

Approved 2/3/11

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 15, 2010 – Fay House, Radcliffe Yard, 10 Garden Street, Cambridge - 12:00 P.M.

Members present: William B. King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*;
M. Wyllis Bibbins, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, Jo Solet, *Members*;
Shary Page Berg, *Alternate*

Members absent: Robert Crocker, Joseph Ferrara, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2644: Fay House, Raddiffe Yard, 10 Garden St., by President and Fellows of Harvard College. Renovate building including new accessible entrance, alterations for egress, removal of fire escapes, alter select windows, install louvers, regrade walkways, install bike racks.

Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order. He explained that the hearing of December 2 had been continued to December 15 for the purpose of inspecting the existing conditions of the windows and would be again continued to January 6, 2011 for further deliberation and a vote.

Mr. Sullivan described the history and evolution of the building, originally a private home that was later converted to institutional use.

Kate Loosian, Project Manager at Harvard University, introduced the university representatives and the architectural team from Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates. She said the Commission had asked many good questions at the December 2 hearing and the team had been looking closely at the window issue.

Dan McCoubrey, of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, explained that there was a complex assemblage of windows in the building, which had undergone multiple additions and renovations. The goals for the project were to recognize the historic nature of the building, provide long term durability, increase energy efficiency, and allow for ease of operation within the institutional setting. He described the collection of existing window types and the proposed approach for each type. The building included some pre-1850s windows, a large number of 1890s windows, two campaigns of 20th century replacement sash, and replacement casements from the 1960s. The pre-1850 windows with boat tail sash construction would be restored and interior fixed storm panels installed. The 1890s windows could be repaired but would require lots of work. He said that window conditions varied substantially and he was concerned about the longevity of repairs. Replacement sash would be made of either African mahogany or Spanish cedar with true divided light (TDL) insulated glass, matching the existing dimensions. He projected that the replacement sash would last longer than repaired sash but acknowledged that the insulated glass would have to be replaced two or three times over the next 50-75 years.

Mr. Shirley noted that insulated glass was expensive to replace and difficult to reset into a sash.

Joel Donlon noted that the windows at Byerly Hall had been replaced with TDL insulated glass units, setting a precedent for Radcliffe Yard buildings. He compared the estimated U Values between restored sash with Allied interior storms (.5 - .75) and TDL insulated glass sash replacements (.4).

The Commission toured the building and observed existing conditions of windows on each floor.

[Mr. King left].

The windows included curved sash (with flat glass) at the front lobby, twentieth century replacement sash with wavy glass, oval windows and large double-hung windows in the Sheerr Room, 1890s windows in the rear additions, and twentieth century casements in the old library on the top floor.

Ms. Loosian noted that having operable windows would provide for greater energy efficiency. Interior storms could make window operation more difficult and less likely to occur.

Mr. Irving suggested exterior storms which were easier to open and would protect the restored windows.

Mr. Sullivan noted that storm windows could be installed without review by the Commission, a policy that had been in effect since the 1960s. He noted that Fay House was a residential scale building, different from Byerly Hall and other academic buildings at Radcliffe.

Mr. Shirley also encouraged exterior storms to protect the windows and to reduce the frequency of painting and other maintenance required. He expressed appreciation for the proposal to provide TDL in the replacement sash, but the TDL would increase the amount of sealant in each window and thereby increase the likelihood of failure. He explained that insulated glass had a diminishing U value over time and then it eventually fails. The difference in R values between the insulated glass sash (2.5) and the restored sash with storms (2.0) would not result in large monetary savings over time. A good window restorer could add gaskets and increase energy efficiency of old windows in other ways. He noted that casements would have to have interior storms, which might impact the university's decision.

Ms. Harrington said that institutional users could learn how to use storms and properly operate the windows. Inconvenience to the users was not an argument that held much weight for her.

Ms. Burks asked if the window manufacturer, KSD, had shown the design team a sample window. Mr. Donlon replied that they had. They had also seen a curved sash sample.

Mr. Shirley noted that it would be difficult to achieve a tight fit for replacement sash because the window frames had wracked in the old building.

Mr. Irving noted that the weight pockets were a point of energy loss, in addition to the sashes themselves. The proposal did not address the weight pockets, so there would be very little improvement in efficiency. Only 25% of a building's energy loss was through the windows and some portion of that is attributable to the pockets.

The Commission thanked the proponents for arranging the inspection of the building. The hearing would be continued on January 6.

Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn, and Ms. Berg seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/15/10**

Kate Loosian	10 Garden St
Joel Donlon	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19147
John Horst	10 Garden St
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Ave
Dan McCoubrey	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19147

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.