

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 3, 2009 - 834-806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Chair King; Vice Chair Irving; Dr. Solet; Ms. Harrington; Mr. Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

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With a quorum present, Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M. and introduced the commissioners and staff. He described the consent agenda procedure and asked if there were any cases that a member of the public, commission, or staff felt it necessary to be heard.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the following cases per the consent agenda procedures.

**Case 2450: 148 Brattle St., by Charles & Lindsay Coolidge. Alter garage.**

Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-73: 1991 Mass. Ave., St. James Episcopal Church.** Consider petition to initiate landmark study.

Mr. King reported that a petition of registered voters had been received by the Commission on October 16, 2009. At its November meeting, the Commission voted to schedule a public hearing on the matter of whether to initiate a landmark designation study for the premises of St. James Episcopal Church. He reviewed the hearing procedures and the agenda items related to the church.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 1888 Romanesque Revival style church. He described the related structures including the 1884 parish hall, 1912 pastor's study, 1958 school wing, and 1915 Knights Garden, the design of which was attributed to John Nolen. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was subject to a preservation restriction held in perpetuity by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). In 2005, the church and the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding future development on the site and the Commission had declined at that time to proceed with landmark designation. The MOA identified significant features of the site and set up guidelines for future development. Oaktree Development had purchased the adjacent car wash in 2008, and the CHC and Community Development staff had met several times with the proponents to discuss the proposal. MHC was currently reviewing the proposal and would issue a finding per their restriction.

Mr. King asked for a representative of the petitioners for a landmark study to make a statement.

John Armstrong of 36 Orchard Street, a Cambridge resident since 1970, identified himself as chair of the St. James Neighbors Committee. The development proposal was too big. The four-story, 200' deep condominium would dwarf the church and block views of it from various points in the neighborhood. The project would preserve none of the churchyard feeling and would harm the Beech Street streetscape. The Knights Garden would be reduced by about one third and would feel more like the courtyard of an apartment building. He noted that the gift of 5 Beech Street to the church from Samuel Woodbridge had specified that it be used only for church purposes. Very few changes had been made despite the many meetings between the neighbors and the proponents. He en-

couraged the CHC and MHC to find a solution that would better serve the neighborhood and the church and that would preserve the historic feeling of the site.

Mr. King noted that the CHC had no jurisdiction with regard to land use, and could only consider the physical nature of the project and the features that were visible from a public way.

Richard Clarey of 15 Brookford Street and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee said the CHC had the power to enforce the MOA as a contract. The current proposal impinged on the Knights Garden and did not keep the church as the primary structure on the site. The case for designating the property as a landmark had already been made in an earlier study report.

Preston Gralla of 19 Beech Street said the developers had claimed they could build a larger building as of right. The CHC should prevent that per the MOA. He liked living on Beech Street because seeing the church gave him the sense of living in the past and present. The proposal would harm that experience.

Patty Armstrong of 36 Orchard St. encouraged the Commission to take its time and complete the study.

Jacqueline Kelley of 21 Blake Street read an excerpt from her report about the property. John Nolen was a figure of great importance. He thought the land adjacent to the church should be a garden for quiet contemplation.

Lydia Gralla of 19 Beech Street said the development would change the nature of the garden. The church needed open space around it. The church was known to people from all over the Boston area. It was already an unofficial landmark. She described the effect of the sun through the stained glass windows in November.

Mr. King noted that a landmark study would not mean that no changes could be approved, but would set up a review process for applications during the study period. The 2005 MOA was an expression of goals for future development, but did not have real teeth. If the commission did not initiate the study, the demolition ordinance would provide the CHC with jurisdiction to review the proposed demolition of the parish house.

Michael Brandon of 27 Seven Pines Avenue did not agree that the MOA was non-binding, but if that were true it was another reason to initiate the study. He spoke in favor of preserving at least part of the parish house. The current proposal would destroy the Knights Garden and negatively impact other historic buildings. The corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Beech Street was the original nexus of Porter Square. A modern building would not be appropriate for the site and would not conform with the MOA. A new study should reflect the changes to Porter Square and take a closer look at the Knights Garden. A study would allow more time for the developers and neighbors to consider alternatives.

