

March 21, 2018 – 1414 Massachusetts Ave., Bank of America conference room - 9:15 A.M.

Appointed Members present: William Barry, Christopher Mackin, Jerry Murphy, Jessica Sculley

Appointed Members absent: Christopher Angelakis, Joseph Ferrara, Kyle Sheffield

Additional committee participants: Jen Deaderick, Gary Hammer

City staff present: Charles Sullivan, CHC; Sarah Burks, CHC

Public present: Liana Ascolese, John Hawkinson, Denise Jillson, Kenneth Taylor

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M. Introductions were made around the room of all the committee, staff, and additional interested members of the public. Mr. Sullivan announced that additional meetings were necessary for the study. He led a discussion on the synthesized goal statements for the district, which included the suggestions made to date.

Ms. Burks noted that if the goals get adopted as goals for the Overlay District and the Conservation District, they will have to be carefully worded so as to apply to both.

John DiGiovanni recommended that the second use of “character” be removed in goal #3.

Christopher Mackin commented that “character” was a nebulous term.

John Hawkinson asked if the goal about preserving small, free-standing wood frame buildings was referring to three types of buildings or just one.

Mr. Sullivan clarified that it was referring to one type of building.

Mr. DiGiovanni commented that it was becoming ever more difficult to upgrade those older wood buildings to current codes and to have them contribute to the vitality of the Square. He gave as an example the Read Block, which put limitations on the businesses that would or could occupy the space. He questioned whether the three deckers on JFK Street would remain usable for long.

Chris Mackin remarked that the block of JFK Street with the three deckers was crucial to the Square. The three deckers needed to be preserved. Shea’s was an example of a business with lively sidewalk energy. The tenants had figured out a way to make money there.

Jessica Sculley said that if the buildings were to prove in the future to not be rentable at market rates, maybe people would petition the city council to provide incentives. Or maybe the Historical Commission would issue a certificate of hardship for their removal if it becomes a blighted area.

Mr. DiGiovanni expressed a preference for the language drafted by Christopher Angelakis for goal #7. The Square was not a typical neighborhood district.

Kenneth Taylor said the introductory goal did not make mention of the area’s special history as a 388 year-old town. Ms. Burks noted that the timeline of significance was actually much longer and the land that became Newtowne/Cambridge had actually been occupied for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the British colonists. She indicated that recent historical associations were also important and

for those reasons, no specific point in time had been pin pointed as the period of greatest significance for Harvard Square.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the six subdistricts of the Square including aerial photographs. The character differs in each subdistrict. The subdistricts merged one into another without precise boundaries. He said the staff would sharpen and update the subdistrict descriptions and goals for the next meeting.

Meeting dates were selected for future meetings on April 25, May 23, and June 13 at 9:15 AM. Ms. Burks said she would try to book the same meeting room for those dates.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner