

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

July 2, 2009 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Chair King; Mss. Harrington, ~~Barton~~ Tobin, and Berg; Messrs. Bibbins and Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M. and introduced the newest alternate member of the commission, Susannah Barton Tobin, who affirmed that she would impartially perform her duties as an alternate member of the commission. Mr. King then described the consent agenda procedure and reviewed the agenda. Mr. Shirley moved to approve the following cases subject to staff review of details:

Case 2368: 1 Brattle Sq., by Wells Reit-One Brattle Square I, LLC. Install telecomm antennas on roof.

Case 2369: 183 Brattle St., by David Harrison. Repair porch and restore columns; extend curb cut.

Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-89: 41 Sacramento St. (William Dean Howells House), John D. McGillvray for Life, owner. Review landmark study report and consider recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the preliminary landmark report. The house was built in 1857 by Charles McClure, a returned Forty-Niner, in a neighborhood he had subdivided and begun to develop. In 1866, the house was sold to William Dean Howells, with the help of Charles Eliot Norton. Mr. Sullivan described Howells' career and association with the house, and he read several of Howells' *Atlantic Monthly* descriptions of the house and environs. The house is a landmark of American literature. After the Howells moved out, the house became a two-family and then a three-family residence. The porch had been enclosed and larger windows added. The entrance vestibule was enclosed and an earlier Queen Anne window added. The porch was removed ca. 1997. The house was put up for sale about a year ago. The house is significant under landmark criterion (1) for its association with Howells, a pre-eminent figure in American literary history. The property meets criterion (2) as a rare example of its style in Cambridge and for its association with housewrights Joseph Littlefield and Ivory Estes. He reviewed the suggested guidelines and recommended landmark designation.

Mr. King offered an explanation of landmark designation procedures and protections.

Ms. Harrington asked whether the designation would affect the number of families that could occupy the house. Mr. Sullivan replied that the designation would have no impact on that matter.

David Chilinski, of 3.5 Wendell Street, said he had wondered for years whether anyone would fix this rare house. He spoke in support of landmark designation.

Shirin Philipp, of 42 Sacramento Street, said the house was a diamond in the rough; it would be nice to see it restored. She supported landmark designation.

Ms. Berg asked whether the house was still on the market. Mr. Sullivan said that it was under contract with a couple with experience renovating houses, but the contract was contingent on the sale of their own house.

Mr. King said he thought the house was worth preserving. The Commission's recommendation to the City Council would not get heard until the end of the summer break and then it would likely be referred to the Ordin-

ance Committee. If a demolition application were made, the Commission could review it under the demolition delay procedures.

Ms. Harrington moved to accept the report and forward a recommendation for designation to the City Council. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2355: 1 Plympton St., by A. D. Club (continued). Review previously-removed and modified chimney.

Mr. King explained that there were only three members from the June hearing present now.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the case history. The Commission had been made aware that a chimney had been cut down without approval and asked the A. D. Club to make an application. The club made the application and had explained that a building permit for roofing repairs and sidewalk obstruction for scaffolding had been granted. The roofing contractor had informed the owner that the chimney was in dangerous condition and the owner had hired a mason to cut and cap it. The owner reported at the June hearing that three other chimneys had been treated in the same manner ca. 2000. The hearing had been continued to better answer the question to what changes had been approved for the other chimneys.

Ms. Burks reported about the building permit granted in 2000 to "...remove and plate over 3 non-functional roof whirlies and install 1 new 24" roof whirly for ventilation..." all of which took place prior to Harvard Square being designated a neighborhood conservation district. Fire repairs were performed in 2005, but the permit was issued without the signature of the staff of the Historical Commission.

Gary Waite, the building manager, said the roofing contractor and mason had told the club that the chimney was in danger of falling. They had pulled the permits that the city had required and thought they had done everything that was necessary. The insurance company agreed that the work was necessary. The chimney had been leaning toward the street. The price difference to restore the chimney vs. to cut and cap it was \$25,000. The two chimneys on the back had been left a little taller before being capped because they were not in as bad condition but those chimneys were all brick, with no limestone quoins.

Mr. Sullivan read 2.78 and Sec. 13 of 40C with regard to violations.

Mr. King pointed out that if the club had applied before doing the work, Mr. Sullivan could have inspected the condition of the chimney and consulted with the owners and contractors about the situation.

Ms. Berg noted that in June, the Commission had considered putting a marker on the file, so that the next time a major roof job was performed, the restoration of the chimney could be required at that time.

Mr. Sullivan recommended finding that there had been a violation and either pursuing it through the law department or asking the chimney to be restored at some future date.

