

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

July 6, 2017 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; William Barry, Chandra Harrington, William B. King, Susannah Tobin, *Members*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate*

Members absent: Robert Crocker, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. He made introductions, reviewed hearing procedures, and described the consent agenda procedure. He recommended three cases for consideration:

Case 3815: 151 Brattle St., by Sikander Ilyas & Heidi Greiling. Replace basement window sash, construct dormer and basement stair enclosure on rear (north) elevation; enlarge basement windows and construct window wells on north and east elevations.

Case 3816: 6-12 Mason St., by Keith Row Trust, Joseph H. Davis Ltd. Partnership. Remove existing skylight and housing and replace with lower, pyramidal (hipped) skylight.

Case 3817: 27 Holyoke Pl., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Install temporary fencing, storage box and construction trailer at former garden to support Lowell House renewal.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve Case 3815 per the consent agenda procedure. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Mr. Barry moved to do likewise with Case 3816. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Ms. Tobin moved to approve Case 3817 in the same manner. Mr. King seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. [Mr. Sheffield arrived].

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-118: 66-68 Otis St. Michael Massimino of Mass ARC 1, LLC, owner. Consider draft landmark designation report and make recommendation to city council.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the preliminary landmark report about the architecture and history of the house.

Ms. Harrington asked what features were already missing before the current project got underway. Ms. Burks showed an historic image of the building from 1938 and file photos from before the project began and noted the trim that had been removed before the building was sided with asbestos shingles.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if there was a way to encourage future owners to restore missing or altered features. Ms. Burks noted that the design guidelines in the report did just that.

Bill Dines of 69 Otis Street noted that the original flush board siding was in decent condition before the developer improperly removed the asbestos shingles. The project was a disaster since day one.

Marie Elena Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street offered additional information about the builder, William Hall, and the first buyer, William Fetridge, who owned a periodical shop in Boston and traveled to Paris frequently. She suggested his high-style tastes may have influenced the design of the house. The house was extraordinary in the history of East Cambridge.

Mr. Sheffield congratulated the petitioners for bringing this to the Commission last year. He said he hoped the owners and developers would take advantage of the resources available through the staff of the Commission.

Branka Whisnant of 61 Otis Street noted that the developer had not completed work on the house including the water table. She asked the staff to offer him advice about the proper finish details.

William King said it would be unfortunate if a landmark designation resulted in an increased profit to the developer who did not follow all the rules in his project. But if the Commission and neighbors feel that some leverage existed on this or future owners then maybe it was worth designating it.

Mr. Barry said the Commission was in it for the long haul. There was lots of potential for restoration of the house in the future.

Mr. Dines said the Commission should get Inspectional Services to refer all gut rehab projects to the Commission in the hope that original features of historic homes could be preserved.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. King suggested that the Alterations section of the guidelines in the report be expanded. Mr. Barry suggested that the guidelines encourage the recovery of the original fenestration size and pattern.

Mr. King moved to send the amended final report to the City Council with a recommendation to designate the property as a landmark. Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1431 and D-1447 (Amended): 227/229 and 221-225 Concord Ave., by 227 Concord Nominee Trust c/o Lauren Harder. Consider revised project plans for moving house on lot and select demolition at rear of retail buildings.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the determination made in May that the buildings were significant and preferably preserved. He described the commercial building, built in 1925 with an additional bay added shortly afterward. He described the new proposal to preserve the storefronts and to demolish only the back part of the building. The house would be moved on the lot and townhouses constructed at the back and above the commercial building.

Mark Boyes-Watson, the architect, said they had heard the public testimony about the importance of the retail frontage. He described the changes to the project including moving the house 6' to the right and approximately 9' forward. It would be converted back to residential use. He displayed the site plan and described the proposed changes to the commercial building including the residential addition above. He shared elevations and renderings and noted the location of parking spaces in the courtyard.

Mr. King asked if the project would require zoning relief. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that it was designed to comply with the proposed zoning amendment.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the heights of the existing and proposed conditions. Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that the house at 229 was 34' high and would not change. The commercial building, with the residential addition would be 37' high and the rear building would be 34.5' high.

Mr. Boyes-Watson told Mr. Irving that rooftop addition would face the courtyard. Mr. Barry asked if there was precedent for the triple windows in the dormer. Mr. Boyes-Watson said there was lots

of variety in dormer details along Concord Avenue. Mr. Sullivan suggested that the addition could be less puzzle-like, especially on the west elevation. Mr. Boyes-Watson said he could add a water table there.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact from the public.

Patty Nolan of Huron Avenue asked why only one retail tenant was proposed. Mr. Boyes-Watson noted the accessibility issues at the other doors. Ms. Nolan commented that the protrusions above the retail building interrupted the lines of the building.

Marilee Meyer asked about ceiling heights in unit #225 and Mr. Boyes-Watson indicated it would be 9' on the second floor and 7'-6" at the third floor.

Mr. Sheffield offered some tweaks to the composition and fenestration of the residential addition. Mr. Barry suggested changes to improve the symmetry and detailing of the dormer and bay.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Kristen Mann of Concord Avenue said she was satisfied with the proposal on a personal level, but the zoning amendment committee had not met to discuss it.

Ms. Meyer said she appreciated the work that went into the changes and that the courtyard was cozy. She was not satisfied with the height and proportion to the residential addition on top of the retail building. The triple dormer was massive.

Carol Weinhaus of 271 Concord Avenue said she liked that the design recognized the architecture of both the existing residential and retail buildings. The amended proposal was much better than the all-residential design and was more in keeping with the character of the street.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period. He said he would like to see the revisions come back to the Commission. Mr. King pointed out that the design review process of the demolition review ordinance was not intended to be as detailed as that of a historic district or conservation district. He asked if it was necessary to retain the finding of preferably preserved for the existing buildings.

Mr. Boyes-Watson said it would be helpful to be allowed to relocate the house and to demolish the rear portions of the retail building.

Mr. Sheffield said that he hoped the design comments had provided enough fodder to make it unnecessary for the project to return to the Commission.

Mr. Barry moved to waive the remainder of the demolition delay, contingent on achieving the other departmental reviews necessary for a building permit. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case D-1446 (Amended): 247 Lakeview Ave., by Duncan MacArthur. Consider revised project plans to relocate house (1899) on lot.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed the decision of the May 4 hearing to find the house sig-

nificant and preferably preserved. The major issue revolved around the lack of a rear elevation and questions about drainage and its possible effects on the neighboring properties.

Robert Linn of Moskow Linn Architects displayed the amended proposal. He explained that there was a 5' drop in elevation from the front to the back of the lot. The new owner wanted a more level lawn. The current proposal was to move the house 11' to the south. A retaining wall, 4'-6" at the highest point, would be constructed of dry-laid fieldstone. The design of the addition had also been amended. He spoke about the soils report and plans for handling drainage on the site including a pump that would bring water from the back of the lot to a dry well. The existing house was found to exceed 35' (37') and was therefore non-conforming to zoning. The addition would either need relief or the height of the house would need to be lowered by 2'.

Mr. Barry asked where the height would be lowered. Mr. Linn answered that it would mostly come by lowering the height of the foundation.

George Sallum, an owner of the abutting property at 249 Lakeview Avenue, expressed concern about the drop in grade on the side of the driveway next to his property and the effects of heavy cars, settling, and possible outward movement of the retaining wall.

Duncan MacArthur, the owner, indicated that a dry laid wall was less disruptive to the site.

