

DRAFT Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission—THIS DRAFT HAS NOT YET BEEN REVIEWED OR APPROVED BY THE COMMISSION

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 5, 2025 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (831 0191 1336) - 6:00 P.M.

Present: Chandra Harrington, *Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Liz Lyster, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, *Alternates*

Absent: Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan (online), *Executive Director*
Sarah Burks (in person), *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation pursuant to Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M. She explained the meeting instructions, public hearing procedures and introduced commissioners and staff. She indicated both alternates present could vote on all matters. She dispensed with the consent agenda and noted that public comments would be limited to three minutes.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 5207 (continued from April 3, 2025): 12 Berkley St., by 12 Berkeley LLC, Managing Member, Edward Mullen. Remove deck and construct addition. Remove garage and construct new carriage house. Landscaping changes.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and displayed photos of the house and reported on a visit to the site since the April hearing to inspect an area of selective removal of the stucco cladding. The original clapboards and trim were found under the stucco, as anticipated by the applicants.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owners, introduced the project team including Michael Glenmulen and Jonathan Miller, of Frank Shirley Architects, and Michael Wasser, landscape architect.

Mr. Miller shared his screen and presented the updated plans, noting changes from the original presentation and responses to suggestions raised by the commission. These changes included rebuilding the chimneys, removing skylights at the front, materials such as fiberglass gutters to match a traditional wood profile, cedar shingles wood trim, paneled elevator door, and retention of the shingled flare on the right side. He noted where salvaged windows could be reused on the building, decorative patterning in the gable end, and woven corners on the shingled walls. He said the mechanical equipment would be located on the west side of the house. The carriage house was unchanged other than its materials of wood shingles, fiberglass gutters, and wood trim.

Mr. Ferrara asked for clarification of the two possible window sizes on the Hastings Avenue elevation. Mr. Miller showed two options. A salvaged window would be narrower than the new window next to it or two new windows could match in width.

Ms. Harrington noted that the suggestions made by the commission at the last hearing had been incorporated into the revised design. She asked if there were questions of fact from the public.

Shanti Fry of 8 Berkeley Street asked about new or removed trees. Mr. Wasser answered that the

landscape plan depicted trees based on field observation but a future survey will place them exactly. Trees marked with an X are to be removed in accordance with requirements of the tree ordinance. He noted that the yews planted along Hastings Avenue had grown into the easement and would be removed.

Ms. Meyer asked about the width of the walkway on the north corner of the lot. Mr. Wasser said it would be 4' wide. Ms. Meyer asked if half timbering could go back in the gable end. Mr. Miller said it had been considered but they did not believe the half timbering was original. Diamond patterned shingles were proposed in the top part of the gable.

Gail Roberts of 8 Berkeley Street asked if the stucco had been tested for asbestos or lead. Mr. Miller said testing had not been done yet, but the contractor would follow all code requirements. Ms. Roberts suggested the CHC be informed of the test results. How would the neighbors be protected? Mr. Miller said the contractor would communicate with the neighbors about construction issues.

Ms. Harrington opened the public comment period with a three-minute limit.

Ms. Fry said her property was the most impacted by the project. She and her spouse had replaced their garage on the same footprint but did not add a second floor to it. She said the new garage at 12 Berkeley should be only one story and if living space was needed it could be added off the back.

Ms. Meyer commented that the shingles at the top of the gable end did not look right. The landscape should remain more rustic and rural and not be overly refined. She asked if the rear bay would still continue to the first floor. She expressed a preference for the narrower window on the Hastings Avenue elevation.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan recommended a Certificate of Appropriateness with the objective of returning the house to its original cladding and trim details.

Mr. Ferrara said the revised proposal responded to many of the suggestions such as keeping the chimneys and flare. He moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposal, as submitted, subject to approval of construction details by staff with the objective of restoring the original cladding and trim design. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kleespies and passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington)

Case 5307: 15 Mt. Auburn St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Demolish existing building and construct a new 3-story building.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the double house, built in 1870 for James Robbins, a hardware dealer and real estate developer. The bump outs on either side were original to the building. Number 15 was located in the Harvard Square Conservation District and Overlay District but was outside the National Register district. He described the development of the area, once the location of the William Winthrop estate. Carol Johnson purchased the building in the 1970s, stripped off the asphalt shingles and restored wood clapboard siding and wood trim. Graham Gund added a traditional porch and

Italianate style window hoods and shutters. Gund had assembled a development site next door for an office building but never built it. The subsequent owner, Greg Carr, built the mixed-use building that includes a theater. Mr. Sullivan explained that the building and those at 9-11 Mt Auburn Street were subject to preservation restrictions donated in the 1980s by Gund and his development company. The object of the restriction on #15 was to preserve the house along with #9 and #11. Alterations could be approved by the CHC per the terms of the restriction, but the document did not mention demolition as a permitted option. He suggested the Commission hear the case and then ask for a continuance so to seek legal advice about what actions were possible under the terms of the restriction.

