

Approved 5/6/10

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

April 1, 2010 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Chair William B. King; Vice Chair Bruce Irving; Dr. Jo M. Solet; Mss. Shary Page Berg and Chandra Harrington; Mr. M. Wyllis Bibbins

Members absent: Ms. Susannah Barton Tobin; Messrs. Robert G. Crocker, Joseph V. Ferrara, and Frank Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

With a quorum present, Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. and introduced the commissioners and staff. He described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases that a member of the public, commission, or staff would recommend for approval per the consent agenda for which it was not necessary to have a full hearing. Four cases were identified for the consent agenda.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the following cases per the consent agenda procedures, delegating review and approval of construction details to the staff.

Case 2485: Wright Hall, 99 Brattle St., by Episcopal Divinity School. Construct accessible entrance; restore select windows; install new air conditioning units.

Case 2486: St. John's Chapel, 99 Brattle St., by Episcopal Divinity School. Install air intake and vents for boilers.

Case 2488: 1555 Massachusetts Ave., by Harvard-Epworth Methodist Church. Install exterior lighting.

Case 2489: 14 John F. Kennedy St., by 1834 Realty. Install awnings.

Mr. King said he would recuse himself from voting on Case 2489, because of his position as an incorporator of the Cambridge Savings Bank, which was the landlord for the building.

Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 for Cases 2485, 2486, and 2489 and 5-0 with Mr. King not voting on Case 2489.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2445 (continued): 1991 Massachusetts Ave., by Saint James Episcopal Church. Review project details.

Mr. Bibbins recused himself due to a former professional relationship with the church and left the table.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the case to date. The Commission had granted a conditional approval in January. Certain of those conditions still needed to be met. He read conditions #1 through #5 from the January decision. He noted that some correspondence from members of the public had been received late in the day, but had been reproduced and distributed to the Commission members.

Phil Terzis of Oaktree Development reviewed the site plan and described the proposed plantings around the site. A pergola would be built over the trash storage. Pavers, a rubberized play surface, and shade trees would be in the play area. Shade trees would be planted in the residential gardens. An existing crab apple would be relocated to the contemplative garden. Groundcover would be planted at the Beech Street entrance. The front of the church would be re-landscaped later, noting that the site plan showed more planting areas than the last submittal.

Mr. Terzis described the proposed building materials. Stone and glass (1st floor) with EIFS stucco or Hardie Plank (upper floors) would be used on the elevations facing the streets. The metal would be a copper color.

The windows would be aluminum. Hardie Plank and windows would be used on the walls facing the residential neighbors. The storefront would be metal and glass. He displayed a sample board of the materials.

Gwen Noyes of Oaktree said they had selected materials that would be durable and high performance.

Alan Aukeman of St. James said the church would make drainage improvements at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Beech Street, but it would wait to prepare a plan for other landscape changes at that corner.

Mr. King said the landmark study report should include a requirement that the landscaping of the same corner be subject to CHC approval.

John Howard of 8 Cogswell Avenue asked when the proponents would discuss tree selection with the neighbors. Ms. Noyes answered that Sasaki would do that within the next two or three months. Art Klipfel clarified that it would occur prior to submitting for a building permit.

Ruth Ryals of 115 Upland Road asked about EIFS and graffiti. Mr. Terzis said it could be painted.

Bruce Roberts of Orchard Street asked for examples of Hardie Plank in use. Ms. Noyes sited other Oaktree projects at Richdale Avenue and Walden Street. Mr. King noted that the Historical Commission had toured several projects where Hardie Plank was used. Ms. Noyes said the product didn't burn, held paint well, and was dimensionally stable.

Lydia Gralla of 19 Beech Street expressed concern about the poor maintenance of the grounds. The existing garden had fallen into disrepair. Mr. Terzis said the new gardens were designed to require less maintenance. More eyes looking down on the garden would likely mean fewer homeless people there and less trash accumulation. Mr. Aukeman noted that the existing garden had mature shrubs that do not get a lot of pruning.

Preston Gralla of 19 Beech Street asked if the church would be willing to make a gated entrance to the children's garden from the neighborhood. Why would neighborhood children not be allowed to use it? Mr. Aukeman said the church had heard concerns from the public that the existing playground was publicly accessible. He did not know how to balance the concerns which came in on both sides of the issue. Mr. King suggested that it could be worked out in a neighborly way outside of the Historical Commission process.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about toxic off-gassing from the new materials. Ms. Noyes replied that the project would be LEED certified and that much attention would be paid to that issue.

