

Approved 1/6/11

### Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

December 2, 2010 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: William B. King; *Chair*; Jo M. Solet, *Member*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks, Eiliesh Tuffy

Public present: See attached list.

---

With four members and two alternates present, Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. He made introductions and designated alternates Berg and Ferrara to vote on all matters. He reviewed the hearing procedures and consent agenda policy.

Mr. Irving recommended Case 2641 to be approved per the consent agenda policy. Mr. Bibbins so moved. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

[Mr. Shirley arrived].

#### Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

**Case L-97: 40 Norris St., former Ellis/North Cambridge Catholic School.** Consider petition requesting initiation of landmark designation study.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff memo, which described the architecture and history of the building and contended that the property met the ordinance's criteria for landmark designation.

Mr. Irving reiterated that the Commission could not review use, the number of units inside the building, the number of parking spaces, or traffic impacts; only exterior alterations were subject to Commission review during a landmark study.

Young Kim of 17 Norris Street made a powerpoint presentation. He noted that famous students of the school had included Ruth Easterling, a prominent African American female doctor, and Thomas O'Neill III, former Lt. Governor. He noted that the other Cambridge schools designed by the same architect, Aaron Gould, had been demolished and a similar school at 35 Atherton Street in Somerville was listed on the National Register and redeveloped as condominiums in the 1980s. He recommended that 40 Norris Street be preserved in Easterling's honor. He showed pictures of various views of the building and expressed concern about the proposed skylights.

Sean Hope, the attorney for owner LaCourt Family LLC, explained that his client, Dr. Rizkallah, was unable to attend. He said they did not oppose a landmark study. They had applied for a Special Permit from the Planning Board. The skylights would be necessary to serve as operable windows in upper level bedrooms. They would only oppose landmark study if it was used as a tool to try to control the number of units in the building. Otherwise, they would be willing to work with the Commission about the architectural integrity of the building.

George McCray, formerly of Norris Street, said the cutting of the slate roof for skylights would be problematic and visible from a distance.

Dan Bertko of 13 Norris Street noted the visibility of the roof from surrounding streets and from inside neighboring houses.

Paul Ayers of 2 Drummond Place indicated that he wanted the exterior to stay the same with no changes.

Mark Levy of Oxford Street noted that the developer indicated that there were already skylights in the roof.

Charles Teague of 23 Edmunds Street said that the former school was one of few great buildings in the North Cambridge neighborhood and neighbors wanted it to stay the same. He asked about the study process.

Mr. Sullivan explained the designation process. He said the purpose of landmarking was not to freeze a property in time, but to make sure changes were appropriate. Skylights would not necessarily be ruled out of consideration; the Commission's concern would be to ensure that future alterations would be appropriate.

Matt Schofield of 35 Norris Street asked about window air conditioning units. Mr. Sullivan said they would be subject to Commission review.

Michael Brandon, of 27 Seven Pines Avenue and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, indicated that it was his opinion that a variance from the Board of Zoning Appeal would be required for the proposed project, not just a special permit from the Planning Board. He noted that landscaping and fencing and driveways could also be reviewed by the Commission during a landmark study.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission accept the petition and initiate a landmark designation study for the property. Mr. Crocker so moved, for the reasons stated in the staff memo. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

#### Public Hearing: Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Designation Proceedings

Consider petition requesting initiation of a NCD designation study for the properties at **0-12 Blanchard Road and 149-267 Grove Street.**

Mr. Sullivan reported that a petition had been received requesting the initiation of a NCD study for properties on Blanchard and Grove Streets. The 33 lots along the edge of the Fresh Pond Reservation were subdivided in 1951. He noted that the petition left out one property in the subdivision, 777 Huron Avenue, which was presumably an oversight. He showed slides and said the subdivision had a unique character for Cambridge. He explained that many of the houses had been altered and enlarged over the years. The massing was mostly 1-story facing the street and the predominant style was Ranch. He described several of the architect-designed homes. He showed a slide of 245 Grove Street, which was altered significantly in 2003 and represented the type of change to massing about which the petitioners had expressed concern. He explained that the A-2 zoning district height and FAR allowances were far greater than the existing density of the neighborhood. He noted that 2 Blanchard Road had been demolished after CHC review in 2007, and that the new house also demonstrated the density allowed by zoning. He reported that the staff had met with a group of petitioners after the petition was received last month. He described the NCD designation procedures and explained that all exterior alterations, other than paint color, visible from a public way (including the municipal golf course) could be subject to review in an NCD. He described the way in which NCD review criteria could be tailored to meet the needs of a particular neighborhood. The small number of properties in the subdivision would make it impractical to have a separate NCD commission, and would make it necessary for an NCD to be regulated by the citywide Historical Commission. He described the NCD study process and said

that grass roots work would be needed to build consensus in the neighborhood before the Commission would recommend designation to the City Council.