Mr. King asked if there were any comments against the initiation of a landmark study.

Gwen Noyes of Oaktree Development said that she had been working with the vestry and rector for over a year on a cooperative approach to development that would address the space and accessibility needs of the church. Oaktree had originally considered putting twenty-eight condos on the car wash site. Ricardo Dumont, a principal at Sasaki Associates, was designing the project with the goal of honoring the historical and sculptural quality of the church. The cooperative project would establish an endowment for the ongoing maintenance of the church. Maintaining a garden was a key element of the project. The current proposal was at least 17,000 sf below the maximum allowed by zoning. A preservation consultant had been hired to review the history of the site. A land-

scape plan for the garden had not been found. John Nolen was a friend of the rector. Nolen had recommended plantings for the garden, but did not create a fully designed plan. The parish house was of lesser significance than the church and had lost integrity due to the many alterations. She read from the goals in the MOA and described how the current proposal met the goal of keeping the church freestanding. The connection to the new building would be minimal. The development would minimize encroachment on the garden, another goal in the MOA. The design would have a different garden that would be more functional for the church while maintaining a substantially equivalent usable area. Landmark designation would be an extra burden and was not desired by Oaktree.

Rev. Holly Antolini, rector of St. James church, said the conversations with MHC had shaped the project. The church needed to get ahead of the emergency maintenance needs and establish funds for ongoing repairs as well as accessibility and energy improvements. The stained glass windows were in need of restoration. No plan by Nolen had turned up in the research. He had sent the rector a list of shrubs. The new garden might have more trees and fewer shrubs, or it might have a memorial garden. She hoped it would be more functional and central to parish life. They had insured that space around the building was kept open in the development proposal.

Ricardo Dumont of Sasaki Associates presented the existing and proposed conditions. He described the Knights Garden, which currently consisted of some 1980s plantings at the front, a grassy lawn, and a children's play garden in the rear. The goal of the new garden was to make it usable and accessible to multiple entrances. There would be less shrubbery and more usable space. The design was still in development. They were doing everything possible to preserve the five pin oaks on Beech Street. He reviewed the proposed site plan and described the ground floor parish hall, new Massachusetts Avenue entrance, parish library, and food pantry. He reviewed the elevations. The fourth story had been pushed below the ridge of the church. The Massachusetts Avenue façade had been pushed back 9' to preserve the view of the fire station. It was also further from the apse of the church on Beech Street. The connection to the church would be only at the ground floor. The new building would not compete with the church, but would have a simple and modern design.

Mr. Dumont answered questions of fact from the CHC and the public, including clarifying views of the church and the new building; parking arrangements, and mechanical equipment. Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the existing garden space would be preserved.

Alan Aukeman, the church's garden committee chair, answered questions about the garden. Very few of the original Nolen plantings remained when the garden was studied and renovated in the 1980s.

Rev. Antolini answered a question from Mr. Armstrong, saying that the church objected to the landmark study because it was already engaged in discussions with CHC and MHC staff.

Mr. King opened the floor to comments.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the structural impacts of excavation on the church building. She commented that the new building would obstruct views of the church from Massachusetts Avenue and Beech Street. The height of the new building should relate to the eaves, not just the peak of the church building.

Ruth Ryals of 115 Upland Road said the neighbors were using the process to prevent change. The current proposal would be a welcome addition to the neighborhood. The site was a prime location and would not remain as it was forever. Urban gardens could be very restful, useful places.

Mr. Brandon suggested that the developers make a model of the proposal. Ms. Noyes said one was requested by the Planning Board. Mr. Dumont said there would be no loading dock for the retail space.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He called for a short recess and reconvened the meeting at 8:40 P.M. He explained the landmark study process.

Arthur Klipfel of Oaktree Development noted that he was working with foreign investors who might opt to go back to the single-site development on the car wash lot if the review was going to extend for another year.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the correspondence that had been submitted to the CHC. Letters from Andrea Saltzman, Rachel Evans, Jessica Pratt, Nancy McArdle, Jane Hirschi, Margaret Moran, Judy and John Gay, Michelle Holmes, Colleen Madden, Costanza, Alea, and Jacob Eggers, Thomas Tufts, Anne Tate, Mary Caulfield, Michael Salib, and Fred Meyer were acknowledged and summarized for the record. A petition of approximately 50 names in favor of the development was accepted into the record as well as a lengthy report received from Jacqueline Kelley, who had made her own statement during the public comment period.