Alexandra Offiong, of Harvard Planning and Design, introduced the project and its importance to the institutional mission and commitment to Harvard Square. The project would provide a new building for the Harvard University Native American Program (HUNAP). She introduced Jordan Clark, Director of HUNAP and Justin Lee of Lee² Design. Ms. Offiong explained that #15 was one unit in a 3-unit condominium, which had been acquired by the university in 2022 as a gift. The project was originally conceived as a renovation and reuse of the existing building. A feasibility study and schematic design over the course of a year revealed major challenges to renovation. The long-term goals of the project would not be met with the existing building due to structural and other condition problems. The benefits of a new building would be to give breathing room to #11 and provide a design that would incorporate traditional materials, be pedestrian friendly, and fit in well with the quirky neighborhood. Harvard would consent to a continuance of the hearing and would use that time to continue conversations with the abutters.

Mr. Clark, a Wampanoag Aquinnah citizen and director of HUNAP, described the background and mission of the organization. The building project would allow the Program to expand and provide outdoor space for ceremonial uses. The design would become significant in its own right. Traditional design elements such as tree bark and wampum banding would relate to local tribes while the interior spaces could represent other nations represented at Harvard and in Cambridge.

Justin Lee, a principal of Lee² Design, shared his screen and discussed the site arrangement, history and challenges to reuse of the existing building. The foundation was compromised by water infiltration and settlement, the structural main beam was split, the façade and roof leaked, and there was no accessible entrance and no room for a ramp. He said multiple sites had been considered for HUNAP. He said the design wanted to embrace Native American cultures but avoid cliches. He showed the proposed site plan noting that the building would retain the scale of the existing building. He went on to describe the elevations and materials, which included tulip poplar bark on a curbed bay at the entrance and wall siding that would incorporate colored panels in pattern that references a beaded wampum belt.

Ms. Paris asked if the trees at the front of the property would be retained and if a new curb cut was needed. Mr. Lee said the trees would be protected and no new curb cut was needed.

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Mr. Kleespies asked why this site had been chosen. He asked if other sites like the surface parking lot on Francis Avenue had been considered. Ms. Offiong answered that the requirements for a site included room for a stand-alone building, ceremonial green space, and proximity to residential and academic buildings.

Ms. Lyster asked if the yard space would be big enough with this design. She noted that the existing back yard was larger. Mr. Lee said the existing back yard was very shaded and had no privacy due to the passageway through the block. The new plan would create a side yard with privacy. Ms. Lyster asked for more information about the bark cladding. Mr. Lee provided a photo and examples of other projects where it had been used. It would be at ground level where people can really experience it. It would turn the corner with a curving bay and extend on the west side. Ms. Lyster asked about the purpose of the triangular bays on the east side. Mr. Lee said the offices were modest in size; the bays would allow for fresh air and light. Ms. Lyster asked Mr. Clark if he was satisfied with the design. Mr. Clark answered that he was happy with the layout, yard space and location. It was the outcome of over a year of work and would speak to the culture of Native communities in the northeast but also was a very modern design. It was important that the building not be set in the past since it was for Native people of the present day.

Ms. Harrington asked for additional information about the colored panels. Mr. Lee described the cementitious panels of a variety of hues and textures that would be applied to a rainscreen wall system. Ms. Harrington invited questions of fact from the public.

James Williamson of Churchill Avenue asked about the location and if the building would be for the exclusive use of HUNAP or open to use by other entities. Mr. Clark said the Program partners with other schools and programs across the University. Mr. Williamson asked how long it had been the office of the Harvard Clerical & Technical Workers union. Ms. Offiong confirmed the union had been a former tenant but did not know the length of time.

Ms. Meyer asked if Harvard owned the other two buildings at 9-11 Mt Auburn Street. Ms. Offiong said those houses were not affiliated or owned by Harvard.

Bryan Sweeney, a geotechnical and structural investigator hired by Harvard for the project, elaborated on the condition issues of the building. The building had settled almost a foot. The rubblestone foundation was in poor condition and would require replacement. To replace the foundation of the existing building would put the building at #11 at risk due to the close proximity of the two buildings.

Ms. Harrington opened the public comment period.

Mr. Williamson said he was sympathetic to the proposed use. He remarked that he really did not find the proposed new building to be attractive. HUNAP and Cambridge deserved better.

Ms. Meyer said she understood the need for a center for HUNAP. She had consulted the opinion of an architect about the design. She noted that Wampum was not used as a traditional architectural

element. The concept was interesting, but she wasn't convinced it fit the context of Mt. Auburn Street.

Ms. Harrington closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan said there were legal questions he wanted to get clarity on before the Commission made a decision on the application. Could the Commission approve demolition? Does Mr. Gund have standing to challenge such a determination?

Ms. Lyster said there was something stark about the proposal in this context, but her overall feeling was that it might be time to let someone else have control of the architectural narrative. If HUNAP was happy with the design, she didn't want to say too much.

Mr. Ferrara agreed there were important legal questions to answer.