Mr. Barry said he found the revised proposal acceptable. He moved to waive the remainder of the demolition delay based on the amended proposal, contingent on achieving the other departmental reviews necessary for a building permit. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case D-1456: 411 Massachusetts Ave., Watermark Central Venture LLC. Demolish and reconstruct commercial building (1887) as part of larger Mass+Main project.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the Lafayette Square Building at 411 Massachusetts Avenue and the surrounding context. He summarized the staff memo about the history and architecture of the 1887 Italianate commercial building and rear addition of 1997. A large mixed-use residential and retail development was planned for the site. The proponents had intended to preserve the building but found that the façade was supported by the subway tunnel. The current proposal was to dismantle the facade, salvage the original materials, and reconstruct it as exactly as possible using the salvaged materials to the fullest extent possible. The remainder of the building, which featured party walls with no original materials or features, would be rebuilt with new materials to a new design.

Bob Flack of Twining Properties described the permitting process to date, including changes to the overlay district in May 2015 and approval of a Special Permit in early 2017. He displayed renderings of the proposed Mass+Main development. Only in the last month had they discovered that the building could not be propped up due to its position atop the subway tunnel.

David Nagahiro, a principal at CBT Architects, displayed the architectural site plans and elevations for the Mass+Main project with a residential tower on Massachusetts Avenue and a lower building on Columbia Street. He showed existing and historic photographs of the masonry details of the Lafayette Square Building. The building was not strong enough to allow new openings to activate the ground floor retail along the left side. Brick samples for the side walls would be provided to staff as well as mortar and joint samples. There would be a seam at the corner transition between historic and contemporary brick.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact.

James Williamson asked if the billboard on top of the Café Luna building next door would be impacted. Mr. Nagahiro replied it would not. Mr. Williamson asked about the granite lintel above the storefront. Mr. Nagahiro said it was not original; it would be removed and the original iron lintel would be replicated. Mr. Williamson asked how much original material could be salvaged. Joe Bearak, a construction consultant to Twining Properties, explained that the façade would be demolished by hand from the top down. The bricks would be cleaned and stockpiled. Unfortunately, the nice hard face bricks were only at the front wall, not on the sides and so there was limited quantity of them to salvage. The windows would also be replicated. Mr. Williamson asked if the testing had revealed any blue clay. Mr. Bearak answered that it was not present until 18' below grade; the project would not require taking down of the basement of the building or underpinning the foundations.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Marilee Meyer said the choice and color of brick would be very important. She said it was good that the façade would be reconstructed because the larger project needed texture and the historic context.

Colin Fleming of 22 Worcester Street noted that the 1910 photograph showed floor to ceiling windows at the first floor. Mr. Nagahiro answered that the details of the original storefront would be replicated as closely as possible based on the evidence.

Mr. Williamson commented that it was unfortunate that the building had to come down, but he was glad that it would be replicated.

Mr. Fleming said the other buildings were all boring and unattractive so he appreciated the effort being made to preserve 411 Massachusetts Avenue.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Barry suggested they devise a strategy for where to use new brick. Maybe at the cornice, which would be in shadow.

Mr. King moved to find the building significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Sullivan said the proposed approach was justified because there were clear problems with the structure of the building, both with the façade and the rear portions of the building. He recommended

finding the building preferably preserved but waiving the delay on the condition that the applicants work with the staff on the construction details of the façade replication.

Mr. King instead moved to find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the specific proposal presented, which contained the applicants' commitment to work with the staff on the details of the replication of the façade. Mr. Bearak confirmed that he was committed to work with the staff on those details. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case D-1457: 29 Bellis Circle, by Nicole Barna & Dudley Wyman. Demolish house (1856).

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff report describing the Italianate sidehall house and the neighborhood's history.

Nicole Barna, an owner, said her family had previously lived in the neighborhood then returned after some time away. She said it was a great family street. She described the problems with the condition of the house including cracked beams and storm water runoff from the park. They wanted to build a new house using Passive House design standards. It would be the first of its type in Cambridge. She and her husband had met with their neighbors on numerous occasions and had received their support. She noted the letter of support written by the neighborhood association.

Tagore Hernandez, the architect and builder, said the existing house was not a pristine example of its type. The original plan had been to do a deep energy retrofit of the house, but the substantial deterioration of the foundation due to 80 years of flooding made that infeasible. The current proposal was to keep the same footprint, protect the big maple tree at the back, and construct a new contextual house. The house would have horizontal siding, take advantage of the views and solar gain on the south side, and use traditional New England materials of cedar and standing seam metal roof. It would be 35' high.

Mr. King asked if a new foundation was proposed. Mr. Hernandez replied in the affirmative. There would be a new concrete foundation with EPDM membrane inside and out. French drains would be installed around the perimeter. The new house would have solar panels on the south facing roof plane, where there would be no dormers or plumbing penetrations to interrupt the array.

Mr. King moved to find the existing house significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Ms. Harrington asked about the basement flooding. Was there an engineer's report? Mr. Hernandez said the engineer had recommended a new foundation. Ms. Barna said there had been a lot of water damage over the years. They had studied a renovation but it could not be done to an efficiency level that would qualify for a Passive House certificate.

Mr. Sheffield asked if there was a geotechnical report. Mr. Hernandez said they had not commissioned one but they knew that water was about 7' below the street level. The storm water would daylight at the rear of the property. Mr. Sullivan noted the construction complications caused by the clay found at

the old Massey's Hardware site at Walden and Sherman streets. Mr. Sheffield recommended that they get a soils report done. He said he admired the plans for a NetZero house but he would not want to see it fall apart because of the drainage issues.

Mr. Barry asked why the existing house on a new foundation would not do the job. Mr. Hernandez said the height of the third floor was very low. To change the roof, and reframe the windows, and repair the damaged structural beams would require rebuilding much of the structure. He added that the wall cavities were insufficient to get the insulation factor they wanted without using foam and they wanted to build the house foam free to avoid dangerous off-gassing.

Mr. Irving asked for public comment.

Mr. Williamson noted that the site was very close to the flood plain. At Jefferson Park, the basement apartments might need to be closed because of possible flooding.

Lea Kerr of 27 Bellis Circle said she supported the application. The house was falling apart and it would be great to have the new Passive House in the neighborhood.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Barry remarked that the two-story bay was an aggressive design element, but otherwise the massing of the proposed new house was consistent with the existing.

Mr. King said it was a very eclectic street. He expressed support for the proposed design. It would fit in with the street. He agreed with Mr. Sheffield that a soil analysis was an important next step. He recommended the existing house be found preferably preserved until such time as the report was submitted.

Mr. Irving said the argument that the house was substandard was not convincing to him. Ms. Barna explained that they bought the house quickly while abroad and had not seen all of the condition issues before purchasing it.

Mr. Barry noted that the house was not in an historic district. He and Mr. Irving said they wanted to see the structural engineer's report to understand the problems with the existing house.

Mr. Sullivan said the goal of a demolition review was to determine where the public interest would be best served. Demolition would result in a loss to the architectural character of the street.

Mr. Barry suggested finding the house preferably preserved until further evidence could prove otherwise.

Mr. Hernandez said he had talked to other architects who had gone through the demolition review process. He did not understand why this house could be preferably preserved when others were not.

Ms. Harrington moved to find the house preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement design. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 4-2. Messrs. Irving and Sheffield voted in opposition.

New Business: Determination of Procedure: Alteration to Designated Property

Case 3825: 19A Berkeley St., by Wendy A. Weiss, o/b/o Berkeley Condo Trust. Build stone wall and walkways at rear of property.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides. The landscaping work at the rear of the lot had begun already. A retaining wall and new paths were proposed.

Stephen Shay introduced himself as the husband of the owner. He apologized for not understanding that the work needed Commission approval. He described the proposed work to level the rear yard, construct a retaining wall and alter the path arrangement.