John Armstrong of 36 Orchard Street asked about access to the residential gardens. Ms. Noyes replied that they would be for the exclusive use of and be maintained by the residential unit owners. Mr. Klipfel added that the condo association would maintain the common outdoor areas on Beech Street and along the driveway.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee noted that the church had received Community Development Block Grant funds about 15 years ago for brick or cobble paving and benches near the west entrance to the main sanctuary. Would that seating disappear? Mr. Terzis said the paving near the church entrance would be concrete. He described the concrete and stone dust paths, low garden wall that would double as seating, and benches in the grove. Mr. Aukeman said that people waiting for the bus could use the benches, which had not yet been located on the drawings. Mr. Brandon suggested a higher quality paving material. He asked that the agreements with the city for the CDBG money be reviewed. He asked if the

materials being shown that night had been presented to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) staff. Ms. Noyes answered that they when the CHC had approved drawings, then those drawings would be taken to MHC for review. Mr. Brandon suggested that the CHC not vote until it had heard the proponents' responses to the concerns outlined by the MHC in its December letter.

Ms. Meyer asked if the new building was the same height as the peak of the sanctuary roof. Ms. Noyes said it was lower; the height had been brought down and MHC had unofficially approved of the proposed height.

Ms. Gralla objected to the loss of the view of the church and sky from points in the neighborhood and along Beech Street. Mr. Aukeman noted the historic precedent of having a building where the parking lot is.

Mr. Armstrong submitted photographs documenting the present views of the church from various points in the neighborhood and asked that they become part of the record. He said all those views would be compromised or obliterated. Views of the tower of the fire station would also be compromised.

Mr. Brandon said the new market rate condos were incompatible with the historic uses of the property. That use was not appropriate. The garden would be converted to a plaza.

Elaine Callahan, representing Jacqueline Kelly of 21 Blake Street, said the proposal was an abomination. She noted the great importance of John Nolen, the city planner that designed the Knight's Garden. Why could the church trample the garden and destroy Nolen's work? What economic studies did the developer have showing that the project was economically viable? The church could find other ways to generate income, like selling pictures of the church. She said Nolen's unique garden should not be destroyed.

Ms. Gralla said the church buildings, site and neighborhood were all historically significant. She objected to the loss of views of the church.

Ms. Ryals spoke in support of the project. Historic buildings could live in close proximity with new buildings; it was not necessary to freeze the property.

Mr. King closed public testimony and asked about materials. Had the proponents taken Mr. Irving's suggestion that the new materials not try to match or compete with those of the church sanctuary? Ms. Noyes answered that the architect had not mimicked the church materials. Mr. Klipfel said they had selected slate instead of rusticated stone for use on the new building.

Dr. Solet asked for more information about EIFS. Ms. Noyes described the material, saying it was durable and well insulated.

Mr. Irving commented positively on the choice of slate instead of rusticated stone. He said the pattern of the slate could be further refined and less rustic.

Mr. King acknowledged the written correspondence and summarized the points made by Mss. Gralla and Ryals. He noted that the Commission did not regulate use and that parking requirements were dictated by code and ordinance. He said the project review had been very long, but indicated that there were still not enough specifics on certain aspects. He noted the submission of a commitment in writing regarding the financial arrangements providing for the future of the church. He asked how "net profits" would be defined. He asked if completion bonds would be secured. Mr. Klipfel said the contractor would be bonded to complete the job on schedule.

Ms. Berg asked for clarification about the amount of money the church would receive. Michael Walters Young, the church treasurer, reviewed his letter to the commission, describing the church's pledging history and 25 year capital improvement plan. He said the improvement plan was organized in three phases. The financial agreement with Oaktree was designed to be risk-averse. The Diocese would not have approved a risky plan. He said the church expected approximately \$1 million in proceeds, but not until 75-80 percent of the condo units were sold. That money would create an endowment, the proceeds of which would go to property maintenance. Capital fundraising campaigns would continue every 5-10 years. Mr. Klipfel noted that there would be an escrow fund of \$2 million to insure that the church could complete the ~~Parish-parish House-house~~ if the project failed.

Dr. Solet recommended that the church complete a building assessment to fully understand the major needs of the sanctuary building and to inform the capital improvement plan. Mr. Young said the assessment would be completed in the first phase of the project.

Mr. King asked for questions or comments on the financial presentation.

Mr. Gralla said the fate of the church should not be gambled on the real estate market. He noted that Rev. Antolini had been quoted in the *Chronicle* as saying that money from the city would still be needed by the church.

