

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 7, 2017 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Robert Crocker, Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

Members absent: William Barry, *Member*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. Irving called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3863: 0 Garden St., by Christ Church Cambridge. Install pyramidal skylight on rear flat roofed portion of church facing Farwell Place.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the site and described the visibility from Farwell Place.

Rector Joseph Robinson described the rectangular, pyramidal skylight. He said it would improve a room that had a low ceiling. The top of the skylight would show above the roofline of the building.

Mr. Sheffield asked if the skylight would be centered between the two windows. Rev. Robinson answered that it would be almost centered.

[Ms. Paris arrived].

Rev. Robinson told Dr. Solet the shape of the skylight was an oblong pyramid.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions and comments but there were none. He closed the public comment period. He designated Mr. Kleespies to vote as alternate on this first case.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the application as presented. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Kleespies voting.

Case 3864: 56 Magazine St., by Christian Mission Pentecostal Tabernacle of Cambridge. Extend eaves at main roof.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Queen Anne-style church built in 1886. He noted that the Commission had approved a preservation grant to help with the roofing project. The roofer had noted that the original clipped eave was not conducive to venting the roof and allowed water to wash down the sides of the building. The application was to extend the eave by as much as 12" to allow for a soffit vent where the attic spaces were being insulated. The ridge event was already installed.

Ms. Harrington asked how the alteration would affect the architectural integrity of the building. Mr. Sullivan answered that although it was a highly-designed church, he was not sure why it wasn't built with larger eaves. It was not a good detail.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the gutters. Kerry Coyne, the project manager, answered that there were gutters all around, although some were missing. Mr. Sheffield asked how wide the strip vent would be. Ms. Coyne answered that the vent product came in a 6" dimension but additional space would be

needed for sistering the rafters. Until the building was opened up, it was uncertain just what minimum dimension would be needed for the eaves. Mr. Sheffield described a honeycomb-like product called Cor-A-Vent that had a narrower width. Ms. Coyne said she could look into the product and how it would change the assembly detail. She wasn't sure if the roofer would agree to warranty it.

Mr. Irving asked how much further down in vertical dimension the eaves would extend. Ms. Coyne noted the relationship to the second floor windows. She said extending the eaves could also be beneficial to the trim and windows, which took a beating from water washing off the roof.

Dr. Solet asked why not all areas of the roof would get the extended eaves. Ms. Coyne answered that only areas that were to be insulated and conditioned space needed the soffit vents. The dormers and steeple did not need to be changed.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions and comments, but there were none. He closed the public comment period and designated Mr. Sheffield to vote as alternate.

Mr. Sheffield moved to approve the application on the condition that product and construction details be approved by staff and on the understanding that the projection of the eaves would be kept to the minimum necessary for venting. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Sheffield voting.

Case 3865: 47 Brattle St., by George Wyner Realty Brattle Street LLC c/o Myer Dana & Sons, Inc. o/b/o First Republic Bank, tenant. Replace existing storefront and create new storefront openings on Church Street elevation.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1926 one-story commercial building with stores entered from Brattle Street. He noted the brick wall and mural facing Church Street. He explained that the current storefront glazing was not original and contrasted it with the presumably original storefront next door in the same building. This had wood bead-board below the shop windows and transom lights above. The corner of the glazing was trimmed with a metal corner strip. At #47, the transoms had been covered and the skirt below the windows built out. Also, the left-most pilaster was covered up. He explained that per the Harvard Square Conservation District guidelines, if the applicant restored the original masonry surrounds of the storefronts they would not need Commission approval to make changes to the storefronts themselves. The proposed new openings on Church Street side did need approval, however.

