy & Voilich Architecture, presented the architectural drawings. She noted that the existing doors were replicas, not originals. The material lift would be installed in an existing basement level areaway and would be detailed with similar materials as already exist there.

[Mr. Barry arrived].

Mark Verkennis, of the Harvard Planning Office, noted that there was also a proposed change at the roof level for the elevator override. Ms. Meyer showed the roof plan and described the existing vent and doghouse. The elevator would be relocated a little to the west. The new override would not be as tall as the existing doghouse, but would be broader.

Ms. Loosian described alterations that had been done to the 1907 building over the years. The barrel dormers were added in the early 1950s. The aluminum dormer windows had failed and needed to be replaced. And exterior ramp was added in 2003 to provide an accessible entrance.

Mr. Sheffield inquired about the materials for the new elevator override. Ms. Meyer answered that the existing slate roof would be repaired. The cladding material of the existing doghouse was zinc and the same would be used on the override, except for the flat roof portion which would be EPDM.

Mr. Ferrara asked if new exterior lighting was proposed. Ms. Meyer answered that three new cylinder lights would be installed in the areaway and would cast light down into the areaway.

Mr. Kleespies asked and received confirmation that the lift was not for people, but just materials. Ms. Meyer said the intent was to have the top of the lift would align with the top course of the wall cap.

Mr. Irving asked if the transom above the new front doors would be glass. Ms. Meyer answered in the affirmative. She said they were considering a shadowbox type of glass. It would not be too shiny or reflective.

Dr. Solet asked if the lift would make a lot of noise. Ms. Meyer said it would be very quiet. The power supply was located inside the building in the vault. The noise was not anticipated to carry up to the first floor, but if it does, it would be remedied.

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

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the door panels were symmetrical and if the proportions of the transom had been studied. Shawna Meyer replied in the affirmative. Other entrances on campus were studied as was the depth of the door in the threshold.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Marilee Meyer commented that the proportions of the new door frame looked too lightweight and modern for the building. It looked like a cheap 1950s door.

Dr. Solet asked about automatic door opening hardware and received clarification.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan remarked that he was initially concerned about the idea of glazing the entry doors, but because the existing doors were sub-par replicas and not original, he could understand the desire to have a more transparent entry. He said he did not think it would be inappropriate, given the context of other alterations to campus buildings done in a modern architectural language. He suggested that the building name or a logo be put on the transom light. The materials lift was a necessary mechanical element. He recommended that a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work, as proposed, be approved.

Dr. Solet so moved. Mr. Sheffield requested that the motion be amended to include delegation of the review and approval of construction details and materials to staff. Dr. Solet agreed amend her motion. Mr. Barry seconded the amended motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3878: 36 Follen St., by Mark Lanza, Trustee of 36 Follen St. Realty Trust. Raise house approximately 18" and construct new foundation and front steps. Enclose porch. Construct rear addition and balcony. Construct dormer. Remove a chimney. Replace windows. Build trash enclosure.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the history of the house, built in 1847 and expanded considerably in the 1890s. He noted that the house sits very close to grade, probably because the street level was raised but the house was not. The abutting house at 34 Follen Street was constructed in 1946. He summarized the proposed dormer, lifting the house on a new foundation, and addition at the rear. He noted the partial view of the rear elevation from around the corner on Follen Street. He noted that the vegetation that currently screened that view was considered ephemeral.

Mark Lanza, the representative of the real estate trust that owned the property, introduced himself

and the project architect, Samuel Kachmar.

Mr. Kachmar walked the Commission through the architectural plans and described the proposed alterations including raising the house 18” on a brick foundation, new steps, enclosing part of the porch, removing one chimney, constructing a dormer, reworking the rear façade with an addition and a balcony, installing skylights, window replacement and select window opening changes.

Mr. Sheffield asked how deep the rear addition was. Mr. Kachmar answered that it would be 3’ deep and set back from the corners of the house by about 6”

Dr. Solet asked about the size of the balcony. Mr. Kachmar said it would project 2’ past the roof edge. Dr. Solet asked about the twelve windows on the rear elevation. Mr. Kachmar answered that they would be either casement or awning style and single light sash rather than the divided lights on the other elevations of the house. Dr. Solet noted that the absence of a window on the first floor of the south elevation was odd looking.

Mr. Sullivan asked for and received confirmation that the overall height was only increasing due to a taller foundation, not by way of a change to the roof ridge or eave height. He asked what zoning relief was needed. Mr. Lanza answered that there were pre-existing nonconformities about the house that would trigger the need for relief. The total FAR increase was 180 square feet.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions of fact.

Marie Elena Saccoccio asked if the house was to be converted to a two-family. Mr. Lanza replied in the negative.

David Elliott of 22 Follen Street asked about FAR in the attic level. Mr. Kachmar said that space with a height of at least 5’ 6” counted as FAR.