Ms. Ryals said it was common for churches to struggle with money concerns, but the work always gets done. It would be unreasonable to require them to have the money up front with guarantees.

Leslie Borden of 12 Saginaw Avenue said the venture with the developers was a huge risk. She said the new building would envelop the historic church like a tumor.

Mr. Brandon asked that the neighbors be given copies of the financial report. He suggested that \$2 million be put into an independent trust fund up front to assess immediate needs and protect the church sanctuary.

Ms. Gralla said the church/developer partnership was a bad idea. Oaktree should just develop a smaller project that would not overtake the church.

Mr. Armstrong said the escrow account was insuring the wrong thing. The sanctuary should be protected before the parish house.

Mr. Young said the project was a risk but also an opportunity. The historic building and the historic use could be preserved. The new parish house would be more accessible and easier to maintain. \$500,000 would be freed up to in parish house maintenance costs that could be reallocated toward the sanctuary building.

Mr. Aukeman explained that the escrow account would insure that if the project failed the church would be able to complete the parish house. The church had made use of world-class advisors to bring value to the project and limit risk; the more the review process drags on, the more risky it would become.

Mr. King closed public testimony.

Mr. Sullivan described the written materials received and stated that everything was on record and available to the public at the Commission office. The next step in the review process would be for the Commission to determine whether the conditions it had set in January, with the preliminary approval of the project, had been met. He reviewed the five conditions and made recommendations. He noted that no matter how detailed, capital plans were always inaccurate, with costs coming in more than estimated. Churches doing a restoration project typically

seek multiple funding sources. He thought the plan adequately represented what the church needed to accomplish. He wondered whether some part of the income should go to an endowment dedicated to the maintenance of the sanctuary building. The church had demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the historic building but a dedicated endowment fund would be a way to ensure that future funds are used for that purpose. He suggested that the Commission require a written commitment from the church to keep the garden open to the public, subject to reasonable conditions. He suggested that the church have the landscape plan completed now, even if the work is to be carried out in a later phase. The material samples had advanced the discussion but were not complete. He suggested the Commission could approve materials in general terms, but that ultimate approval would be subject to more detailed drawings and a mock-up, though that could be several months away. He reported on mediation meetings moderated by Rep. Alice Wolf. He noted that the building design might continue to evolve as the mediation meetings, permit process, and MHC process move forward and as permit drawings are developed. He suggested that the Commission either approve a Certificate of Appropriateness with further conditions or acknowledge its previous preliminary approval and identify further information needed.

The commissioners asked further questions about the financial arrangements both during and after construction and about space accommodations and programming during construction. Mr. Aukeman provided further detail and explanation.

Mr. King said he wanted more information on materials, elevations, and the landscape plan before finalizing the approval of the certificate. He said condition #1, written description the financial rationale, had been provided. The projected costs had been provided as partial completion of condition #2.

Ms. Berg asked for a written commitment to dedicate the proceeds to the maintenance of the church building.

Mr. King asked for a written commitment of public access to the garden for condition #3. In response to the public comment, he noted that he was aware of John Nolen's reputation and career. He asked for a dimensioned conceptual landscape plan, not construction drawings, with areas of planting and pavement described as well as landscape structures. For materials, he suggested that the Commission find that condition #5 had been met, but subject to review of further details and a mock up panel.

Mr. Irving moved to confirm the Commission's prior approval of the general location and size of the proposed new building and to make the following findings and ask for the following further assurances with regard to the five conditions of its earlier approval:

1. The Commission understands the financial arrangements between St. James's Church and Oaktree and accepts the safeguards agreed to by the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. However, the Commission finds that the public interest in preserving the historic building would be better served if the church agrees to place a significant portion of the expected income from the development project in an endowment specifically dedicated to the capital needs and maintenance of the historic church sanctuary building.

2. The Commission accepts the capital needs projections prepared by the church and its consultants, with the understanding that the actual cost of work on historic buildings often exceeds the most careful estimates. The Commission also recognizes that further fundraising and grant assistance may be necessary. Establishment of a dedicated endowment for the benefit of the historic building will support the church's commitment.
3. The Commission understands that ownership of the garden will continue to be held by St. James's, and that the owners or tenants of the condominium units will have no special rights or responsibilities for it. Oral assurances of guaranteed public access notwithstanding, the Commission reiterates that the public interest will be best served by a written commitment from the church assuring continued public access.
4. The Commission has not yet received an adequate landscape master plan. An acceptable plan will show not only paved and landscaped areas, but also the varied treatments of those areas and the provision of lighting, signs, pavement, curbs, benches, and the like, not only for the new garden but also for the entire publicly visible perimeter of the church. The Commission accepts that implementation of the plan may occur in stages, but believes that an accepted plan be in place to guide future actions.
5. The Commission expects that the exterior of the building will continue to evolve as details are finalized and materials are chosen. The materials board presented was generally acceptable, but the samples were small and not arranged in a way that allowed careful consideration. After construction drawings are approved at a future hearing, the Commission will require construction of a mock-up of the major components for on-site approval.

Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed with a vote of 5-0.

Mr. King called for a short recess and reconvened the meeting a 9:20, at which time Mr. Bibbins returned to the Commission table.

Case 2481: 1 Waterhouse St., by Niles Company, Inc. Install sign.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the site and described the property.

Craig Murphy of Cambridge Reprographics explained that a sign was desirable so that people could find the building. He described the proposed free-standing sign and noted that the letters projected from the sign face.

Dr. Solet asked if there was precedent for a similar sign elsewhere in the historic district. Mr. Sullivan answered that he was unaware of a similar free-standing sign. He noted that the building was in a residential district and asked if the proposed sign was allowed under the zoning code.

Mr. Murphy said he had shown the sign to Inspectional Services, but offered to check again.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the sign was doing more than identifying the building and address. It was advertising the Niles Co. and providing a display panel advertising units for lease. He noted that the building name was already located elsewhere on the building. He thought that the sign was not appropriate in the historic district.

Linda Stearns of the Niles Company explained that each entry to the building had a different name. "Mather Court" was one of four names on the building, which was confusing for visitors to the building.

Dr. Solet suggested a small hanging plaque indicating apartments for rent with a phone number. Ms. Stearns said they had such a sign in the past. The notice boxes could be eliminated and the sign could be shortened. The granite posts would be maintenance-free.

Mr. Bibbins said the granite posts were not appropriate because of the close proximity of the sign to the building. It was a different setting than the fence at the ~~common~~-Common with lots of open land around.

Mr. King said there were other signs identifying the names of buildings in the district and around the Common. He encouraged the applicant to look at other signs on the north and west sides of the Common. He agreed with Mr. Bibbins that the granite posts were out of place and said the sign was too big.

Mr. Irving suggested that the commercial nature of the sign be toned down. A name and phone number would accomplish the task and be more elegant. He suggested considering a blade sign or moving the sign to another location.

Mr. Sullivan suggested that the sign could be close to the actual entrance.

Mr. Bibbins said there was visual tension between the curved building and the placement of the flat sign.

Mr. King asked the applicant if they wanted the Commission to vote or if they would agree to continue the hearing. Ms. Stearns agreed to continue the hearing to May 6.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing, with the applicant's consent, to May 6. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case 2484: 95 Irving St. (William James House), by Gerald & Kate Chertavian. Construct rear addition.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application. He described the visibility of the proposed mudroom from Francis Avenue.

Nima Yadollahpour, the architect, explained that the application was approved a couple of years ago, but the project was not started because of the financial downturn and the approvals had since expired. He described the proposed addition and displayed a model. The materials and colors would match the existing house.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Dr. Solet asked about a window that she remembered would be cut in half. Mr. Yadollahpour said the bottom half of the bathroom window would be filled in.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the application. Mr. Bibbins seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1194: 34 Larchwood Dr., by Omar & Karen Eton. Demolish garage and covered walkway.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo about the history and architecture of the Larchwood subdivision and the house and garage at 34 Larchwood Drive. The house and garage had been designed by the architectural firm of Duguid & Martin, which had specialized in small Georgian Revival houses for the middle class in the 1920s and 1930s. He described the corner lot and fireproof construction materials for garages at that time. The garage was significant as an early architect-designed automobile garage by an important Cambridge architectural firm in the planned subdivision of Larchwood.

Matt Petrie, the architect, displayed a model of the proposed new addition. He described the existing conditions. The garage was nonconforming in a setback. He said the Etons wanted to build an addition but preserve the Georgian character of the home. The addition would look like a traditional sunroom. The garage would be in a similar location to the existing. The addition would include dining, living, bedroom, and kitchen spaces. The addition was designed to be distinct from the main house, with different materials and a flat roof.