Mr. Bibbins said that total restoration for a non-functioning chimney seemed too much to ask, in his opinion. However, partial restoration and a proper cap (like it was originally) would be good or perhaps removing it altogether would be better than in its present condition.

Mr. Sullivan warned that it was a slippery slope to allow non functional/ornamental features to be removed. It was a feature the original architect thought was worth the investment.

Ms. ~~Barton~~ Tobin asked what time period should be set for restoration of the chimney?

Mr. Sullivan said it would require some discussion with the club and its board. Perhaps a time frame of five or ten years was reasonable.

Mr. Shirley said he was not in favor of removing the chimney. He moved to accept Mr. Sullivan's recommendation and find that there had been a violation and to authorize the staff to consult with the club and its board about appropriate mitigation measures. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion.

Mr. Waite asked why the building permit did not come to the Historical Commission. Ms. Burks replied that it was ultimately the responsibility of the owner to seek the permission of the Historical Commission but that sometimes the Inspectional Services Department will issue a permit without a Historical Commission signature.

Mr. Shirley's motion passed 6-0.

Case 2363: 41 Hawthorn St., by Edward Fehrmann. Replace slate roof, gutters, and flashing; new dormers.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building. The property abuts Longfellow Park, so he indicated the view from that park.

Douglas Okun, the architect, explained that the slate would be replaced to match existing. The gutters would be replaced with copper to match the existing profile. The flashing would be copper.

Edward Fehrmann, an owner, said they had made a lot of interior improvements to the building since purchasing it. The roof patches were no longer enough and it needed full replacement.

Richard Burrey, an owner, said the slate had reached the end of its 100 year life cycle. The skylights also needed repair or replacement. They had chosen Gilbert & Becker as roofers, and masons would restore the chimneys while the roof is staged. It would be cost effective to do everything at one time. The third floor units would be improved if dormers were added so that each unit could be two stories. The additional rent for the larger units would help offset the cost of the \$1,000,000 job. The windows would be from Marvin's historic line.

Mr. Okun reviewed the drawings and explained the details of the dormers. The dormers were designed to be as small as possible. He indicated the location of the existing skylights. The dormer windows would be placed at about 5' above the floor.

Ms. Burks said the dormers would conform to the dormer guidelines, even though they reached the ridge line of the roof, because they met the other recommended setbacks.

Mr. Fehrmann explained that the gas-powered air conditioning units for the top floor would be accommodated in the attic or on the roof, but not in the dormer windows.

Mr. Shirley said the proportions of the dormers were satisfactory, but recommended that they be pulled down 1' from the ridge line. Ms. Berg agreed that this would make the space feel more comfortable.

Mr. Okun said they could not lower the dormers without increasing the FAR. Mr. Bibbins suggested lowering and widening the window sills, not the whole dormer. Mr. Okun said he would study that option.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness in principle, with details of the windows, dormer placement, window placement, rooftop equipment, and slate samples delegated to the staff review and approval. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case 2370: 1 Follen Lane (13 Follen St.), by Audra Dainora. Construct swimming pool.

Ms. Berg recused herself because her husband was involved with designs for the project.

Mr. Sullivan distributed a plan of the neighborhood and explained that much of the house was not visible from any public way. Only what could be seen down the driveway was visible. Because a pool was a major construction project, he required a hearing so that the Commission could make the determination about visibility.

Liz Callahan of Gregory Lombardi Design distributed an alternate site plan for the pool, which could be used if the setback from the property line became an issue for zoning approval. Neither proposed location of the pool would be visible from the street. She explained that it would be an in-ground pool and the existing fencing around the property may be sufficient to meet code, if not, a new low fence at the edge of the lawn would be added. The new fence, if necessary, would not be visible from the public way.

No members of the public offered public comment or asked questions.

Mr. King said that if no elements of the project were visible, the Commission could issue a Certificate of Nonapplicability. Ms. ~~Barton~~-Tobin so moved. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 5-0, with Ms. Berg recused. Ms. Berg returned to the meeting.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1167: 20 Sacramento St. rear, by Agassiz Baldwin Community. Demolish carriage house (1852).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the application and staff memorandum. The carriage house was built in 1852 and survived in relatively original condition. An addition on the east side had been removed and only plywood remained on that wall. The roof and cornice had deteriorated since the Commission last reviewed an application to move the carriage house in 2002.

Wendy Prellwitz of Prellwitz Chilinski Architects said she had been working on the Maud Morgan Visual Arts Center project for many years. A special permit had been issued in 1998 but it expired. A second special permit was appealed by a neighbor. The case was finally won in December 2008. After all that time and legal entanglement, there was less money for the project and a tougher economic climate for fundraising. The carriage house would not be an easy building to move. As part of the plan agreed to in the legal proceedings, the site plan had been reconfigured so as to preserve a tree in the yard. The carriage house would be less visible from the street in this reconfigured plan. She reviewed the proposed elevations. The size of the carriage house door opening and the proportion of the hay loft door would be the same. The eave height would be raised 7.5" to achieve a code height door. The cupola would be 4' square instead of 5' square. Skylights were added.