Vince Pan, the architect, described the proposed extension of the storefront windows along Church Street. The cast-stone detailing would be replicated at the new sections of storefront. The transom lights would be restored. A composite bead board, resembling that next door, would be installed below the new windows. The black color was existing and would remain. The cornice would be duplicated on Church Street. The existing masonry would be cleaned and preserved.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the door on Church Street and why the materials changed there. Mr. Pan explained that the change of material from brick to stucco was existing. Also, the cornice height was different there. Mr. Sullivan noted that the door led to an alleyway that provided access to the back of the

stores that had at some point been enclosed.

Mr. Kleespies asked why the wood-framed shop windows were to be replaced with aluminum frames. Mr. Pan answered that the existing windows were single-glazed and the new windows would have better energy performance. The mullion dimension would match the existing. The store next door had smaller panes of glass and metal corner trim.

Dr. Solet asked about the asymmetry of the glass panels at the corner entryway. Mr. Pan said the dimensions would match existing conditions.

Mr. Pan told Mr. Irving that the existing cast stone would be preserved. A mold would either be made in place or a piece would be removed temporarily to send to the fabricator and then reinstalled.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked if the cornice was being raised. Mr. Pan answered that where it was lower at present, it would be raised to match the height of the rest of the storefront. Ms. Meyer asked about the profile of the mullions. Mr. Pan said the existing profile was square and the new would match that shape and dimension. Ms. Meyer suggested they consider keeping the wood frame of the windows. Mr. Pan said it would be necessary to have a frame within the wood frame which would not be visually appealing. Ms. Meyer asked about the base of the storefront. Mr. Pan answered that it would be returned to the original bead-board detail. Ms. Meyer suggested the signs not be so large across the corner. She said the lettering was top-heavy compared to the transom and awning. Mr. Pan said the signs were designed to be code-compliant.

Abra Berkowitz of 253½ Broadway asked if the bank had considered incorporating the mural into the Church Street elevation. Mr. Pan said they had not, but could take that into consideration. Ms. Berkowitz said a vibrant pattern could be used on the awnings to get a similar artistic, lively effect.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Ms. Meyer said cleaning the masonry and the new materials would sterilize the building and make it look like something one would see in a mall. She suggested the architectural details be studied, adding that not all composite materials looked good *in situ*. She noted that there was a zoning petition that could impact the bank's proposal because of the width of the proposed bank frontage.

Brad Bellows of 87 Howard Street commented that there were a lot of positives about the plan. The new openings on Church Street were good. He suggested that the storefronts be extended all the way down to the end to eliminate or incorporate the alley door. He suggested that a more traditional flashing detail be used at the parapet. New insulated glass could be installed in a wood frame with traditional detailing at the sill and mullions. He questioned the need for another bank and suggested that display space be provided to the community to give the passersby something interesting to look at and solve privacy concerns for the customers and employees.

Mr. Sheffield noted that the plan indicated there would be planters behind the glass.

Ms. Berkowitz said the façade should be enlivened and made more pleasing to the public.

Ms. Meyer said she liked that the cornice was to drop down at the alley door, indicating the end of the building and the start of the next and echoing the original alley location.

Mr. Irving agreed and closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the existing 2" x 4" mullions were neither original nor sacred. The thin metal corner trim at the perfume store would not be possible with insulated glass. The wood sill at the perfume store had about a 15° slope and projected about 2", and recommended that detail to the architect.

Ms. Harrington thought the idea of having outward-facing display cases was a good one. It could enliven the corner if community art was displayed there.

Dr. Solet said she had seen people taking pictures of the mural because they knew it was going away. She suggested a mural with an eagle could be a funky embellishment to the wall and make use of a symbol in the bank's logo (eagle).

Ms. Paris noted that some establishments had exterior window treatments to provide privacy.

Mr. Crocker asked about rooftop mechanicals. Mr. Pan answered that they would replace existing units that were on a lower part of the roof and set back. The location would remain the same.

Mr. Kleespies suggested eliminating the awnings for a more dramatic look.

Mr. Sheffield suggested recessing the alley door. Mr. Pan answered that it would have a small reveal at the corner of the pilaster.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the application for a certificate of appropriateness be approved on the basis that the proposal protected the distinctive characteristics of a significant building, enhanced the functional environment of the district, and sustained the vitality of the commercial environment.

Mr. Ferrara so moved. Ms. Paris seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Paris voting.

Case 3866: Massachusetts Hall, 11 Harvard Yard, by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Exterior restoration; replace HVAC system, code and life safety upgrades.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the architecture of Massachusetts Hall (1718), the oldest building at Harvard. It was thoroughly renovated in 1924, when the roof deck was rebuilt in concrete that mimicked the look of the old sagging rafters. The last renovation was completed in 1992 and the main issue now was sensitive treatment of the ancient brick masonry.

Mark Verkennis of the Harvard Planning Office introduced the architect and construction team, including Steve Baker of Baker Wohl Architects, Thomas Fanning of Northstar, and Carl Jay of Shawmut Construction. He explained that the change of presidents offered a rare opportunity for a major renovation. The project would include accessibility improvements, HVAC work, and life-safety code upgrades.

Architect Steve Baker described the masonry protocol used in 1992 with several different colors of mortar to blend with existing conditions. A binocular survey had identified areas of concern. The end

chimneys needed to be rebuilt from the roof up. The center chimneys needed the top courses rebuilt. Custom brick would be made for the project to match the size of the Georgian-era bricks. An elevator vent would be installed behind the center chimney for limited visibility. He proposed replacing the wood gutters with painted copper to match the wood profile and increasing the size of the leaders to the downspouts. The slate was replaced in 1992 but a few were missing and would be replaced. More snow tabs and snow rails would be added for safety reasons. The clock would be restored and re-gilded. A new area-way on the south side would house mechanicals and would be covered with a grate. Conduit would be minimized and old mechanicals removed. A new fire beacon and sprinkler bell would be added for code.

Ms. Harrington asked about the appearance of the areaway and Mr. Baker provided more detail.

Ms. Paris asked if the chimneys were operational. Mr. Verkennis replied in the negative. Mr. Sullivan noted that some may not have caps, which could be exacerbating their condition. Mr. Baker said sheet metal caps would be installed.

Mr. Irving asked if the original architect was known. Mr. Baker said it was not, but the 1924 restoration was designed by Shepley, Bullfinch.

Thomas Fanning, President of Northstar, said the timetable was very aggressive. \$11M of work would be done in only eight weeks. Principal-level people were involved and there was a high level of commitment to doing it right.

Mr. Sheffield asked if the interior plan was changing. Mr. Fanning said there would be minimal changes for bathroom accessibility, mechanicals, and elevator work.

Dr. Solet asked about noise and vibration from the elevator. Mr. Baker said they would be consulting with acoustical engineers.

Mr. Baker told Mr. Irving about the elevator vent. It would be clad in copper to blend in with the roof. It would be screened by the balustrade and chimney but might be visible from a distance.

Mr. Irving asked for public questions or comments but there were none.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the application subject to staff approval of masonry and construction details. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Kleespies voting.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1471: 140-142 Prospect St., by Islamic Society of Boston. Substantial demolition of double house (1844). *Request received to continue hearing to January 4.*

Ms. Tobin moved to grant the requested continuance to January 4. Mr. Crocker seconded. The motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Sheffield voting.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-124: 227 Cambridge St., Mark Lechmere LLC, owner. Consider draft designation study report and make recommendation to City Council. *Request received to continue hearing to January 4.*

Mr. Crocker moved to grant the requested continuance to January 4. Ms. Paris seconded. The motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Paris voting.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 18-1: 267 Broadway, by Just A Start. \$70,000 for foundation and exterior rehabilitation.

Case IPG 18-2: 35 Magazine St, by First Korean Church. \$100,000 for belfry restoration.