Dr. Solet noted that the addition would almost double the size of the house. Mr. Petrie said the house had a lot of square footage in the attic but the floor to ceiling heights in the house were low. The project would raise the second floor and remove the attic floor. The 0.5 FAR would not be exceeded.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing garage significant for the reasons given in the staff report, and as defined in the ordinance. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 4-2 with Messrs. King and Bibbins voting in opposition.

Mr. King said the addition was not inappropriate to the neighborhood so he would not find the garage preferably preserved in the context of the proposed addition. He supported the owners wish to maximize the use of the house and make a modern living choice in this situation.

Dr. Solet commented that the addition was different from the main house in every way.

Mr. Irving said the 60 degree angle of the garage/addition accentuated its size and made the original house look small. He asked about building materials.

Mr. Petrie said the house would be clad with cedar shingles with a 5" exposure and would have 8" fascia boards. He said these materials were preliminary choices. Mr. Irving suggested shiplap or clapboard siding.

Cyril Hughes, the contractor, noted that the owners wanted a traditional design, not a contemporary one.

Omar Eton, an owner, said he preferred architecturally conservative designs. The garage was too small to be functional and was serving no purpose at present. It was made of concrete blocks and had a nice roof. He had informed his Larchwood neighbors about the proposed demolition and heard no objections. The house had been rented for many years and needed a lot of work. The proposed alterations would not detract from the neighborhood. He asked the Commission to approve the project without a delay and explained that the contractor needed to have access to the back of the site in order to complete the interior renovations that were already underway.

Dr. Solet moved to find the garage and covered walkway not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed additions, along the lines presented to the Commission. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 5-1. Mr. Bibbins voted in opposition.

Preservation Award Nominations

Mr. Sullivan circulated the nomination forms and showed slides of the nominated storefront projects. The Commission selected 9 Walnut Avenue as the Tony Platt Award recipient, but deferred a decision on the rest of the award winners until additional before-and-after images could be distributed.

Preservation Grants

IPG Case 10-7: Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 400 Harvard St. Request for new grant (#5) of \$50,000 for restoration of louvers in tower.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the church had received four previous grants. The current request was for restoration of the louvers in the tower. He showed slides of the existing conditions. He suggested that the Commission ask the church to defer its request and wait and see who else applied this year.

There was a consensus among the members in agreement with Mr. Sullivan's suggestion.

PG Case 10-2: 75-79 Kinnaird St. by Homeowner's Rehab, Inc. Request for grant of \$40,000 to strip and re-side the exterior of the building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the proposed rehabilitation project. The proposal was to remove the asphalt siding and install new Hardie Plank cladding. He recommended approving the request.

PG Case 10-3: 14 Dinsmore Ct, by Homeowner's Rehab, Inc. Request for supplemental grant of \$2,200 for renovation of the porch, per specifications of certificate of appropriateness.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the request was for \$2,200 to cover the extra costs of the porch repair incurred to meet with the requirements of the Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the Half-Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. He recommended approving the request.

Mr. Irving asked Mr. Sullivan to encourage the applicants to come back with a grant proposal for removal of the aluminum siding from the mansard roof. He moved to approve the requested grants for 75-79 Kinnaird Street (\$40,000) and 14 Dinsmore Court (\$2,200) and to request the Old Cambridge Baptist Church to defer its application at this time. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

Mr. King said he had no corrections to the March minutes. Mr. Irving moved to approve the March minutes, as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Ms. Berg moved for adjournment, and Mr. Bibbins seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 10:59 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 4/1/10**

Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Michael Walters Young	St. James's Church
Phil Terzis	Oaktree Development
Gwen Noyes	Oaktree Development
Art Klipfel	Oaktree Development
John Armstrong	36 Orchard St
Lili Winslow	53 Orchard St
Karen Klinger	20 Beech St
Lydia Gralla	19 Beech St
Preston Gralla	19 Beech St
John Howard	8 Cogswell Ave
Craig Murphy	21 McGrath Hwy, Somerville 02143
Linda Stearns	100 Congress St, Quincy 02169
Oliver Radford	33 Richdale Ave
Robie White	99 Brattle St
Ellen Ezorsky	15 Beech St
Gretchen Friesinger	18 Orchard St
Sherry Oliver	49 Orchard St
Nima Yadollahpour	118 South St, #3B, Boston 02111
Judith Clark	81 Orchard St
Fiona Akhtar	41 Orchard St
Stefanie Le	80 Boylston St, Boston 02116
Leslie Borden	12 Saginaw Ave
Susan Hunziker	80 Orchard St
Ruth Ryals	115 Upland Rd
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Matt Petrie	6 Orchard St

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.