Amy Nadel of 265 Grove Street spoke on behalf of the petitioners. She said they did not want to stop building in the neighborhood, but wanted new construction and alterations to be consistent with its present character. An NCD study would allow the neighborhood time to discuss what types of changes it would like to see occur.

Ben Wilson of 265 Grove Street spoke in favor of starting the study process and discussing whether an NCD would be appropriate for the area. He expressed interest in the subdivision being the only “Country Club” housing development in Cambridge, which spoke of its era.

Elizabeth McLoughlin of 195 Grove Street spoke of her positive experience before the Board of Zoning Appeals when she built a second story. She spoke of the work at 245 Grove Street and said the neighborhood needed to be preserved.

Peter White of 12 Blanchard Road noted that most houses were one or two stories at the front with an extra story on the sloping grade at the back facing the golf course. He indicated that the initiative was intended to have neighborhood guidelines define the visual character and allow new buildings that were consistent.

Mr. Sullivan said an NCD study would identify what guidelines and goals for the neighborhood had broad support. Some guidelines might be in conflict with each other, but they would provide guidance to a regulatory body trying to find a balance between them.

Mr. Bibbins pointed out that the golf course was a public way, which would create a district where much more of each property was protected than in other districts.

Ann Sicari of 169 Grove Street said she had previously lived in the Mid Cambridge NCD. She expressed support for the petition.

Duncan MacArthur of 245 Grove Street said he was disappointed that the petitioners did not contact every property owner; everyone should be involved in the discussion. He said the area could handle some very exciting architecture.

George Helou of 2 Blanchard Road indicated that he had not been contacted by the petitioners. He said it should not be necessary to ask one’s neighbors if they share one’s taste in design.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period and asked for questions from the Commission.

Mr. Shirley asked what guidelines would be used during a study period. Mr. Sullivan said that without guidelines or exemptions to begin with, all exterior alterations visible from a public way would be subject to review during the study period. However, the Commission would be aware of the neighborhood’s goals, and would treat each application on its own merits.

Ms. Berg suggested the neighbors meet again to disseminate more information before initiating a study. Ms. Harrington agreed.

Ms. Nadel asked for the Commission not to delay. She was concerned that Mr. MacArthur would get a building permit for work at 255 Grove Street, which he had recently purchased, and make major changes like he did at 245 Grove Street. She said there were only two properties that she did not approach about the petition.

Mr. Helou said zoning regulations were sufficient. How would an NCD affect the future sale of his home?

Mr. Wilson said zoning allowed for too much height and density that could change the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Shirley said it was essential for the Commission to get feedback from a strong majority of the property owners or residents that an NCD study is desirable. He moved to continue the hearing, without prejudice, to January 6, 2011. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Mr. Irving encouraged communication between the petitioners and the property owners. He suggested that they meet in the coming month and come back with a clear picture of how much support there was for a study.

Mr. Sullivan said it was not realistic to expect 100% consensus before a study commences and that consensus building can develop during a study as the proposed review criteria and design guidelines are discussed.

Mr. Irving called for a brief recess and reconvened the meeting at 8:00 P.M.

#### Public Hearings: Demolition Review

**Case D-1209 (continued): 180 Franklin St., by John Kennedy.** Demolish 1-1/2 story commercial building.

Mr. Shirley recused himself because he had not been present at the November hearing.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reported that the Commission had found the building to be significant and preferably preserved at the November hearing and had encouraged the applicant to return with further information about the proposed replacement buildings.

Mark Boyes-Watson, the architect, distributed new drawings and described the site plan and elevations for the proposed three new townhouse buildings. The buildings would conform to zoning and be two stories with small penthouses. The materials were not finalized, but the massing was settled. The projecting bays would be differentiated in materials from the other walls.

Maryann Taylor, of 55-55A Brookline Street, asked how far the nearest building would be from her property. Mr. Boyes-Watson said it would be approximately 7'-6" at grade and about 11' at the second floor. One parking space per unit would be provided on the lot.

Stan Lee, of 55B Brookline Street, asked about the gate for his emergency egress. Mr. Boyes-Watson said Mr. Lee and Mr. Kennedy should discuss that, but there was a route out for Mr. Lee.

Mr. Bibbins asked about the material of the courtyard "mews," and Mr. Boyes-Watson answered that it would be some kind of paver.

Mr. Sullivan recommended suspending the demolition delay but retaining the finding of significance for the existing building.

