

Approved 6/7/12

**Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission**

April 5, 2012, 6:00 P.M. Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave.

Members present: William B. King, Chair; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Members absent: M. Willis Bibbins, *Member*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

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Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and made introductions. He designated alternate Joseph Ferrara to vote on all matters. He explained the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases which members of the staff, Commission, or the public thought did not require a full hearing.

Dr. Jo Solet moved to approve the following cases according the consent agenda and subject to review of construction details by the Executive Director.

**Case 2846: Lehman Hall, by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Temporary banners.

**Case 2849: 1734 Massachusetts Ave., by Linnaean Corp.** Replace cladding and trim on rear addition. Replace metal handrail at front steps. Construct new roof parapet, roof hatch, and roof assembly over deck. Install canopies over garage door and egress doors. Install 4 new windows.

**Case 2850: 6 Berkeley St., by Erroll and Anna de Souza.** Remove garage and construct new garage.

**Case 2853: 6 Follen St., by Don Picard.** Restore carriage house/garage including installation of new foundation, garage door, and windows and restoration of siding and slate roofing.

Bruce Irving seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review/Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-107: 11 Brookford St., by Jean Emery Homes, owner.** Consider status and possible termination of landmark designation study.

Charles Sullivan showed slides. Ms. Burks summarized the discussion at the last meeting. The Commission had initiated a landmark designation study but scheduled a hearing for April to hear updates on the discussions between the owners and the neighbors and to consider terminating that study.

Kevin Emery, a co-owner, said the neighbors had appealed the Planning Board special permit. He said he would drop the demolition application if the neighbors would drop the appeal. He said he had found a preservation solution but could not move forward because of the appeal.

Carolyn Mieth of 15 Brookford Street said she would be disappointed if the Commission terminated the landmark study. Eleven Brookford was the oldest house on the street. She spoke in opposition to construction of a second house in the back yard. The vista through the yard to the Linear Park would be broken, and it would establish a bad precedent for the street of two houses per lot.

Richard Clarey of 15 Brookford recommended that the landmark study include all properties on the street.

Bob McGowan of 22 Brookford questioned whether the back of 11 Brookford was in the flood zone. Mr. Emery said he had hired a surveyor and made an application to FEMA to take the property out of the flood plain.

Michael Brandon, of 27 Seven Pines Avenue and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, noted that the demolition permit application had not been rescinded. Mr. Emery could demolish the entire house if the landmark study was terminated. He asked the Commission to continue studying the property.

Mr. Sullivan noted that a demolition permit could not be issued until all other permit approvals for a replacement project were lined up.

Mr. King recommended the Commission take no further action at the present time.

Mr. Emery said the project that was granted a special permit would result in more open space than currently existed on the lot. He questioned whether the house rose to the level of significance needed to recommend designation to the City Council. He said he wanted to preserve the house and build a new one in back, but could not resolve the appeal if the landmark study was continued.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet said the special permit project could be approved during a landmark study with a certificate of appropriateness.

Mr. Irving moved to terminate the study. Robert Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 5-1. Mr. King voted in opposition.

Mr. Brandon asked the Commission to reconsider its vote so the owners could not build as-of-right.

Ms. Mieth noted that there were two other properties for sale on the street. Would the neighborhood have to downzone in order to stop other development proposals such as this?

Mr. King replied in the affirmative.

**Case D-1250 (amendment)/Case L-108: 21-23 Sciarappa St., by 21 Sciarappa LLC.** Review amended proposal to demolish house (1854) and construct new building. Consider initiating a landmark designation study.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the case. He explained that the hearing was advertised both as a requested amendment to the demolition proposal and as the routine consideration of whether to initiate a landmark study for a preferably preserved significant building.

Paul Fiore of Foley Fiore Architects said that revisions to the design had been made based on feedback from the Historical Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeal. The garages were below grade. The entrance would be more pedestrian-friendly. The Planning Board had withdrawn their previous objections. He reviewed the architectural drawings for the amended design.

Dr. Solet asked if the revised project would require zoning relief. Mr. Fiore said it would need less relief than the original design. It would need relief for the rear and side setbacks, but not the front and not the height.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street indicated that the design was much better. She asked about the size of each unit and air conditioning equipment. Mr. Fiore answered that the existing two-family house had about 2,800 square feet and the two new units would each be about 1,700-1,800 sf (total about 3,400-3,600). The condensers would be located behind the roof parapet.

