

DRAFT Minutes of the Reservoir Hill NCD and HD Study Committees—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED

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

December 9, 2015 – 10 Phillips Place, Washburn Commons, Room 103 - 6:00 P.M.

CHC Members present: William King, *Chair*; Shary Page Berg, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

CHC Members absent: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; William Barry, Robert G. Crocker, *Members*

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

RHNCD Study Comm. Members absent: none

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

Public present: See attached list.

William King, of 25 Hurlbut Street and the Historical Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:02 P.M. He noted that it was the first time that a study process (both historic district and neighborhood conservation district (NCD) had been undertaken jointly with combined meetings of the two committees. He noted that there were three possible outcomes for the Reservoir Hill study: no district, an NCD, or expansion of the Old Cambridge Historic District. He noted that the content of the meetings would be largely staff driven. He welcomed the public at all the meetings.

Introductions were made around the room of all committee members, staff, and general interested members of the public.

Charles Sullivan, Executive Director of the Historical Commission, described the specific procedures for establishing historic districts and NCDs under the state and local enabling laws. He described the timeline and evolution of the Old Cambridge Historic District, which had begun with four smaller, non-contiguous districts in 1963 and were later combined and extended several times. He described the four existing NCDs in Cambridge and why the local ordinance creating this kind of district was passed. He noted that three of the NCDs have their own commissions, supported by staff of the Historical Commission and the Harvard Square Conservation District was administered by the Historical Commission. He noted that the study area was the largest possible extent of a new or expanded district. The boundaries could be reduced, but not expanded, without started over with the study process.

Bracebridge Young of 88 Appleton Street, who was out of town but participating via teleconference call, asked if a simple majority vote of the committee would determine committee decisions. Mr. Sullivan replied in the affirmative.

Sarah Burks, Preservation Planner, presented a slide show and described the wide array of historic preservation tools utilized in Cambridge including both regulatory and non-regulatory tools.

Mr. Young asked if any properties in the study area were protected by Preservation Restriction (PR). Mr. Sullivan replied that one property owner was about to finalize a PR for her property in 2016 but

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it had not yet been executed. Mr. Young pointed out that PR donation can have tax advantages to the property owner. Mr. Sullivan agreed, but noted that abuse of that by some (especially in D.C.) had led the I.R.S. to crack down in recent years to only allow the tax benefits where PRs provide a documented increase in restriction/protection on a property beyond whatever regulatory protection might already exist prior to execution of the PR. Mr. Young ~~noted that without the regulation of a district, the value of a PR donation would be greater.~~ asserted that where the regulation of a historic district is already in place, the potential tax advantages of donating a preservation restriction go away.

Mr. Sullivan presented a slide show on the history of the Reservoir Hill neighborhood describing the evolution of roads and means of transportation, estate subdivision, and residential development patterns from the Colonial period through the mid twentieth century.

The staff led a brainstorming exercise to elicit responses to the question of what everyone considered the best qualities of the neighborhood.

Will Edgerly, of 32 Highland Street, indicated that he appreciated the age of the building stock, noting that 14 of the 17 houses on Highland Street were built in the nineteenth century. He said he felt fortunate to live in the neighborhood.

Peter Ellis, of 16 Highland Street, said that he had arrived here in 1957. The neighborhood had a strong sense of tradition. He said that the neighborhood used to have a lot of children, Harvard faculty, and very little traffic. He noted that the neighborhood had started to change but he would like to see a sense of continuity.

Mr. Young said he chose to move to the neighborhood because of its proximity to the Buckingham Browne & Nichols School where his children were enrolled. The scale of homes was very attractive as well as its close proximity to Boston and Harvard Square. His family had dogs and the size of the lot made it a nice place for them. He noted that he had been able to make a contemporary space at the rear of his home. He cited the neighborhood's diversity of architecture.

Time was short and this exercise did not last long. Members were encouraged to send in their thoughts to the staff via e-mail.

Mr. King moved to adjourn and the meeting ended at 7:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

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**Committee Members and Members of the Public
Present on December 9, 2015**

Arch Horst	55 Brewster St
Jo M. Solet	15 Berkeley St
Joe Ferrara	195 Brattle St
Susan Denny	29 Highland St
Susannah Tobin	3 Arlington St
George Mabry	77 Sparks St
Chandra Harrington	123 Hancock St
Len Edgerly	165 Mt. Auburn St
Will Edgerly	32 Highland St
Shary Berg	11 Perry Street
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 (via phone)	88 Appleton St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.