Ms. Harrington moved to suspend the demolition delay on the basis of the design presented for the replacement buildings. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, and the motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Shirley returned for the discussion of the next case.

#### Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 2445 (continued): 1991 Massachusetts Ave., by St. James's Episcopal Church and Oaktree Development.** Consider color of materials for new condominium building.

Mr. Bibbins recused himself and left the room because of a previous professional relationship with the church.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the actions of the Commission at the October 29, 2010 hearing on the site. The only issue remaining for Commission action was to review the exterior trim color of the new building. He reported that he and Susan Maycock had met with the project team to review material samples for color.

Phil Terzis of Oaktree Development displayed photographs of the materials mockup with the preferred trim color. He showed physical samples of the Nichiha panel in "Autumn Brown" and the stone material and a sample of the new brown trim color (Sherwin Williams "Turkish Coffee"). This color will be mixed in Kynar 70% paint for the metal trim elements and vinyl formulated paint for the PVC trim. For comparison, he showed a sample of the brown that had been discussed at the October 29 meeting.

Ms. Harrington asked if the new brown had enough red in it to work well in relationship with the reds on the historic sanctuary building. Mr. Sullivan replied affirmatively. He said it was intentionally not as red as the trim on the historic sanctuary building but would be appropriate in relationship to that.

Ms. Callahan asked about the number of days during which an appeal could be filed and when the clock started. She announced for the record that there would be an appeal taken.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the Sherwin Williams "Turkish Coffee" color for the trim, as displayed tonight and as seen in the field by Susan Maycock. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Bibbins returned for the discussion of the next case.

**Case 2624 (continued): 41 Sacramento St., by John Morway.** Remove ell and front vestibule, install new windows and restore building exterior.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the architecture of the house. He summarized the discussion at the November hearing, at which time the Commission asked for further documentation of the proposed conditions.

John Morway, the owner, noted that he had provided new drawings of the addition, which would replace the left (west) portion of the ell and create symmetry with the ell on the right (east) side. He described the concave metal roof that would be built over the front entry. He described the 6+6 wood windows for the front of the house.

Mr. Ferrara asked about the brackets. Mr. Morway answered that the porch brackets would be similar to those of the matching house at 27 Cogswell Avenue. There would be no brackets on the cornice of the rear addition, per the CHC suggestion to keep the detailing subordinate to the front block of the house.

There were no public comments or questions.

Mr. Ferrara complimented the applicant for providing the additional details and drawings requested. Mr. Irving expressed support for the project.

Mr. Bibbins recommended delegating approval of construction details, such as the brackets and window trim, to the Executive Director.

Ms. Burks asked for clarification on the three types of windows proposed. Mr. Morway said the rear addition would have simple awning windows, the basement would have Brosco 6+6 double-hung windows, and the main floors of the front of the house would have a higher-grade 6+6 double-hung window.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project with construction details to be approved by the Executive Director. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

**Case 2632: 187-207 Magazine St. (Shell Spectacular Sign), by Pecten Properties.** Refurbish sign and install new lamps.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the sign had been designated a city landmark in December 2009. The new owners were proposing to repair the sign and convert the bulbs from incandescent and neon to LED. The sign raceways for the light bulbs were made of tin or galvanized steel. The sequence of illumination was documented and described in the landmark report.

Jason Parillo of the Back Bay Sign Company explained that there were three components to the application: replacement of the light-gauge steel raceways with aluminum, conversion of the bulbs to LED, and change of the tubes spelling out "SHELL" from two strokes of red neon to three strokes of white LED. He said the raceways were original, but for the sign to last they needed to replace the deteriorated steel with aluminum. The light sequencing would stay the same.

Will Castle, representing Pecten Properties, said they preferred white for "SHELL" but could accept red LEDs. The original sign required approximately 135-145 amps and the new LED would only require 60-75.

Mr. Crocker asked if white bulbs on red channels would look pink. Paul De Santis of the Back Bay Sign Company did not think so.

Mr. Shirley asked about the extent of steel replacement and the finish on the aluminum. Mr. Parillo answered that it all needed to be replaced because of the deterioration. Mr. De Santis said the raceways would likely fall apart when taken off the sign. The work would be phased and if anything could be salvaged, they would re-use it. The aluminum would be painted with Matthews Paint, which would last about 10 years. The colors would be replicated, based on the brightest and least faded existing areas. All the details of the channels would be replicated.

Ms. Berg asked why the owners were motivated to restore the sign. Mr. Castle explained that Pecten Properties was an independent real estate holding company with properties of different brands. They considered the sign to be a treasure and wanted to preserve and relight it even though there was no advertising value to them.