Sarah DiSimone of 66 Winter Street noted that the applicant had spoken to the neighbors about their concerns and had agreed to change the location of windows on the back of the building and to make some improvements on her side of the fence.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving agreed with the comments of the Planning Board and commended the proponents on the design changes. The unusual building next door at the corner of Winter Street helped make the proposed building not so out of place.

Mr. Ferrara said the massing had improved but the front yard would be unusual for the neighborhood.

Mr. King noted that the new building would be different from others on the street in its style, sloping driveway, and front setback, but the design would not diminish the character of the street.

Mr. Irving moved to terminate the remainder of the demolition delay in light of the revised design proposal. Chandra Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Irving moved not to initiate a landmark study for the property. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

#### Public Hearings: Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Appeal Proceedings

#### **Consider petition of applicants, Pierre and Marie Humblet, appealing the decision of the Mid Cambridge NCD Commission in case MC-4030: 13 Bigelow St.**

Mr. King explained the NCD appeal process provided in 2.78 of the Cambridge Municipal Code. The hearing was not a de novo hearing on the merits of the original application, but a procedural review of the NCD Commission's hearing of the case.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of 13 and 15 Bigelow Street and described the setting and context of the street. Until recently, the two properties shared a driveway.

Ms. Burks described the submittals sent to the members of the Historical Commission outlining record of the Mid Cambridge NCD case. She reviewed the staff memo of April 5, 2012 about the case and appeal.

Vincent Panico, attorney for the owners, noted that there were two other curb cuts allowed on Bigelow Street in 1989. The staff had not turned up anything in the case files about those other curb cuts. He noted that in denying his clients' request for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission had not referenced what review criteria had impacted their decision.

Ms. Burks observed that in 1989 the Mid Cambridge district order called for non-binding review of alterations to National Register buildings, unlike today, when such alterations receive a binding review of the Commission. She confirmed that there was nothing in the Mid Cambridge NCD case records from 1989 to indicate what review, if any, had been made of driveways, parking arrangements, or alterations to structures such as retaining walls that may have been associated with those two other curb cuts.

Mr. Panico pointed out changes to the retaining wall at #5, #9, #15 and #17 Bigelow Street. The alterations proposed for #13 Bigelow were similar to those completed in 1989 at #17.

Mr. King asked what had been presented to the Mid Cambridge NCD Commission. Eiliesh Tuffy, CHC staff assigned to the Mid Cambridge district, answered that the application materials presented to the NCD commission were included in the record of the case provided to the Historical Commission. It was a similar presentation as that made by the owners in the appeal documents.

Mr. Panico said the NCD commission did not follow the procedures of 2.78 by specifying which criteria and facts it used in making its decision.

Dr. Solet asked if the applicant intended to preserve/re-use the components of the existing wall. Mr. Panico replied in the affirmative. Dr. Solet asked if there had been any discussion at the NCD hearing about future restoration of the wall. Ms. Tuffy said that the focus of the discussion had been the original layout of the lots on Bigelow Street and the fact that this portion of the wall was a rare survivor and a significant design feature.

Mr. Panico said the driveway arrangement would not be unusual for a city property. He asked the Commission to hear testimony from Francis Spinks, the landscape architect for the project and a resident on the street. Dr. Solet asked if Mr. Spinks had spoken at the prior meeting. Mr. Panico answered in the negative. Mr. King indicated that the Historical Commission would not take new testimony on the project at this hearing.

Mr. King noted that the record showed that the NCD commission had considered the review criteria described in 2.78.220 of the Code. He observed that Chapter 40C, Sec. 10c of the Massachusetts General Laws, which was referenced by 2.78, instructs commissions to consider whether a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, is created when a certificate of appropriateness is denied. The record did not show that hardship was specifically discussed by the NCD commission. He suggested that the case be returned to the NCD commission for consideration of whether the denial of Certificate of Appropriateness creates a substantial hardship or if a hardship otherwise exists that could be the basis of a Certificate of Hardship. He noted that when considering Certificates of Hardship, a commission must determine that it could be approved “without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the intent and purposes of [the] chapter.” (40C, Sec.10c)

Mr. Spinks, of 17 Bigelow Street, indicated that he was in favor of the proposal. Breaching the wall would not have much impact on the streetscape. It was important to keep the posts, as had been done elsewhere. He had prepared the drawings for 13 Bigelow Street but had not attended the Mid Cambridge NCD hearing.