Ms. Burks asked if the existing cupola could be salvaged. Ms. Prellwitz said the contractor had answered negatively to that question due to the damage on the rear side.

Mark Eclipse, of Prellwitz Chilinski Architects, said they thought a 4' square cupola would have better proportions, but they could look for a 5' square one.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the condition of the existing carriage house.

Ms. Prellwitz said the holes in the roof had been boarded up when the community group bought the property. Bracing had been put up inside the building in 2002 so the building would not fall in on itself. There was dry rot, old water damage, no floor slab, rubble foundation, and no floor framing. The 2002 estimate to move the building was very costly (\$50,000).

Mr. Shirley said that estimate sounded high. To demolish and dispose of the existing carriage house would

be at least \$15,000. It was not a green solution to demolish the building if it was structurally sound.

Ms. Prellwitz said it would be necessary to sister all of the roof members and second floor framing in order to upgrade the loading capacity for kids to use the second floor as an art studio.

David Chilinski, also of Prellwitz Chilinski Architects, said that a lot of the exterior cladding was rotted and much of the interior framing was not sound. It would be essentially rebuilt anyway. The corner posts and the diagonal bracing could not be kept. There was not much sound material that would be suitable for the new use and load requirements.

Mr. Bibbins said he was concerned about the proposal to raise the eave height and reduce the size of the cupola.

Ms. Prellwitz said the non-profit owner's needs and finances weighed on the decision. There were benefits to the community to have a citywide arts center for kids in the more solid, rebuilt structure.

Mr. King said the Commission would take into consideration the public interest factors that balance against the demolition request. The proposed use for the carriage house as an arts center was a strong public benefit. He asked about exterior materials.

Ms. Prellwitz answered that wood shakes would be used, although Hardiplank would be less expensive.

Ms. Burks recommended re-using any exterior materials that were sound.

Mr. Sullivan agreed that the decision would come down to balancing the different interests of the public. It probably would be more expensive to move the building and renovate it than to build new. The design was not an actual replica, but a cartoon version of the real thing. Had they considered designing something contemporary?

Mr. Chilinski explained that any modification to the design that got the special permit would require a new special permit, which was not possible due to the complexities of the legal situation.

Mr. Sullivan said that the Inspectional Services Department was very strict about staying close to plans approved in the zoning review process. He cautioned that demolishing the carriage house might be deemed a change. He recommended continuing the hearing to a site visit for the purpose of inspecting the conditions and design details of the existing and to allow the special permit conditions to be clarified. Terry DeLancey, the Director of the neighborhood non-profit, agreed to the continuance.

Ms. Berg moved to continue the hearing, with the owner's consent, to Friday, July 10, at 8:00 A.M. Ms. Barten-Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the May and June minutes, as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on the landmark designation of the North Prospect Church by the City Council on June 22. The Avon Hill NCD Boundary Study Committee recommendations would go to the Council in September. The Shell sign hearing of the Ordinance Committee had been postponed. The language of the order might need amending because, as written, a designation would be revoked if the property was sold for another use.

Mr. King said the matter could be raised when it comes before the Ordinance Committee. Exceptions

were built into the order to satisfy extensive maintenance conditions. Shell might want to protect its proprietary rights to the sign design and might not allow another owner to use it. He moved to put a hearing on the next regular meeting agenda to discuss whether the order needs to be amended or the study period extended. The staff should notify the building department so that they would notify us of a removal request. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 5-1, with Mr. Shirley opposed.

Mr. Shirley moved to adjourn. Ms. Berg seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 7/2/09**

Gary Waite	1 Plympton St
Shirin Philipp	42 Sacramento St
Peter Cooke	Metro PCS 285 Billerica Rd, Chelmsford 01824
Brian Grossman	Prince Lobel, 100 Cambridge St, #2200, Boston 02114
Sohail Usman	285 Billerica Rd, Chelmsford 01824
Wendy Prellwitz	3.5 Wendell St
Terry DeLancey	38 Crescent St
Mark Eclipse	221 Hampshire St
David Chilinski	3.5 Wendell St
Mitchell Bury	213 Commonwealth Ave, Boston 02116
Edward Fehrmann	47 Marsh St, Belmont 02478
Douglas Okun	156 Mt Auburn St
Audra Dainora	1 Follen Lane
Liz Callahan	Gregory Lombardi Design, 2235 Massachusetts Ave

Note: Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.