The Commission deliberated the question of whether to initiate a new study. Dr. Solet noted that a study would neither freeze the site nor stop a partnership between the church and Oaktree, but would set up a review process with the CHC. She was inclined to accept the petition and initiate a study.

Ms. Harrington agreed. She would like the conversation to continue between the neighbors, the church, and Oaktree. The CHC could be another voice in those conversations.

Mr. Shirley said the proposal showed what the site could be. The new building was well designed. The height of the building was not completely resolved but the choice of materials and rendering of the facades was masterful. The garden had the potential of being very contemplative. The design reminded him of a European cloister, serving as a quieter building design and as a backdrop to the church. He noted that cloisters were usually smaller in scale to the church. The building might benefit from having one less story. He noted the benefits that an endowment could have to the long-term maintenance of the church. He asked what role the CHC would play in the design review if it did not initiate a landmark study.

Mr. Sullivan described the MHC review process by its staff and the CHC demolition review process per the demolition delay ordinance. A great deal of progress had been made in the last month of design discussions. He did not oppose the project in concept. For the right design, the parish house could go. The increased density on Massachusetts Avenue was not a problem. The mass had been pushed back and clipped to preserve views of the church and fire house. He expressed concern about the Beech Street elevation. There was little known about the design of the Knights Garden. A landmark study was warranted. Continued review would make the project better.

Dr. Solet moved to accept the petition and initiate a landmark study, based on the reasons stated at the hearing and incorporated into the record. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion.

Mr. King said he was impressed by the design. The new building respected the church and would be a good backdrop. It might be improved if it were lowered. The mechanism of enforcing the MOA was unclear while the mechanism of a landmark study was very clear. He anticipated a few months of conversation and study and then a conclusion of the study.

Mr. Shirley said there was a risk to initiating a landmark study. Five members were absent and they might have a different opinion of the development proposal. The demolition review process might afford the CHC enough leverage to review the details of the development proposal.

Dr. Solet noted that future owners of the condominiums might have different ideas for the long term management of the site. Landmark designation would give the CHC continuing oversight of the property.

The CHC voted 4-1 in favor of the motion, with Mr. Shirley voting in opposition.

#### Public Hearing: Demolition Review

#### **Case D-1182: 136 Fayerweather St. / 56 Saville St., by 136 Fayerweather LLC. Demolish house (1926).**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo describing the house, the development of the largely African American neighborhood, the occupants, and the architect, F. Cliff Pierce. The house was built in 1926 as a two-family, with one entrance on the flank side and another on the gable end. Two other identical houses were built nearby in the same year. The lots were laid out on clay pits that had been filled. It was an early commission for the architect, who went on to such projects as the Touro Synagogue restoration and the buildings at the Cape Cod National Seashore. The building was significant in the context of the development of the Bay State Brick Company clay lands and for its relationship to the African American community.

Scott Kenton, an owner, described the condition of the building. It had settled 12" from front to back, which presented a difficult situation for renovation. Fill material was added over the years to support the house. He summarized the geotechnical report. The house had not stopped settling, causing problems with the frame and the foundation. He proposed removing the building and the soil down to bearing material. The proposed new house would be on a similar footprint, with slightly less FAR. The building would be moved 10' away from the lot line. He reviewed the drawings for the new building. The flat roof would be lower than the ridge of the existing gable roof by a few feet. The design of the new building was more modern, which lent itself to a flat roof.

Dr. Solet asked if other properties in the neighborhood were likely to have similar soil testing results leading to other demolition requests. Mr. Kenton invited the Commission to view the conditions at a site visit. He said he had only seen this type of soil condition a few times in 25 years.

Ms. Harrington pointed out that many of the houses in the neighborhood were two-family residences. A single family home would have a different character from the rest of the neighborhood. Mr. Kenton said the physical massing could be the same for one or two families. Mr. King noted that the Commission had no jurisdiction on matters of use, though the point about neighborhood character was a possible consideration.