Mr. Irving made the motion as framed by the Chair. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

#### Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 2717 (continued): 1131 Massachusetts Ave./1-5 Remington St., by Veritas at Harvard Square, LLC.** Application for Certificate of Hardship for transformer, installed previously, in violation of Case 1956.

Mr. King reported that the applicants had requested a continuance until the next meeting.

Mr. Irving moved to accept the applicants’ request. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

**Case 2838 (continued): 153 Brattle St., by Tom & Jeanne Hagerty.** Demo garage; construct new garage at rear; extend driveway; alter retaining walls at side yard; path and paving details; relocate bench.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the case. The March hearing had been continued. He noted that the existing garage had been allowed with a Temporary Certificate of Hardship and allowed to remain with a subsequent Temporary Certificate of Hardship. He showed slides of the site from surrounding streets.

Ms. Burks reviewed the discussion at the March meeting. She added that Mr. Bibbins had suggested that the existing landscape be documented for the file if the application were approved.

Mr. King noted that Ms. Berg had requested that the research collected on Fletcher Steele by the proponents be submitted to the Historical Commission for its files.

Guy Grassi, architect, reviewed his revised design for the garage. The ridge had been lowered and knee wall eliminated. The cupola was eliminated and other detailing simplified. He showed photos of two-story carriage houses in the neighborhood. The lot was large but the current garage allowed for parking only one car. That arrangement was a hardship to the owners, given the size of the house and lot and the cost of the property.

John Grove, the landscape architect described revisions to the landscape structures including narrowing the driveway, constructing low retaining walls, and reusing the bluestone cobbles in strips down the center of the driveway in combination with asphalt pavers. He noted that no plans had been found by Fletcher Steele but they had located some photographs and descriptions of plant materials. Steele was probably responsible for the front fence, balustrade, and front plantings. The foundation plantings were added later and would be removed. The granite stairs from the side terrace to the rear yard were to be moved and re-used.

Ms. Burks asked if the treads would be made narrower. Mr. Grassi replied in the affirmative.

In answer to Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Grassi said the interior renovations had not removed original details, but modern kitchens and baths were installed, as well as painting and restoration work.

Dr. Solet asked about nearby carriage houses. Mr. Grassi answered that they were not all from the same period as the houses, but were not recent. 153 Brattle Street's a carriage house had been removed long ago.

William Edgerly of 32 Highland Street said he had understood that when the Hammonds no longer resided at the house that the existing garage would be removed. He said their family is chagrined that it was still there.

Marilee Meyer asked the width of the proposed driveway. Mr. Grove replied that it would be 10'.

Annette Lamond of 7 Riedesel Avenue asked what research had been done into the Steele design. Matt Langan of Reed Hildebrand answered that they had reviewed holdings at SUNY Syracuse, which had photos and lists of plant materials, and an archive in Rochester, N.Y., which had no information.

Margaret Koerner of 121 Brattle Street noted that there was a book about Steele and recommended that a specialist in that subject be consulted for more information. She said the carriage house design was very nice, but it did not belong with this house. It was not appropriate in this context.

John Gilmore of 47 Reservoir Street urged the Commission to visit to understand the views and context. The proposed changes would impair one of the last great houses on Brattle Street.

Richard Chasin of 2 Appleton Street said his house was the nearest to the proposed carriage house. Even as revised it would be a looming presence.

Mr. King noted the five letters in opposition from neighbors of the property.

Ms. Harrington said she had no objection to the demolition of the existing garage, but that was separate from the proposal to build a new driveway and carriage house.

Mr. Grassi said the applicants were asking to use the house in the same way as other houses on the street.

Mr. Ferrara said the landscape was very important to the setting of the house and the integrity of the whole. Even the existing small garage was preferable to the proposed driveway, wall, and new garage.

Dr. Solet suggested the Commission meet on site.

Mr. Crocker noted that the existing parking situation did not have a negative impact on the sale of the house. It sold quickly both times. He was not supportive of the current proposal.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to a meeting at the site on April 13, 2012 at 8:30 AM. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. King called for a brief recess and reconvened the meeting at 9:15 P.M.