Marilee Meyer asked about the expanded dormer on the west (rear) elevation. Mr. Kachmar explained that it would provide head height in the third floor space. Ms. Meyer asked if the dormers complied with the zoning dormer guidelines. Mr. Kachmar replied in the affirmative. He noted that they would match the existing dormers, which were slightly below the ridge line of the main roof (about 3”).

Mr. Sullivan asked if the driveway would be re-graded and slope up. Was there a fence between the driveway and the back yard. Mr. Kachmar replied affirmatively to both questions.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Ms. Meyer said the dormers were too large and made the design top heavy and cluttered. The rear elevation looked like a restaurant with the large windows. She suggested that the dormers be lowered further from the ridge.

Mr. Elliott said he found the loss of the chimney regrettable and the dormers to be too large. He objected to the massing of the addition at the rear of the house.

Mr. Sullivan read an e-mail received from abutter Douglas Yoffee of 34, 44, and 50 Follen Street. In his e-mail, Mr. Yoffee objected to the north side dormer because he believed it would shade his house

at 34 Follen Street. He also expressed concerns about privacy due to the windows and balcony. He indicated that the attic height was less than 7' and therefore could not be occupied. He asked for a delay of the decision and indicated that he had not been contacted by the new owners.

Marie Saccoccio expressed her support for the abutters' concerns. The interior changes seemed to be driving the exterior alterations. The elongated dormers were not appropriate on the old house.

Mr. Irving closed public comment. He asked the width of the dormer on the north elevation. Mr. Kachmar replied that it was between 6' and 8' wide.

Mr. Kleespies said he did not object to raising the foundation, but he considered the rear addition to be incongruous to the rest of the building. Mr. Ferrara agreed about the rear addition. He added that more traditional fenestration would help. He also said the cantilevered balcony was incongruous.

Mr. Barry said the house might just be too small for the programmatic needs. He said removal of the chimney was unfortunate.

Dr. Solet said the façades were very different and did not appear to be for the same house. She asked about location of mechanicals. Mr. Kachmar said the heat pumps would be located under the back deck.

Mr. Sheffield commended Mr. Kachmar on the level of documentation provided in the drawings. He indicated that the interior details were not necessary. He suggested that the rear addition could be less than 3' deep.

Mr. Irving said he was a fan of contemporary additions, but the whole new plane on the back of the house was an intense approach. He did not object to the proposed changes on the front of the house but suggested further design consideration of the back.

Mr. Sullivan advised preserving sound original window sash and asked to see more detail on the porch enclosure, grading plan, and mechanicals. He said raising the foundation was a practical necessity and not inappropriate. The south wall could have a blind window with casings and closed shutters. He suggested a denial of the application or a continuance if the owner would consent to that. Mr. Lanza said he would agree to continue to a mutually agreeable date. Mr. Ferrara moved to continue the hearing to April 5 at the request of the applicant. Dr. Solet seconded the motion which passed 7-0. The applicant signed a consent to continue form. Mr. Irving called for a brief recess and reconvened after five minutes.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-124: 227 Cambridge St., Mark Lechmere LLC, owner. Consider draft designation study report and make recommendation to City Council.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the landmark study report for the Lechmere National Bank. She noted that the owner's attorney had submitted some proposed edits to the language in the report and those suggested edits had been distributed to the commissioners. She noted that only the lot on

which the former bank was situated was the subject of the landmark study.

James Rafferty, attorney for Mark Lechmere LLC, explained that the edits would provide that changes to the retail addition to the former bank building only come to the Commission at a hearing in the event that staff considered the alterations would have a negative impact to the historic building. The wording of the proposed review criteria seemed focused on the materials and design of the historic facades, not the new addition.

Dr. Solet noted that the former bank and the addition would not have an interior separation and would technically be the same building. Mr. Rafferty agreed but said that changes to the new retail addition would be of a lower level than changes to the historic facades.

Mr. Barry said it seemed like a reasonable approach to future regulation.

Ms. Tobin suggested adding, “unless the proposed work affects the architectural integrity of the former bank and its immediate setting based on the judgement of the staff” to the proposed footnote number two.

Marie Saccoccio passed around the 75th anniversary paperweight created by the bank and described an article about the bank’s early history that she had found. The article detailed a legal case between two groups of shareholders of the bank. She also noted that Lewis Hall was an abolitionist and had lived in her house at 55 Otis Street. She described a negotiation between her grandmother and the bank during the Great Depression. The bank worked with its mortgage customers and no one lost their home.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Tobin moved to accept the report as amended by Mr. Rafferty and herself and to send it to the City Council with a recommendation for designation. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case L-126: 40 Cottage St., Roy P. Russell, Jr. and Robin M. Chase, owners. Consider draft designation study report and make recommendation to City Council.

Case L-127: 44 Cottage St., Charles E. Allen, Jr., owner. Consider draft designation study report and make recommendation to City Council.

Ms. Burks showed slides of the two Greek Revival houses and summarized the joint landmark study report.