Mr. Shirley asked if the house could be moved, then replaced on a new foundation. Mr. Kenton said it would be possible, but would require replacing every stick in the building. The ceiling heights would change or else every joist and beam would need to be replaced.

Jesse Winder of 59 Saville Street asked what would happen to the Linden tree. Mr. Kenton said it would be retained, though the branches would be trimmed.

Doina Contescu of 59 Saville said their house had badly sloping floors. They had underpinned the foundation to fix the problem.

William Cobham of 131 Fayerweather Street said he had problems with his house, but it had recently been restored. He would be satisfied as long as the new house was not a monstrosity like at the corner of Fayerweather Street and Concord Avenue. Mr. Sullivan noted that Mr. Cobham had received a preservation grant.

Mr. Winder said the new house would be uncharacteristic for the neighborhood. The design was jarring.

Mr. Sullivan read a letter from Julie Taylor of 61 Granville Street. She did not object in general but expressed concern about the third floor deck and its potential noise impacts.

Mr. King closed public testimony. He noted that one of the residents of the house, Walter Carrigan, was an African American graduate of Harvard College ca. 1951 and President Kennedy's ambassador to Sierra Leone.

Mr. Shirley moved to find the building significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons presented in the staff report. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. King said he agreed with Mr. Winder's comments that the design of the proposed replacement building was out of character with the neighborhood, which consisted primarily of gable roofed houses. He asked the owners if they would extend the review period to allow for a site visit and a continued hearing on January 7.

Mr. Kenton asked for direction from the Commission about what it would like to see in a replacement project. He agreed to extend the review period. He would study other design options with a lower eave height.

Mr. Shirley said the massing of the proposed building was substantially bigger because of the increased eave height from about 20' to 31' high. He moved to find the building preferably preserved in the context of the replacement project presented. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

The staff said it would schedule the site visit and notify the neighbors. Mr. King called for a brief recess and reconvened the meeting at 10:37 P.M.

#### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 2445: 1991 Massachusetts Ave., by Saint James Episcopal Church.** Demolish parish house (1884), minister's study (1912), and classrooms (1958); construct a new parish house and residential structure, in coordination with Oaktree Development, on a combined site with 2013 Mass. Ave. and a portion of the Knight's Garden.

Mr. King read the description from the application form. He reviewed the Commission's procedures for reviewing an application for a certificate while a property is under study for designation. The comments made during the previous hearing regarding initiation of a landmark study would be incorporated into the record of the current case. He said it might be appropriate to consider a continuance to get a copy of the plans presented to the Commission tonight and to allow for further public review of the proposal. He noted that the Commission had no jurisdiction over changes on the adjacent car wash property. Mr. Sullivan noted that he had found the car wash 'not significant' and had already signed off on a demolition permit.

Mr. Shirley said the proposal presented by the proponents was successful on several levels and would be a way for the church to sustain the sanctuary. He asked if the endowment was guaranteed to go toward maintenance

of the sanctuary. He said he would like to see further details of the design. Mr. King said an agreement about an endowment was outside the Commission's jurisdiction.

Dr. Solet expressed support for the project presented earlier, but with refinements based on the design feedback given by the Commission.

Mr. Sullivan suggested a framework for proceeding with the review of the proposal, based on the language in the MOA. The Commission should ask whether the parish house could be removed. Would the new construction preserve open views of the church? Would the new construction be compatible with the church? Would it allow the church to retain its freestanding character? Did the new construction encroach to the least extent possible on the Knights Garden? Would the garden be retained as an historic open space?

Mr. Armstrong asked if the impact of new construction, surface parking, and sloped driveway on the adjacent Kingdom Hall and the Beech Street streetscape were relevant. Mr. Sullivan said they were. Mr. Dumont said a decorative paver could be used at the top of the driveway. The ramp would not be visible.

Dr. Solet suggested that a working group review the design before the project returns to the Commission.

Mr. King noted his sense of the Commission that there was general support for removal of the parish house and for a new project of the sort presented, but that specifics such as the garden required further review.

