

Approved 1/3/2013

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 6, 2012 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William B. King, *Chair* and Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*,
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*
Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate Members*

Members absent: Susannah Tobin, *Alternate Member*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair William King called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and made introductions. He explained the consent agenda procedure, reviewed the agenda, 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 would not be necessary to have a full hearing. Cases 2977, 2978, 2914, and 2938 were recommended for approval per the consent agenda procedures. Mr. King asked if anyone present wanted a full hearing on ~~either~~ any of those cases.

Hearing no objections, Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the following, per the procedures of the consent agenda policy, and authorized the staff to review and approve construction details:

Case 2977: 1 Brattle Sq., by Piedmont-One Brattle Square I, LLC, owner, o/b/o Metro PCS NE, tenant. Install microwave antenna on the penthouse wall.

Case 2978: 2-1/2 Berkeley St., by Lloyd M. Aiello. Replace and alter wood fence at rear of property.

Case 2914 (Amendment): 126 Brattle St., by Brown and Brattle Realty Trust. Install skylight.

Case 2938 (Amendment): 9 Phillips Pl., by Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Amend design of accessible entrance.

Dr. Solet seconded the motion, ~~Shary Berg seconded~~, and the motion passed 7-0 with Shary Berg and Joseph Ferrara voting, or "all eight of the seven entitled to vote," as Mr. King noted.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2890 (Amendment): 19A Berkeley St., by Wendy Weiss. Replace windows. *Applicant has requested an indefinite continuance.*

Mr. Irving moved to approved the requested continuance, Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Case 2979: 27 Garden St., by Longy School of Music of Bard College. Project temporary lighted sign on exterior wall of Pickman Hall on selected dates.

Britta Wierich, facilities manager of the Longy School, said that the application involved installation of a GOBO theatrical spotlight that would project a 10' by 8' image on the brick exterior wall of the auditorium. The image would be projected from about 5:30 until 11 PM on the evening of five Celebrity

Series performances, of which there would be four more in the current season, on January 23, February 13 and 14, and May 1.

Mr. Sullivan showed a slide of the wall in question and noted that the only physical object involved would be the projector, which would be placed behind the wall out of view.

Dia Philippides of 14 Concord Avenue said that two main rooms of her apartment faced the school, and the light was intrusive. There had been no notice of the first projection in September. She wanted to know if approval meant that future lighting would also be approved, and whether her building would get prior notice. She said she was representing herself but was appearing with the blessing of her building's board of trustees.

William Imhoff of 14 Concord Avenue said that the light was a distraction. It faced a busy intersection and could be dangerous to traffic. He wondered about the purpose of the projection, because it was too late to actually advertise a performance.

In response to questions, Ms. Wierich said that the shut-off time could be adjusted. The purpose of the projection was to celebrate the performances, not to advertise them. Longy was excited to be in partnership with the Celebrity Series.

Mr. Irving noted that the location was on the border between an institutional and a residential area, and urged that the projection be shut off earlier.

Dr. Solet noted that 14 Concord Avenue threw off considerable light that disturbed its own neighbors.

Mr. Sullivan explored the question of jurisdiction. The light was a by-product of a projector that was placed out of public view behind a wall. Four to six events a year did not seem excessive to him. He recommended the Commission grant the installation a Certificate of Nonapplicability for the projector and urge Longy to consult with its neighbors.

Mr. King recommended that Longy turn the projection off earlier. He sympathized with the neighbors, but he also recognized Longy's value to the community.

Mr. Irving moved to adopt Mr. Sullivan's suggested motion, Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Ms. Wierich assured Ms. Philippides that she would hear about future requests in advance.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1286: 158 Cushing St., by Joseph & Theresa Borelli o/b/o Anthony Borelli. Demolish three-decker (1897).

Mr. King explained the demolition review procedures.

Ms. Burks showed slides of the structure and summarized the staff memo.

Maggie Booz of Smart Architecture said that her clients had owned the house, an 1897 three-decker, since 1960. The interior needed renovation, but her clients had learned that the excessive tilt of the house could not be remedied because it had been built on a deep deposit of peat, which had been covered by about 15' of fill. Geotechnical engineers surmised that there were ponds in the neighborhood, and that the tilting occurred soon after the house was built. Faced with the extent of work required, the owners had hired her to design a replacement. The current building had a footprint of 52' x 26'; the new one would measure 57' x 27'. A variance would address several nonconformities, including the number of units (3), setbacks, open space, and parking. The new building would have clapboards and wood windows, and a flat rubber roof. It would be reminiscent of the present three-decker, but modern and energy-efficient. Renovation would require lifting the house and supporting it while installing piers and a new foundation on a very tight site.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Irving moved to find the building significant for the reasons stated in the staff memo. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 6-0 with Ms. Berg voting and Mr. Bibbins not voting.

