

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

March 7, 2013 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternate Members*

Members absent: William King, M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and made introductions. He dispensed with the consent agenda and explained hearing procedures. He designated both alternates to vote on all cases.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3006: Cambridge Common, by City of Cambridge. Renovate structures, paths, lighting and landscaping.

Ms. Burks showed slides of the Common and discussed the multi-year planning and design process. The last extensive renovation had taken place over 30 years ago. [Mr. Barry arrived].

Bill Deignan of the Community Development Department explained that the plans were at the 100% design stage. The planning process included an Advisory Committee appointed in 2000 and the Harvard Square Design Study of 2006. He described the scope of the work which would include the field, walking and biking paths, street furniture, drainage, lighting, and landscaping. He described the new path that would create a connection from Harvard Square to northbound Massachusetts Avenue through Flagstaff Park. The curb would be moved and the roadway reconfigured to accommodate it. The radius of the curb would be wider, so there was less likelihood that trucks would run over the curb when turning left.

Cynthia Smith, the landscape architect, displayed an aerial photo showing the location of paths and monuments. There would be a unified palette of materials for the paths, which would have some minor realignments. Most paths would be asphalt with flush granite edges. The paving in plazas would be brick and granite. A new 12' path would align the DAR gate with the Civil War monument. New benches and lights would be located on both sides of that path. A sign kiosk would be located near the gate. Trees would be pruned or removed to open up the view to the monument from the gate. Most of the trees were Norway maples, planted after World War I, and many were not in good condition. The canopy would be diversified with New England native trees. The cobbles at the Civil War monument and the Washington Elm/cannon plaza would be relocated to the perimeter of the Common as a maintenance strip near the curbs. Some of the existing large granite benches would be reused. Slurbbery at the perimeter of the Common would be removed and new paths installed to enter the common from various points. Standard bike parking, trash and recycling containers, and park signs would be used. The playing field would be re-graded and the softball backstop removed. New lighting would be installed throughout.

Shary Berg asked about the lighting color and glare. Mr. Deignan replied that the color would be warmer than the new LED street lights and a diffuser could be added to the fixture to control glare.

Dr. Solet was concerned that the city was switching to non-natural spectrum lighting for street lights, which would affect people's circadian rhythms and impact their sleep. She asked the city staff to convey this to

those responsible for selecting street lights. Mr. Deignan said the lights on the Common could be on automatic dimmers, which would save energy but would not be visually noticeable. Dr. Solet asked about leaf drop along the edge of the Common, which could get slippery. Ms. Smith noted that the pin oaks to be planted along the edge hold their leaves longer.

William Barry asked if the Civil War monument would continue to be lit with spot lights. Mr. Deignan replied in the affirmative. The flagstaff in Flagstaff Park would also be lit with spots.

Chandra Harrington asked if there would be additional paved paths from the parking spots to the main paths. Mr. Deignan replied in the affirmative.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

Ms. Berg asked about the schedule. Mr. Deignan replied that there would be a final review with the state and construction details would be reviewed by the staff. The City would be seeking bids this spring.

Ms. Berg moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as submitted, subject to final review of details by the Commission staff. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 without discussion. [Mr. Sullivan arrived].

Case 3007: Massachusetts Hall, by President and Fellow of Harvard College. Masonry restoration. *Received written request to withdraw application.*

Mr. Irving noted that the applicant had requested leave to withdraw the application. Mr. Crocker moved to accept the withdrawal without prejudice. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3008: Radcliffe Gym, by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Masonry, roofing, windows, trim.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the building. The interior renovation had received a preservation award several years ago, but the current application was for exterior repairs and restoration.

Kate Loosian, the project manager, explained that maintenance was needed on the exterior.

Mitchell Lowe, the architect, described the work to be done including repairs to the slate roof, chimney repointing, limited repointing of the walls, painting of woodwork, re-glazing the existing windows, replacing one window and one door in kind, replacing deteriorated columns at the colonnade, and reconstructing the concrete stairs. Ms. Loosian noted that the stair and colomade work were budget-dependent.