Robin Chase, an owner of 40 Cottage Street, spoke about her multi-year attempt to renovate and make alterations to her home. She asked the Commission not to vote to landmark her home explaining that it was not a unique house type in Cambridge. She showed photos of other similar houses that she said

were in better condition than her own. She recalled the day she first saw the two vacant houses and decided to buy one, noting that she had tried to buy number 44 but the owner was not interested in selling at that time and recommended she contact another member of the family who owned number 40. She said she and her husband treasured their house and had been good stewards of it. She said her neighbor had prevented her from getting a zoning variance for their first proposal about five years earlier. She said an application for demolition was made, but that they never really intended to ~~really~~ demolish the house. She said they had done so only to make a point of what would be possible with an as-of-right by zoning project. She said she wanted to live in the house another thirty years and that her son wanted to live there too in the proposed back house. She said her family were good citizens of Cambridge and shouldn't be subjected to the regulations of a landmark designation.

Charles Allen, Jr. of 44 Cottage Street said that his recollection of the first Board of Zoning Appeal hearing was that a couple of dormer windows were changed and that the application was approved by the Board. He cautioned that if the two houses were not landmarked, they could be demolished and replaced with a larger townhouse project as demonstrated by his neighbors' demolition application.

Colleen Gillard of 82 Magazine Street said she was a longtime friend of Robin Chase and Roy Russell. She said it sounded like they had a vindictive neighbor and that the landmark study had been a misuse of the Commission office.

Dr. Solet asked the owners of 40 Cottage Street why they had applied for demolition and sent their son to present a rationale about energy efficiency if they did not really mean to demolish the house. She added that the Commission had spent a lot of time at that hearing talking about the matter. Roy Russell explained his conversations with staff and why they had applied for demolition and submitted a plan for townhouses that they did not intend to build.

Mr. Kleespies explained that he had not been on the Commission at the time of the demolition hearing. He said the disagreement between neighbors was unfortunate. He said he was a resident of Cambridgeport and hoped that both houses would be around in another 100 years. The landmark status would not prevent the owners from making the improvements and additions that they wanted to make.

Mr. Sullivan noted a defect in the language of the proposed order that did not make mention of and incorporate approval in the order for the approved plans for the alterations and additions to 40 Cottage Street. It was mentioned elsewhere in the report but needed to be added to the proposed designation order.

Mr. Sheffield asked Ms. Chase and Mr. Russell if that design was still their intended plan for the house. Ms. Chase answered that they would like to make some minor changes to the design that was approved by the Commission. She asked if changes to the new back house could be excluded from review of the Commission.

Architect Charles Meyer introduced himself. He said he had been retained by Ms. Chase and Mr.

Russell to oversee the building permit application and construction of the project. He asked what would happen if the Certificate of Appropriateness expired before they could begin work. Mr. Irving answered that as chair he was able to approve an extension of the certificate.

Mr. Sullivan explained that if the owners wanted to proposed modifications to the approved design it could come back to the Commission, but he saw no reason to think that the Commission would not approve some modifications to the back house. The process need not be time consuming or onerous. He recommended going ahead with the designation recommendation to the City Council.

Dr. Solet moved to modify the report to include a separate designation order for number 40 incorporating the approved plans for the renovations and addition as described in the certificate of appropriateness. She further moved that with those edits, the Commission accept the report and forward it with recommendation for designation of 40 Cottage Street by the City Council. Mr. Kleespies seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. Mr. Kleespies moved to forward the report with a positive recommendation for designation of 44 Cottage Street. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

Dr. Solet offered an addition to the December 2017 minutes. On page 4, it should read that she thought the painting of a new mural with an eagle on the Church Street side of the building at 47 Brattle Street would be a “funky embellishment” to the building.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the December minutes, as corrected. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Director’s Report

Mr. Irving said he was alarmed to read of Susan Maycock’s impending retirement. Mr. Sullivan confirmed the matter as true.

John Hawkinson noted that Ackermann should be spelled with two N’s.

Mr. Irving commended the current owners of 115 Dudley Street for pursuing the installation of the African American Heritage Trail marker long-intended for that location. Mr. Sullivan explained that when the markers were first fabricated in 1993, there were two property owners who would not grant their permission for their installation on their properties. In this case, it was the former owner of 115 Dudley who had objected.

There being no new business to discuss, Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:21. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on February 1, 2018**

Kate Loosian	79 Brattle St
Shawna Meyer	16 Elmer St, #203
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Ave
Betty Lee Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Audrey Cunningham	49 Gore St
Marie Elena Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Kathleen Ranelli	58½ Spring St
David Elliott	22 Follen St
Hungway Yu	22 Follen St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Derek Tommy	26 Agassiz Ave. Belmont 02478
Sam Kachmar	45 Saville St
John Hawkinson	jhawk@mit.edu
Beaver Spooner	329 Walden St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.