

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

July 10, 2009 – 20 Sacramento Street, carriage house – 8:00 A.M.

Members present: Chair King, Mss. Berg, Harrington and Barton Tobin; Dr. Solet;
Messrs. Bibbins, Shirley, and Ferrara

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 8:10 A.M. and introduced the Commission members and staff.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Property

Case D-1167: 20 Sacramento St., by Agassiz Baldwin Community Center. Demolish carriage house (1852).

Mr. King noted that this was a continuation of a public hearing on July 2 at which the Community Center had asserted that it should be allowed to remove and rebuild rather than preserve the carriage house. The site visit would allow the Commission to assess the condition of the building.

Mr. Sullivan asked Wendy Prellwitz of Prellwitz Chilinski Architects, who was representing the owner, whether she had managed to clarify the requirements of the Inspectional Services Department with regard to the altered plans. She replied that Rangit Singanayagam, the building commissioner, told her that the special permit was for use; she thought that the project needed only to more or less resemble the approved plans.

Ms. Prellwitz continued that the building had deteriorated over the ten years that the project had been in litigation, and that costs had risen. Their engineer was not present, however.

[Ms. Burks arrived and took over the secretarial duties].

Several members of the public complained that there had been mistakes on the notice sent out by the Agassiz Baldwin Community group about what design was being carried out.

~~Wendy~~ Ms. Prellwitz, led a tour of the interior and exterior of the carriage house. She noted that the rain was leaking in when she was there earlier in the week. She pointed out the added wood beam and metal tie rod down the center of the building, as well as the truss supports on the two main beams. The east side addition had been demolished 12 years ago and the building reinforced from the inside so that it would stay up. The stairs to the hay loft had long since been removed because they were unstable. She read from the engineer's report about rotten sills, compromised exterior sheathing, split and rotted center beam truss, some rot in the joists, which were undersized for the new use, a compromised roof that needed full replacement, as well as the need for steel beams, restructured floors for moving the building, and new interior framing for insulating the walls.

Mr. Sullivan stated that the construction methods were standard for barns of that period. It was typical for barns to have no foundation, but to be built on piers with sills resting on the earth. It was obviously in deteriorated condition, but was not beyond salvaging.

A neighbor asked what had changed from the earlier review when she heard that it could not be torn down. Ms. Prellwitz said it had been the owner's desire to save it ten years ago. Time had passed and it was in worse condition and the organization had fewer resources to put toward the project.

Mr. Sullivan noted that if the roof had been maintained, the deterioration over the last 10 years would not have been so bad. He pointed out roof patches, open eaves on the east side where the addition had been removed,

the poor condition of the cupola on the rear side, and clapboards that were mostly in need of replacement on the rear; the front clapboards were in better condition. The hay loft door was original. When the Historical Commission considers whether to find a building preferably preserved or not, it considers the public interest, which is broadly defined. Factors that should be weighed were the cost to the public institution, the desirability of saving the original, and the significance of the building.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant, as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons specified in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 with members who had also been present at the July 2 hearing voting, including Messrs. Shirley, King, and Bibbins and Mss. Berg, Harrington, and Barton Tobin.

Mr. King noted that the Commission was to consider the plans presented at the July 2 public hearing when evaluating whether the building should be found to be preferably preserved. He understood the condition of the building. He could be convinced that 19th-century barn construction was not suitable for conversion to a children's arts center. He was prepared to find the building not preferably preserved. He asked if there were still concerns about the added 8" height.

Mr. Bibbins said that now that he had seen the building, it was no longer such a concern. The window sizes could be adjusted to make up for the extra height. It was impractical to salvage the building, but it would be nice if the cupola could be reused. Halting the project's construction would not benefit the neighborhood at all.

Mr. Shirley said the engineer's findings were not surprising for a building of this age and type. It would be expensive to re-use the building, though it could be done. It would probably be less expensive to build new because of the amount of work that was required for the new use.

Dr. Solet said that recycling pieces such as the hay loft door would show the children some continuity from the old to new buildings.

Ms. Harrington said it would only be symbolic, but the cupola was the most significant feature and the one that she would select for re-use. She moved to find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement design, on the condition that the cupola be re-used on the new building. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Dr. Solet and Mr. Ferrara, though not voting, said that they were also in favor of the finding.

Mr. Shirley moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:59 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 7/10/09**

Terry DeLancey, ABC Director	20 Sacramento St
Wendy Prellwitz	3.5 Wendell St
Catherine Krupnick	16 Sacramento St
David Kudan	26 Sacramento St
Helen Lambert	25 Sacramento St

Note: Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.