Ms. Harrington asked about the history of the building. Ms. Loosian explained that it was built in 1898 and designed by McKim, Mead & White. It was used as a gymnasium, pool, dance center, offices. After the 2006 renovations it was used for meeting spaces and library storage.

Mr. Barry asked about the cupola repairs. Mr. Mitchell replied that it involved wood and minor copper work. Ms. Loosian added that the lighting would be restored. Mr. Barry cautioned against over-lighting it.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to approve the application, subject to staff review and approval of construction details. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3009: Alumnae House, 79-81 Brattle St., by President and Fellows of Harvard College. Envelope repairs, new fence.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the proposed repairs and fence. The house was constructed in 1836 with multiple later additions.

Ms. Loosian said that the building was ~~the~~ used for Radcliffe Facilities offices. The project included interior renovation and exterior repairs to the building shell.

Jonathan Austin of Austin Architects described the necessary repairs to clapboards, windows, roof, and gutters. A new fence would be used to hide mechanical units.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Austin told Mr. Irving that the fence would be 5' high to hide two or three small HVAC units.

Dr. Solet asked about the architectural notation, "copper insuring." Mr. Austin explained that it was a drawing error and should read, "copper flashing."

Ms. Berg asked if the exterior color would remain the same. Ms. Loosian said she thought it would, but if the building needed to be fully repainted she would welcome input on appropriate colors.

Ms. Berg moved to approve the application, subject to staff review and approval of construction details and color. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3010: Harvard Square Hotel, 110 Mt. Auburn St., by President and Fellows of Harvard College. New canopy and signs.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the hotel, which was constructed in 1956. It was located in the Harvard Square Conservation District.

Jim Batchelor of Arrowstreet, the architect, told Mr. Irving that the glass penthouse was an original feature of the building. It contained guest rooms and mechanicals. A lobby and new stair had recently been completed inside the hotel. He described the proposed changes to signs and the glass entrance canopy.

John Garland, also of Arrowstreet, said the canopy would be 12' above grade. In answer to Mr. Barry, he said the letters and canopy would be illuminated.

Ms. Berg asked if the new signs were conforming. Ms. Burks answered that the sign certification had not yet been completed by Community Development, but it appeared that they would be. Signs could be located higher on a hotel than on other buildings. Alexandra Offiong of Harvard Planning & Project Management noted that changes to the signs had been based on CDD staff suggestions.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the application as submitted. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3011: Harvard Community Gardens, 68 Mt. Auburn St., by President and Fellows of Harvard College. Greenhouses.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the site.

Louisa Denison of Harvard Dining Services described the changes to the garden since its construction. She explained that the current proposal was to erect two small greenhouses, one of which would be accessible. An arbor would be proposed in the future. The greenhouses would be used for starting seedlings and to extend the growing season into the fall. They would be shared with other Harvard Community Gardens. She described the

materials of pressure-treated plywood, spruce studs, UV resistant polythene sheeting, and venting windows. She noted that the vertical growing structure would be removed as well as the temporary signs along Holyoke Place.

Ms. Harrington inquired about the sturdiness of the greenhouses. Ms. Denison replied that they would weigh 650 pounds and extra cinderblocks could be added if needed.

Mr. Barry asked if they would remain in the garden year round. Ms. Denison replied in the affirmative.

Dr. Solet asked why plastic sheeting was proposed rather than glass. Ms. Denison answered that it was more affordable and would provide a model that homeowners could replicate in their own yards.

Ms. Berg asked if they would be locked. Ms. Denison answered that they could be locked, but vandalism had not been a problem at the garden. They would have no lights or mechanical heating.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the construction details of the sheeting. Ms. Denison said she would check.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Berg moved to approve the application, subject to review and approval of construction details by the staff. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-112/D-1280: 28 Vineyard St. Consider initiating a landmark designation study for a preferably preserved significant building.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reviewed the staff report on the history and significance of the house. She noted that it had changed owners in December 2012 but that she had not heard anything from the buyer, Gonzalo Artigas, or his architect about his plans for the property since they appeared before the Commission in October.

Dr. Solet said the house still looked rustic. Mr. Irving noted that it was a very remote location when built. He said that it probably did not rise to the level of significance necessary for landmark designation.

John Sanzone, a member of the public, asked if there were specific structural problems with the house.

Mr. Sullivan replied that he found several unfinished projects inside the house when he visited last year. The house had a recent poured concrete foundation and appeared relatively sound. No original features remained inside. It was probably recoverable, but he agreed that it did not rise to the level of landmark significance.

Mr. Barry asked about the timeline for demolition and permits. Mr. Sullivan said that the owner would be free to demolish after the remaining month of the delay period.

Mr. Barry moved to decline to initiate a landmark study of the property. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

IPG 13-4: Masonic Temple (#1), 1950 Massachusetts Ave. \$20,000 for masonry restoration.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized a grant application for masonry repointing and repairs of the ca. 1910 landmark. He noted that the tin cornice had been replaced with copper as approved by staff.

IPG 13-5: Cambridge Community Center (#2), 5 Callender St. \$50,000 for exterior restoration.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building, originally a schoolhouse built ca. 1885. It was one of the last two wood schoolhouses constructed in Cambridge, along with the Lowell School on Lowell Street. The

Cambridge Community Center was starting a capital campaign to fund a full exterior restoration, using the Lowell School as a model. The Commission had approved a grant of \$100,000 in 2008. The Center had not been able to raise matching funds at that time, and had returned to reapply. He recommended approving the grant in principle, but not tying up the cash until the Center was ready. The current application was for \$50,000.

IPG 13-6: Reed Hall, Episcopal Divinity School, 99 Brattle St. \$48,000 for structural repairs.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the building, designed by Ware & Van Brunt, had termite infestation and structural damage. The grant would be used for structural repairs and accessibility improvements.

Dr. Solet asked if Reed Hall was shared with Lesley University. Mr. Sullivan replied that it was owned by the Episcopal Divinity School, unlike other parts of the campus that were shared with or owned by Lesley.

IPG 13-7: Cambridge Historical Society (#3), 159 Brattle St. Application for \$75,000 for exterior restoration.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the Society was preparing for an exterior restoration and would be launching a capital campaign with a goal of \$250,000. The scope of work included windows, shutters, porch, and garage repairs. The shutters had been removed and put in storage. This was the third grant request from the Society.

Mr. Crocker pointed out that one window had already been restored as a prototype.

Mr. Sullivan noted that there was a balance of \$456,000 available in the grant fund.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve grants as recommended by staff in the amounts of \$20,000 to the Masonic Temple, \$50,000 (in principle) to the Community Center, \$48,000 to Reed Hall, and \$75,000 to the Historical Society. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the January 17, 2013 minutes. Ms. Berg noted that Mr. Ferrara's first name had been omitted in the list of attendees.

Dr. Solet recommended an addition on page 2. She had asked if the reverse side of the panels could be a lighter color and the applicants had replied in the affirmative.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the January minutes as corrected. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on the status of the Kendall Square zoning petition.

New Business

Preservation Award Nominations

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the nominated projects. The ceremony would be held on May 30 at Maseeh Hall at M.I.T. More nominations had been received this year. The Commission eliminated some candidates by consensus. Mr. Sullivan said he would present the nominations again next month with more details.

Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 9:09 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 3/7/13**

Bill Deignan	Community Development, 344 Broadway
Cynthia Smith	HDP, 37 Crescent St
Mitchell Lowe	CBI Consulting, 250 Dorchester Ave., Boston 02127
Jonathan Garland	Arrowstreet, 212 Elm St, Somerville 02144
Jim Batchelor	Arrowstreet, 212 Elm St, Somerville 02144
Peter Riley	Harvard, Brookline 02445
Alexandra Offiong	Harvard, 1350 Massachusetts Ave
Louisa Denison	Harvard, 65 Winthrop St
John Aloian	3 Sacramento St
Kate Loosian	10 Garden St
Jonathan Austin	Austin Architects, 38 Cameron Ave
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.