**Case 2848: Waterhouse St., by City of Cambridge.** Reconstruct roadway and sidewalks. Construct new sidewalk next to Cambridge Common with new curb. Remove traffic signal at Concord Ave. and construct a raised intersection. Enhance green space at intersection of Garden St. and in front of First Church of Christ, Scientist.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and displayed a photograph of the north end of the Common in 1927, showing a sidewalk where none exists today.

Juan Avendano of the Community Development Department noted that there had been a community process to discuss the work, analyze the traffic issues there, and to finalize the scope of work. Work would include constructing a sidewalk next to the fence on the north end of the Common, changing a traffic light to a raised crossing, and adding new crosswalks and curb extensions.

Dr. Solet said she crossed the street at that location frequently with her grandchildren. She expressed doubt that a raised crossing would be as safe as the traffic light. Mr. Avendano answered that the traffic study showed that less than 3% of people used the signal to cross the street.

James Williamson of 1000 Jackson Place asked about the community process. Mr. Avendano answered that there had been three well-attended public meetings between October 2010 and March 2011.

Mr. Sullivan noted that a letter of opposition from Sheila Cook of 34 Follen Street had been distributed.

Mr. Irving asked if two buses could pass on the roadway. Mr. Avendano said the width of the roadway would not change.

The Commission discussed the pros and cons of raised crossings elsewhere in the city.

Heather Hoffman of 213 Hurley Street noted that the raised crossing at the Morse School had a stop sign, but the one on Third Street did not. She said cars went too fast and scraped on the raised pavement.

Mr. Sullivan pointed out that the question before the Commission was the appropriateness of the structures, not to question the expertise of the traffic engineers.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion.

Dr. Solet ~~proposed~~ moved to amend the motion, separating the raised crosswalk from the rest of the work. There was no historic precedent for a raised crosswalk. A driver cannot see a raised crossing when it's snowing.

Mr. Sullivan asked if a three-way stop had been considered. Mr. Avendano answered that stop signs were for traffic conflicts, not slowing traffic. The volume at the intersection was so low that a stop was not needed.

Dr. Solet said not all citizens were the same. The proximity to the tot-lot warranted a stop. Mr. Avendano said the traffic signal and raised crossing had been discussed in detail at the community meetings.

There was no second to the motion to amend. On Mr. Irving's motion, the Commission voted 5-1 in favor. Dr. Solet voted in opposition.

**Case 2854: Cambridge Street Overpass, by City of Cambridge and President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Related to the reconstruction of the Harvard Square Tunnel, alter surface of the overpass including: remove concrete planters and railing, widen brick sidewalk, install new pavers, benches, lighting, signs, and railing.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and remarked that when the underpass/overpass was constructed in the 1960s, it was one of the very first cases to come before the Commission. There had been no opposition to the underpass, but there had been much discussion about the materials and design details. The planters were added a few years later. He described the boundary of the Old Cambridge Historic District, which extended a few feet past the planter on the west end of the overpass and included the walls and gates of the north side of Harvard Yard. The area was also included on the National Register of Historic Places, which requires review of the Executive Director per the Harvard/CHC protocol.

Mr. Irving asked about the condition prior to the construction of the underpass/overpass. Mr. Sullivan answered that Cambridge Street, Kirkland Street, and Broadway all met at grade in a large intersection. When the overpass was constructed, Kirkland Street was closed off at Oxford Street.

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi stated that the tunnel needed serious structural repairs. The use would not change. The overpass would retain the same pedestrian-friendly character. The City and Harvard wanted to move quickly into construction. There had been meetings with surrounding neighborhood groups and they would go back to those groups again.

City Engineer Owen O'Riordan displayed a site plan and photographs of existing and proposed conditions of the tunnel and the surface above it. Modest repairs had been made over the years, but no substantial structural work. The waterproofing on the top had failed and the structure was deteriorating. The sidewalk along the wall of Harvard Yard needed repair. He described the proposed scope of work and the utility conduits that would need to be preserved. An impervious surface would protect the tunnel for the long term. The existing grass was not in good condition.

Kathy Watkins of the Public Works department said the city and Harvard would encourage increased public use of the overpass. It was a shared way for pedestrians and bicyclists. She indicated the points of conflict along the most frequented paths. She described the extent of brick sidewalk reconstruction. She proposed using wire-cut brick, as had been done at other recent city projects. The sidewalk would be widened at the east end. She described the proposed materials for the overpass including concrete pavers, asphalt pavers, and Corian benches of different shapes and sizes. She described the wayfinding signs and 42" high safety railing.

Mr. Irving asked about the failed waterproofing. Mr. O'Riordan explained that it was rolled asphalt. The new waterproofing would last 50+ years and water would be drained off. Mr. Irving asked about the choice of Corian for the benches. Chris Reed of STOSS Landscape Urbanism indicated that the material had been used in

the Maple Avenue park and was extremely durable even in this environment. Mr. Irving asked about the color of the pavers. Ms. Watkins showed a photo of the material; it was darker than the first color sample considered.

Mr. Reed described the 42” high wayfinding signs that would be carved into the concrete walls at each end of the overpass. They would point to Harvard Square, Porter Square, Kirkland Street and Quincy Street. The walls would be a warm gray color.

Dr. Solet asked about the sample benches on site. Mr. Reed said none of the samples were of the selected color, which would be a neutral warm gray with no flecks. The material would stay cool in the sun.

Michael Muehe, Executive Director of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, spoke in support for the proposed wire-cut bricks at the rebuilt sidewalks. The wire-cut bricks were safer and more accessible. He submitted a letter from the chair of his commission, Elizabeth Dean-Clower.

Sandy Durmaskin, a member of the commission, also spoke in favor of the wire-cut bricks. She described the vibration created on traditional brick sidewalks causing pain and making it difficult to stay balanced.

Marilee Meyer lamented the loss of green space on the overpass. The pavers would be hot and sterile. It was a very modern look in contrast with other parts of the campus. Could the Corian be cleaned? Ms. Watkins replied in the affirmative.

James Williamson asked about the benches. Mr. Reed said the benches would be of varying shapes and sizes. They would not be movable, but movable tables and chairs would be located in the area. Mr. Williamson asked what consultations had taken place with neighbors, students, or faculty. Mr. Rossi said they had met with the Agassiz and Mid Cambridge neighborhood associations, as well as with the bike and pedestrian committees.

Mr. Williamson said the overpass was an important public space. It was a missed opportunity not to have done more consultation. He noted that the existing shrubbery served as a sound barrier. There was a plaque in the middle of one of the planters. What would happen to that? He asked for the hearing to be continued. Ms. Meyer agreed that not enough people knew about the meeting.

Mr. O’Riordan said it was important to get started with the structural and utility work right away. Mr. Rossi said the City would continue to meet with neighborhood groups about the project.

Mr. King noted how little of the underpass was within the historic district.

Dr. Solet said it was important to study the sound impacts of the proposed design.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed, subject to staff review and approval of the iron railing, concrete retaining walls, and other construction details within the Old Cambridge Historic District. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 6-0. [Dr. Solet left the room].

### Minutes

Mr. King pointed out typos on page 8. Change “in” to “on” and correct “significant.”

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.



New Business: Community Preservation Act

Mr. Sullivan reviewed a memo from the City's Public Works Department requesting that CPA money left over from previous city projects be put toward the architectural design of the re-slating of City Hall.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the request. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed 5-0. [Dr. Solet returned].

Preservation Awards Nominations

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the nominated projects. The Commission discussed the merits of the various projects and formed a consensus on the award winners. The awards program was scheduled for May 17, 2012 at 6:00 P.M. at Cambridge City Hall.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 4/5/12**

Kevin Emery	9 Gregory Lane, Reading 01867
Ann Newman	72 Lexington Ave #2, Somerville 02144
Elizabeth Gourbosi	42 Irving St
Doug Okun	156 Mt Auburn St
Gregory Cogan	45 School St
Lee Waldock	156 Mt Auburn St
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Michael Bentley	1734 Massachusetts Ave
Peter Baker	6 Hobbs Rd, Medford 02155
Cador Pricejones	30 Sycamore St #2, Somerville 02143
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St
M. Shiz	105 Ravine Rd, Medford 02155
Bill Reynolds	21 Forest Hill Ave, Lynn 01904
Vincent Panico	2343 Mass Ave
Ronald Smith	819B Cambridge St
Harold McShore	819B Cambridge St
Paul Fiore	98 Otis St
Sara DeSimone	66 Winter St
Pierre Humblet	13 Bigelow St
Dick Clarey	15 Brookford St
Carolyn Mieth	15 Brookford St
Marie Humblet	13 Bigelow St
Francis Fox Spinks	17B Bigelow St

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.