Mr. Sullivan recommended approval subject to the ten-day notice procedure. Mr. King so moved. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Preservation Grants

Case IPG 17-9: 82 School St. Rush Memorial AME Zion Church. \$15,000 additional to restore steeple.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the church had asked for a supplemental amount to re-open the belfry as shown on older photographs and as suggested by the Commission. He recommended approval of an outright grant of \$15,000 for the work.

Mr. King so moved. Mr. Sheffield seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case IPG 17-11: 15 Notre Dame Ave., Reservoir Church. \$50,000 to repair belfry roof.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the belfry floor was taking on water. He recommended the grant of up to \$50,000 contingent on availability of funds in September if the City Council approved the usual allocation of Community Preservation Act funds to the grant program.

Ms. Tobin moved to approve the grant as described by Mr. Sullivan. Mr. King seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

Mr. King offered corrections on pages 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the May 4, 2017 minutes. He moved to approve the minutes, as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Mr. Sheffield abstained.

The Commission reviewed the minutes of May 25, 2017. Mr. King offered corrections on pages 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12. Messrs. Barry and Sheffield offered corrections on page 10.

Mr. Williamson noted that toward the end of the deliberations regarding the Harvard Collection project on May 25 Mr. Sullivan had offered a list of items that would need to be reviewed at a future hearing of the Commission. The recorded decision was missing a review of the setback of the penthouse pavilion from Brattle Street.

Mr. Irving asked if that was a request that the Commission keep that matter in mind when the project returns to the Commission. Mr. King said the minutes of the present meeting should record Mr.

Williamson's comment and that members of the Commission recognized that the massing of the pent-house had been raised by Mr. Ferrara as indicated in the minutes of May 25.

Mr. Williamson asked if it would be considered out of order for him to raise that matter at a future hearing.

Mr. King moved to approve the May 25 minutes as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. Ms. Tobin abstained.

The Commission reviewed the minutes of June 1, 2017. Mr. King offered corrections on pages 1, 3, 5, and 6. He moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 4-0. Ms. Tobin and Mr. Sheffield abstained.

Other Business

Mr. King moved to nominate Ms. Tobin as the Vice Chair. Ms. Tobin indicated she would accept the nomination. Mr. Irving seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan said he needed a volunteer to replace Mr. King on the Half Crown-Marsh NCD Commission. No volunteers immediately came forward. Mr. King noted that if a new nominee to serve on the Historical Commission also owned property or lived in the Half Crown-Marsh district that person could do double duty.

Ms. Tobin said she had not been present at the last meeting when Mr. King had announced his retirement. She thanked him for being a good example to all the members and for making Cambridge a better place.

Mr. King moved to adjourn. Mr. Barry seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on July 6, 2017**

Daniel G. Steger	66 Queensberry St #415 Boston 02215
Carol Weinhaus	271 Concord Ave
Kristin Mahon	267 Concord Ave
Mairi Staples	16 Chauncy St
Helen Bowditch	8 Chetwynd Rd
Graciela Galup	36 Copley St
Susan M. Sachs	11 Appleton Rd
John Hawkinson	jhawk@mit.edu
Leah Kerr	27 Bellis Cir
Nicole Barna	39C Bellis Cir
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Branka Whisnant	61 Otis St
John Whisnant	61 Otis St
Joe Bearak	168 Chiswick Rd, Brighton 02135
Maryellen Sullivan	255 Commandants Way, Chelsea 02150
Colin Fleming	22 Worcester St., #22
Lyndi Milton	22 Worcester St., #22
Betty Lee Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Bill Dines	69 Otis St
Marie Elena Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Andy & Liz Zucker	35 Winslow St
Tagore Hernandez	30 Quincy St, Somerville 02143
George Sallum	127 Larch Rd
David Naghiro	70 Howard St, Somerville 02144
Bob Flack	One Broadway
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl
Stephen Shay	19A Berkeley St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.