

Minutes of the Harvard Square Conservation District Study Committee

November 16, 2017 – 14 JFK Street, Cambridge Savings Bank, 3rd Floor - 6:00 P.M.

Appointed Members present: Christopher Angelakis, Jerry Murphy, Jessica Sculley, Kyle Sheffield

Appointed Members absent: William Barry, Joseph Ferrara, Christopher Mackin,

Additional committee participants: John DiGiovanni, Gary Hammer, Frank Kramer

City staff present: Charles Sullivan, CHC; Sarah Burks, CHC; Jeffrey Roberts, CDD; Suzannah Bigolin, CDD

Public present: John Hawkinson, Peter Kroon, Marilee Meyer, Amy Meyer, Angie Ju, Anthi Janahivamen

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. Introductions were made around the room of all the committee, staff, and additional interested members of the public.

Jeff Roberts, zoning specialist at the Community Development Department, led a discussion about zoning, its purpose and its component parts. He described areas of the zoning ordinance including land use, dimensional standards, parking issues, signs, inclusionary housing, green building requirements, design standards, and overlay districts.

Mr. Sullivan gave a short history of zoning changes in Harvard Square. The 1962 re-write of the zoning code was Corbusian with no height limits. Examples of developments from that time included Peabody Terrace and Holyoke Center. Jose Sert was both the Director of the Graduate School of Design and a member of the Cambridge Planning Board at the time. Since then, areas have been down-zoned including the C-1 section on Mount Auburn Street. Height limits were gradually made more restrictive in Harvard Square. The fast order food provision was designed to prevent restaurants like McDonalds from opening in Harvard Square. He said it came about after JFK's assassination and the decision to bring his presidential library to Harvard Square.

John DiGiovanni noted that there was a movement to keep the library out of Harvard Square because of a fear of too many people coming to the Square. In the end, Cambridge got a memorial park instead of the library.

Mr. Sullivan invited Peter Kroon to summarize his petition for a zoning amendment and to describe the proposed changes. Mr. Kroon said they had filed on September 28, considered withdrawing it and making amendments, but on the advice of the Planning Board it was not withdrawn and a new hearing would be advertised for the Planning Board. Mr. Roberts explained that re-zoning proposals could come from the City Council, Planning Board, petition of Cambridge voters, or a property owner. The consideration process was for discussion and comment. The City Council had 90 days to act once the process is underway.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and provided some statistics on the number and types of applications that had been reviewed since the Harvard Square Conservation District was established in 2000.

- 1409 applications
- 844 certificates of nonapplicability
- 12 cases of demolition and new construction
- 13 restoration cases
- 57 storefronts cases (requiring a hearing)
- 234 sign applications

He showed slides illustrating demolition and major development projects (12).

Mr. DiGiovanni noted that applications were reviewed in relationship to the neighboring properties, not as stand-alone projects.

It was announced that the next meeting would be a walking tour on November 18 at 10:00 AM beginning at Winthrop Park.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner