

Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Cambridge Historical Commission (acting as a Historic District Study Committee) and the Reservoir Hill Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee

January 13, 2016 – 10 Phillips Place, Washburn Commons, Room 103 - 6:00 P.M.

CHC Members present: William King, *Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

CHC Members absent: Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert G. Crocker, *Members*

RHNCD Study Comm Members present: Peter Ellis, Robert Higgins, Arch Horst, Bracebridge Young, Jr. with appointed CHC representatives Chandra Harrington and Susannah Tobin

RHNCD Study Comm. Members absent: CHC rep Joseph Ferrara

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

Public present: See attached list.

William King, the chair of the Historical Commission, called the meeting to order at 6:09 P.M. He asked if any member of the NCD Study Committee would volunteer to be chair of the Committee. Peter Ellis and Bracebridge Young volunteered to co-chair the Committee.

Charles Sullivan, presented a slide show about the architectural timeline and styles represented in the neighborhood beginning in the late 1700s. He provided examples of houses built in a wide array of architectural styles. He pointed out styles that were derived from English medieval, classical, and renaissance precedents architecture and highlighted architectural features and styles that developed first here in America by builders and architects like the Queen Anne, Shingle, and Colonial Revival Styles. He ended by describing recent projects that had come before the Historical Commission under either the demolition delay ordinance or landmark designation proceedings.

Linda Kaboolian, of 23 Highland Street, commended Mr. Sullivan on the presentation. She noted some observations about the neighborhood. It was pedestrian friendly, residents enjoy gardening, many of the tall front fences were being removed or lowered, the trees were mature, the lots were spacious and the scale of the neighborhood was pleasant. She noted that her family had taken down a huge stockade fence at the sidewalk and stepped back the garden edge with lower masonry walls. She indicated she would like to see more landscaped property edges rather than defensive high walls and fences.

Sarah Burks presented a summary of the case history she had tabulated of building permits issued between January 1, 2011 and January 1, 2016. She noted that the permits highlighted in green (approximately 60 percent) were those that would likely be approved by Historical Commission staff if they were reviewed as part of a historic district or NCD because they were either for interior alterations, repairs in kind, or temporary structures like tents. She noted that Brattle Street properties that were partly in the study district and partly in the existing Old Cambridge Historic District were included in the table, so that affected the totals somewhat.

Arch Horst, of 55 Brewster Street, indicated he had looked over the table and adjusted for those Brattle Street projects, projects that involved multiple permits, and temporary changes like tents and came

up with approximately ~~22~~27% of the properties in the study area had undergone significant exterior renovations during the five year period.

Ms. Kaboolian stated that there had been a big turnover in property ownership in the last 15 years; about 50 percent of properties in the study area had been sold during that time. She said it also indicated a generational shift in ownership.

Peter Ellis, of 16 Highland Street, asked about the cost estimates in the permit history report. Ms. Burks answered that many of the open permits (projects still under construction) had not finalized the cost information or fees that were based on those numbers, so the cost estimates in the table were not very reliable but were only included as a gauge of the scope of a project and an indicator of property owner investment in the buildings. Mr. Ellis asked if property ownership change rate had sped up in recent years or was not different from earlier eras.

Bracebridge Young of 88 Appleton Street, asked if staff could compare value appreciation in Avon Hill and Reservoir Hill over a period of time to try to see if the district designation made a difference. Mr. Horst agreed that data on property values would be helpful to see. Mr. Sullivan indicated that we would get some data about property values from the assessing department.

George Mabry, of 77 Sparks Street, stated that his house was only ten years old. There were no architectural precedents for it, so how could a commission review changes to the property for appropriateness? He asked how and when the committee would make a recommendation about boundaries for a potential district. Ms. Burks indicated that the boundary would discussion would likely not take place until later in the study process after the characteristics and significance of the neighborhood was better defined.

[Mr. King left the meeting].

Mr. Ellis asked if anyone had changes to the draft minutes of the December 9 meeting. Ms. Burks reported that Annette Lamond of 7 Riedesel Avenue had submitted some proposed amendments in writing. She read over the proposed changes changing the word “noted” to “asserted in the last sentence of the sixth paragraph and correcting a misspelling of “Buckingham” in the eleventh paragraph. Mr. Young clarified his statement at the end of the sixth paragraph. The minutes were approved unanimously, as corrected.

Mr. Young moved to adjourn and the meeting, which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:46 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Committee Members and Members of the Public
Present on January 13, 2016**

Arch Horst	55 Brewster St
Jo M. Solet	15 Berkeley St
Susannah Tobin	3 Arlington St
George Mabry	77 Sparks St
Chandra Harrington	123 Hancock St
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Annette LaMond	7 Riedesel Ave
Robert Higgins	1 Highland St
Peter Ellis	16 Highland St
William King	25 Hurlbut St
Brace Young	88 Appleton St
Linda Kaboolian	23 Highland St
Christian Nolen	29 Highland St
Libby Halstead	25 Brewster St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.