Mr. Irving asked if the building really had a pronounced lean. Mr. Sullivan said that it did. Mr. King noted that Cushing Street was eclectic in its architecture, and the new building would not dramatically alter the streetscape.

Dr. Solet asked about the nature of the fill. Ms. Booz said they found coal ashes, fired clay fragments, and miscellaneous debris. Mr. Sullivan noted that these lots would have been built on much earlier if they were more suitable. ~~She~~ Dr. Solet asked that the geotechnical report be submitted for the record.

Dr. Solet moved to find the existing building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Public Hearing: Neighborhood Conservation District Business

Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District Five-Year Review. Consider preliminary report of the Half Crown-Marsh NCD

Mr. King described the history of the Half Crown-Marsh NCD and said that the 2007 Council order which enabled the formation of the district required that a report of its operations be submitted to the Council after five years. The staff had prepared a report that the HCM Commission reviewed two weeks ago. The few public comments emphasized the need to improve communications with owners to minimize inadvertent violations.

Ms. Berg complimented the staff on an excellent report and said she was surprised a) that 75% of the applications had been approved by staff and b) that there had been only five denials. Mr. King said the denials included a couple of excessively tall fences, and observed that someday the Council might consider if a building permit should be required in some instances.

Dr. Solet commended the staff that wrote the report and observed that the combined districts had worked well.

Dr. Solet moved to accept the report and forward it to the City Council. Mr. Ferrara seconded and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Case D-1287: 221 Monsignor O'Brien Hwy., by Estate of Richard J. Sullivan o/b/o Monsignor Hotel, LLC. Demolish meat packing plant (1929).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the structure and summarized the staff memo. He noted that the building was built by the John Morrell Co., a Chicago meatpacker, in 1929, and had been expanded several times. The designer, the Chicago firm of Henschein & McLaren, designed over 300 refrigerated warehouses on several continents. The cold rooms and internal monorail system for moving sides of beef delivered by rail were intact, although the building had been used as a plumbing supply warehouse for many years. The roof had not been maintained and the current condition of the building was poor.

James Rafferty, representing the applicant, introduced Mark Stebbins, the principal, and Eben Tormey, the project manager for Schleicher & Stebbins Hotels. He said that the history of the site would make an interesting display in the new building. The applicants had explored the possibility of saving the O'Brien Highway façade and incorporating it into a new building, but found that the topography of the site and the building's condition would prevent this. Mr. Tormey distributed photos of the interior in support of this contention.

Mr. Stebbins described the design of the replacement building, and said that they had gone to some lengths with the Marriott chain to gain acceptance of a non-standard design that would be appropriate for the site. He described the proposed site plan and expanded on the difficulty of incorporating any of the present building into the new one. He told Mr. Ferraro that the exterior of the new building would be brick, limestone, and precast concrete. All facades would be fully detailed, because the back would face the new Green Line and North Point.

John Fahimian, owner of the Antiques Mall next door, said he was excited to see the site developed but disappointed that the significant architectural elements of the old building would not be incorporated in it.

Mr. Rafferty said the building had been designed in accordance with the East Cambridge zoning guidelines and would eventually undergo design review at the Community Development Department. In answer to a question from Nancy Jones of 42 Cushing Street he said that it would have a LEED silver rating.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing building significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Mr. Irving then moved to find the building not preferably-preserved because of the quality of the replacement design. Mr. Ferrara seconded.

Ms. Harrington said she appreciated the design of the new building but would like to see a nod to the old one. Mr. Irving replied that the Colonial Revival design was uninspired, but that the Georgian door surround was nicely executed and could be moved inside, along with other artifacts from the building. Although the Commission had no jurisdiction over the interior design, the public use of the hotel would make this appropriate.

Nancy Jones asked if the Commission had a plan for preserving the city's industrial heritage. Mr. Sullivan described several such buildings that were landmarks or had been preserved through the demolition delay process.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Morrell plaques were significant as well as the door surround, and should be incorporated into the interior of the new building. Mr. King said the record should reflect the positive reactions of the proponents.