Case IPG 18-3: 299 Western Ave., by Western Avenue Baptist Church. Grant #2. \$54,860 for accessibility and windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the three properties and described the proposed work for each and the estimated costs. The Greek Revival house at 267 Broadway along with several three-deckers collectively known as Linwood Court had been renovated for affordable housing in the late 1970s. The house was preserved at that time at the insistence of the state housing director. He had recently advocated again for its preservation and not demolition. Elizabeth Marsh of Just A Start indicated that it was a very expensive single family unit and the renovation would cost nearly \$1M.

Mr. Sullivan said the 1871 church at 35 Magazine Street had a tilting steeple that needed to be stabilized. It was clad with aluminum siding. Ms. Harrington asked about the condition of the building. Mr. Sullivan said the roof appeared to be in good condition.

The Western Avenue Baptist Church at 299 Western Avenue was originally built as a stable that was converted to a church in 1920. The church had received a grant in the past for foundation work, windows, and siding. The current request was for accessibility lift to the second floor sanctuary space.

Mr. Sullivan reported that the balance in the grant account was \$460,000. He recommended approving \$70,000 for 267 Broadway, \$100,000 for 35 Magazine Street and \$27,430 for 299 Western Ave. He noted that some unused money from approved grants might be recaptured and added to the balance.

Ms. Paris asked if the lift could be located inside the church instead of in an addition. Mr. Sullivan described the location of the stairs, which would prevent easy location of the lift inside.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the three grants in the amounts recommended. Dr. Solet seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0 with Mr. Sheffield voting as alternate.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan did not make an oral report but had submitted his written report.

Other Business: Submission Requirements

Mr. Sheffield expressed concern that late receipt of materials from applicants made it difficult for the commission to consider changes to designs and to respond effectively.

Ms. Burks said his concerns had been heard and the staff was communicating to applicants and their architects that late submissions or substantial changes to designs would not be accepted. Mr. Sullivan said they would make it clear on the application and website that placeholder designs followed by substantial changes just before the hearing would not be acceptable.

The Commission discussed what changes would be considered substantial (massing, fenestration pattern, etc.) and what would be minor tweaks that could be allowed with a late submission.

John Hawkinson cautioned against being too rigid. Some flexibility on the part of developers in response to feedback from the public before a hearing could be a good thing. He noted that the BZA accepted amendments up to the Monday before a Thursday meeting.

Minutes

Dr. Solet offered a tense change on page 1 of the October 5, 2017 minutes. She moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 with Mr. Irving, Mr. Ferrara, Dr. Solet, and Ms. Harrington voting. The other commissioners abstained since they had not been present.

No corrections were offered for the November 2, 2017 minutes. Ms. Harrington moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Kleespies seconded. The motion passed 7-0 with Messrs. Irving, Crocker, Kleespies, and Sheffield, Mss. Harrington and Paris, and Dr. Solet voting.

New Business

Mr. Sullivan said a volunteer was needed to take the place of Mr. King on the Half Crown-Marsh NCD Commission. Dr. Solet indicated she would be willing to serve. Messrs. Irving and Sullivan thanked her for volunteering.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Mr. Kleespies seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 8:34 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on December 7, 2017**

John Hawkinson	jhawk@mit.edu
Thomas Fanning	1050 Massachusetts Ave
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Ave
Carl Jay	171 Washington St, Dedham 02026
Andy Touchette	1050 Massachusetts Ave
Mathew Klizmik	1104 Smith St, Fort Collins, CO 80524
Steve Baker	132 Lincoln St #4, Boston 02111
Mark Howland	15 Pleasant Ave, Somerville 02143
Joe Robinson	1 Garden St
Vince Pan	165 Fayerweather St
Colin Delaney	146 Adams St #1, Waltham 02453
Scott Dufresne	9 Kashmir Dr, Salem, NH 03079
Tony Amato	19 Prescott Rd, Norwood 02062
Molly Downor	18 Healey St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Kerry Coyne	63 Parker St, Watertown 02472
Brad Bellows	87 Howard St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.