Mr. Kleespies said there weren't many frame buildings remaining in Harvard Square and they should be considered carefully. The two buildings at 9-11 Mt Auburn Street were considered recently and found to be valuable and worth preserving. Number 15 looked considerably better than it did in the 1970s when it was covered by artificial siding and had a modernist entry hood. Harvard was capable of doing preservation projects well. The condition of the building did not seem to be unsurmountable. He fully supported HUNAP having a fantastic building but he wasn't sure this site was big enough.

Ms. Lyster noted that there were residents of this area long before the existing buildings.

Ms. Paris moved to continue the hearing to a future meeting of the Commission, noting the applicant's consent to the continuance. Ms. Lyster seconded and the motion passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Ferrara, Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington)

Ms. Harrington called for a short recess from 8:29-8:35, when she reconvened the meeting.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Property

Case 5312: 195 Brattle St., by Joseph and Jan Ferrara. Construct pylons and railings at front steps.

Mr. Ferrara recused himself from the matter. Ms. Burks moved changed his status on zoom from the panelist side to be an attendee off screen.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the house and summarized the application to match the wing walls of the porch steps at the steps up from the sidewalk to the lawn and to add handrails. He noted that the proposal had been considered and approved several years ago, but the certificate had since expired. He recommended approving a certificate of appropriateness for the work, subject to the ten-day notice procedure which would provide notice to the abutters.

Ms. Harrington invited questions or comments from the public, but there were none.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve the certificate of appropriateness subject to the ten-day notice procedure and approval of construction details by staff. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 in a roll call vote. (Lyster, Kleespies, Paris, Harrington)

Mr. Ferrara rejoined the panelist side of the zoom meeting.

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Preservation Grants

Case IPG 25-8: 137 Allston St., by St. Augustine’s Church. \$50,000 for accessibility work.

Case IPG 25-9: 145 Brattle St, by Holy Trinity Church. \$31,900 for roof, windows, and masonry repairs at the rectory.

Ms. Paris disclosed that she was on the board of Black History in Action for Cambridgeport, a non-profit partner of St. Augustine’s Church. She recused herself from the first grant case.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed photos of the two properties. The project for St. Augustine’s Church would provide accessibility to the basement with a new stair and a lift. The application was for \$50,000 with a required match from the applicant.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the application from Holy Trinity Armenian Church was for roofing, window restoration, and masonry repairs on the brick side walls and chimneys. The total project cost was approximately \$200,000 and the application was for \$100,000. He said roofing was always a first priority. He recommended a total grant of \$45,700 for the roofing alone (\$31,900 outright and \$13,800 to be matched by the applicant).

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a matching grant of \$50,000 for St. Augustine’s project. Mr. Kleespies seconded, and the motion passed 4-0 in a roll call vote. (Kleespies, Ferrara, Lyster, Harrington)

Ms. Harrington moved to approve \$31,900 outright and \$13,800 matching for Holy Trinity. Mr. Kleespies seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Lyster, Paris, Ferrara, Kleespies, Harrington)

Minutes

The Commission discussed the draft minutes of the May 1, 2025 meeting. Mr. Kleespies moved to approve the minutes, as submitted. Ms. Lyster seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Lyster, Paris, Ferrara, Kleespies, Harrington)

Director’s Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on appointments and reappointments. The City Manager had sent his recommended appointees to the City Council for their consideration on Monday June 9. Dr. Solet and Ms. Tobin were not up for reappointment. Three new appointees were proposed for alternate positions.

In Mr. Sheffield’s absence, Mr. Kleespies moved to adjourn. Ms. Paris seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 in a roll call vote. (Lyster, Paris, Ferrara, Kleespies, Harrington). The meeting adjourned at 9:02 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public Present on June 5, 2025

Alexandra Offiong	1350 Mass. Ave.
Justin Lee	Lee ² Design
Kathrin Lee	Lee ² Design
Jennifer Dowd	1350 Mass. Ave.
Jordan Clark	HUNAP, Story St.
James Rafferty	Adams & Rafferty
Jonathan Miller	Frank Shirley Architects
Michael Wasser	Michael Wasser Associates Landscape Architecture, Boston
Stephen Baker	Baker Design Group
John Hawkinson	Cambridge
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St.
Amy Finlayson	11 Rowland Street Marblehead
Bryan Sweeney	Suite 2200, 465 Medford Street, Boston
Thomas O'Connor	8 Story Street
Thomas Gordon	25 River Rd, Wilton, CT
Bichop Narwot	16 Seminole Way, Bloomfield, CT
Jeff Zinsmeyer	8 Berkeley St
Mike Auren	24 Gilleonard Ln, Framingham
Michael Driscoll	9 Orchard Crossing, Andover
Gail Roberts	13 Berkeley St
Shanti Fry	8 Berkeley St.
Marc Levy	3 Potter Pk., #1
Susan Carter	41 Holden St.
James Williamson	Churchill Ave.
Patrick Magee	877 Cambridge St.

Note: City is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.

Note: See <https://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/permitsApplications/projectplansandstaffreports> for a link to the Zoom meeting recording.