The Commission then adopted Mr. Irving's motion that the existing building was not preferably-preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project by a vote of 6-0, with Ms. Harrington not voting.

Case D-1285: 59 Cushing St., by Anthony P. Ferolito, o/b/o Emery Homes LLC. Demolish Italianate house (1868)

Ms. Burks showed slides of the structure and summarized the staff memo.

Kevin Emery, the potential new owner, said the lot contained 15,000 s.f. but had a 15' sewer easement down the right side, opposite the house. He proposed to raze the house and build three attached townhouses, each with a one-car garage. He had looked hard at incorporating the existing house into the project but couldn't make it work.

Mr. King asked if the driveway could run over the easement. Mr. Emery thought so.

Mr. Emery told Dr. Solet that the project was as-of-right, and that he would take title on Dec. 30.

Bruno Scolese, a neighbor, said he was against the proposal.

~~Bill~~ Phil Costa of 63 Cushing Street asked if the curb cut would remain; Mr. Emery said it would. Mr. Costa said the neighbors valued old buildings and would like to see this perfectly fine example incorporated into the project.

~~Mitch Nilon~~ Nell Nelin, another neighbor, said there were many rehabilitated houses on Cushing Street, and encouraged Mr. Emery to restore this one.

Nell Brown, another neighbor, asked if the sale had contingencies. Mr. Emery said he had until Dec. 15 to decide whether to go ahead. She said it was a beautiful house with real value and a great yard. Townhouses were for transient people. Mr. Emery disagreed.

Maggie Booz, a neighbor, said the house should be incorporated into the project.

George White of 71 Cushing Street wanted to preserve the house because of its associations with Rosie Ferolito, the former owner.

Nancy Jones said the open yard was a great asset to the neighborhood

Dr. Solet said the house could be sold at a profit once restored; perhaps CPA funds could be used to preserve the open space.

Mr. King said that Mr. Emery had designed some attractive houses in North Cambridge. However, this house was a major asset to the street. The neighbors should understand that the current proceedings could only delay the demolition.

Mr. Irving moved to find the existing building significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Ferrara voting.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

New Business: Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2984: 15 Berkeley St., by Maxwell and Jo Solet. Remove storm damaged fence at rear of property and replace with new taller fence

Dr. Solet recused herself and sat in the audience.

Mr. Sullivan showed a slide and noted that this was a late application with no supporting documentation. The only public view of the existing fence was 100' down a narrow driveway.

Dr. Solet said that her rear fence abutted 14 Concord Avenue, where floodlighting spilled over into her yard. The fence was 21 years old and had been damaged by a recent storm. The floodlighting blinded automobile drivers and pedestrians in her driveway, but the 14 Concord trustees were not sympathetic. She proposed to build a solid wood tongue-and-groove fence tall enough to block out the light.

Mr. Irving asked her to find out how tall it needed to be; no decision could be made with the information provided so far. He cautioned that a 12' fence would have structural problems and would have to be carefully designed.

Mr. Sullivan offered to meet Dr. Solet onsite to discuss the possibilities. Mr. King said that there was not enough information to proceed.

Dr. Solet rejoined the Commission.

Preservation Grants

IPG 13-3: 872 Main St., Union Baptist Church. Roof and windows. Request of \$100,000

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the current condition and past appearance of the church. It was previously considered to be endangered, but the new minister seemed committed to staying. They had requested \$50,000 outright for roof and stained glass repairs.

Mr. Irving moved to find the building significant and to approve a grant as proposed. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Minutes

Mr. King corrected a typo on page 3 of the October minutes: the reference to 28 Vineyard Street should be to 26-28 Vineyard.

Mr. Bibbins moved to adjourn. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/2/12**

Kathryn Emmett 21 B Street, Burlington
Edwin Derecho 20 Park Plaza, Boston
Britta Wierich Longy School
Lloyd Aiello 2½ Berkeley Street
Julia Dutroff 14 Concord Avenue
Wim Bakker 14 Concord Avenue
Dia Philippides 14 Concord Avenue
Ying Wu 14 Concord Avenue
John Fahimian 201 O'Brien Highway
Anthony Borelli 19 Lawn Street
Liz Goodfellow 10 Hilliard Place
Anne Ellsworth 19 Lowell Street
Alice Dunn 875 Main Street
John Sanzone 540 Memorial Drive
Philip Costa 63 Cushing Street