Mr. Shirley named several points of information for which more information was needed: materials, landscape design, a video showing the perspective views of the site traveling south on Massachusetts Avenue, future review of restoration details of the sanctuary, and an explanation of how the building would be maintained.

Mr. Irving continued, asking for a model and for the points of view to be identified on renderings. He suggested that no stone be used on the new building. The materials should instead be neutral and calm.

Mr. Brandon said the Commission should not rush to judgment. He suggested the Commission require a new application and advertise a new public hearing. The garden was a big issue. The parish house might be preserved in part. Was a modern design appropriate? What were the criteria for the certificate of appropriateness?

Mr. King said the January hearing would be a continuation and a review of revised plans. He asked the church to look into the deed of the Beech Street parcel and report in January.

Rev. Antolini agreed to extend the review period to allow for a continuation of the hearing in January.

Dr. Solet moved to continue the hearing to the Commission's meeting on January 7. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

#### Public Meeting: Determination of Procedure

**Case D-1156: Fogg Museum, 32 Quincy St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Request for extension of determination.

Mr. King reported that Harvard had requested an extension of the Commission's determination on the demolition permit review for the property.

Ms. Harrington moved to authorize the chair to extend the Commission's determination on the case. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

#### Preservation Grants

**Case IPG 09-2 (#2): Christian Science Church, 13 Waterhouse St.**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the request for funds for masonry repairs estimated at \$40,000. He recommended a grant of \$20,000 on a matching basis.

Mr. Shirley so moved. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

**Case IPG 10-2: Christ the King Presbyterian Church, 99 Prospect St.**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the request for \$50,000 for roofing and masonry repairs estimated at \$72,000 - \$99,000. He recommended a grant of \$25,000 outright and \$25,000 on a matching basis.

Ms. Harrington so moved. Dr. Solet seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

**Case IPG 10-4: Caritas Communities, Central House SRO, Cambridge YMCA, 820 Mass. Ave.**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the request for \$100,000 for terra cotta and masonry repairs estimated at \$1,000,000. He recommended a grant of \$25,000 outright and an additional \$25,000 matching.

Mr. Irving so moved. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

**Case IPG 10-5: Cambridge Community Center, 5 Callender St.**

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the request for \$44,620 for roof repairs. The Commission had previously approved a grant of \$100,000 in principle. He recommended a grant of \$45,000 outright.

Mr. Irving so moved. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Minutes

Mr. King reviewed his proposed corrections to pages 7 and 8 of the October 8 minutes. He submitted his corrections in writing.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the October 5 and November 5 minutes, as submitted, and the October 8 minutes, as corrected.

Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. King said the report omitted Mr. Sullivan's performance at the Cambridge Public Library dedication.

Mr. Shirley moved to adjourn, Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed unanimously at 11:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/3/09**

K. Klinger	20 Beech St.
Marc Levy	132½ Oxford St #4
Jesse Winder	59 Saville St
Ross Speer	18 Taft Ave, Lexington 02421
Gwen Noyes	175 Richdale Ave
Ricardo Dumont	26 Blossom St, Lexington 02421
Karen Meredith	110 Central St #3, Somerville, 02143
Michael Salib	19 Hunting St #2
John Thomas Kittredge	3 Clinton St #7
Mark Yoder	21 Haskell St, Allston 02134
Alan Aukeman	90 Inman St #2
John Armstrong	36 Orchard St
Patricia Armstrong	36 Orchard St
Jim Shannon	820 Massachusetts Ave #407
Sarah Farrington	18 Frost St
Richard Clarey	15 Brookford St
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Charlie Coolidge	148 Brattle St
Maggie Booz	237 Putnam Ave
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Husam M. Azzam	1979 Massachusetts Ave.
Rebekah & Bjork	20 Concord Ave, Unit C
Jacqueline Kelley	P.O. Box 441164 Somerville 02144
William Cobham	131 Fayerweather St
Jan Corash	84 Orchard St
Holly Antolini	1991 Massachusetts Ave
Marissa Sobczynski	1991 Massachusetts Ave, Kids Coop
Ruth Ryals	115 Upland Rd

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.