Ms. Berg asked if the revisions to the sign ordinance would affect the project. Mr. Sullivan answered that the sign was grandfathered and different from the on-building wall signs being discussed in the ordinance revisions. He likened the replacement of unrepairable parts to George Washington's axe. It would not last forever if it was not repaired and maintained.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public, so Mr. Irving closed the public comment period. He indicated that a restoration of the sign ought to include restoration of the red lights in "SHELL."

The Commission discussed the light qualities of neon and LED and the effect of three strokes of LED red and concurred that three strokes of red LED were approvable.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the application on the condition that the "SHELL" letters be spelled out using three strokes of red LED tubes, not white, and on the further condition that construction details and color samples of the LED be approved by the staff. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

**Case 2644: Fay House, Radcliffe 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.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the evolution of the building, originally a private home that was later converted to institutional use. The last time the house was before the Commission it was to construct a new side entrance and to create an accessible path to the original front door (facing Garden Street).

Nancy Trainer of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates Architects and Planners explained that the goals of the renovation were to improve accessibility, life safety, and energy efficiency and to make repairs to the structure and the building envelope. She outlined the scope of work, including replacement of most windows, constructing an exit and service ramp on the Garden Street side, constructing a new sloped path to the side door that would become the new main entrance, and landscaping.

Ms. Burks asked why the side entrance was selected instead of the entrance facing the yard, which was lower to the ground. Ms. Trainer replied that they did not want to destroy the historic stair inside and could not use wheelchair lifts.

Ms. Berg asked why no shrubs were proposed on the side of the sloped path. Gabrielle Weiss, the landscape designer, said the ferns used as ground cover would discourage short-cut paths. Ms. Berg commented that ferns were not a traditional ground cover in this setting.

Mr. Shirley asked why most of the windows were proposed for replacement. Ms. Trainer said the decision to replace them with double-glazed units was based on existing condition and the goal of energy efficiency.

Mr. Shirley asked for the U factors of the existing and proposed windows. Ms. Trainer replied that the energy models were being done, but she did not have those numbers at present. Joel Donlan, also of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates, said the new windows would be operable, double-glazed, true-divided-light sash of either African mahogany, Spanish cedar, or sapele wood.

There were no questions or comments, so Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Shirley described the reasons why he disagreed with the proponents' plan to replace the windows. A new window would not solve air leaks. The greater solar heat gain of the existing windows was preferable in this climate. The proposed approach was not consistent with sustainability goals.

Mr. Donlan noted that select windows in the original part of the house and in the Sheer Room could be restored. Some other windows in the building dated to as late as the 1970s.

Mr. Shirley asked for the reports on energy modeling and existing conditions, when they were available. He asked for a cost comparison between repair of the old windows and replacement with the same quality materials. He suggested a site visit to view the existing conditions. Ms. Trainer said a site visit could be arranged. She noted that the detailing of previous replacement windows was not good and water was getting in.

Mr. Irving noted that a repaired window would last longer than a new double glazed window. He asked if exterior storms had been considered.

Regarding accessibility issues, Ms. Berg noted the number of ramps but did not see an alternative. Ms. Trainer said the side entrance was built in 1983, so it the most recent entrance on the building that would be altered.

Ms. Weiss indicated that the walkways would have a slope of 5% or lower. The walkway would be pulled away from the side of the building with a granite curb wall of less than 3' in height.

Ms. Trainer described the new egress stairs and removal of fire escapes.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the work proposed, with the exception of the window replacement, on the condition that the construction details including materials and finishes be approved by the staff; and he further moved to continue the hearing to January, after a site meeting for the purpose of reviewing the existing condition of the windows. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 7-0

#### Determination of Procedure: Neighborhood Conservation District Business

Consider request by **George Kent** to discuss the project at **45 Foster Street** in the Half Crown-Marsh Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD).

Mr. Irving explained that the Commission could not consider the correspondence from Mr. Kent as an official appeal of the Half Crown Marsh NCD case, but that he was welcome to address the body about his concerns.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the background of the case. At the expiration of the two year moratorium following the illegal demolition, the house was to be reconstructed per the proposed renovation plans. He reported, however, that there were discrepancies in the plans because they had been drawn for a renovation, not new construction, so there were numerous elements that needed clarification during the course of construction.

George Kent, of 2 Foster Place, submitted his written comments and questions. He read his letter and asked what would be considered to be construction details. He wanted to know how was it determined what details were within the jurisdiction of the staff to review?

Mr. Shirley described the construction details of the previous case at Fay House as masonry work, mortar, and color. It would differ on each project.

Mr. Irving said construction details were generally the details of how elements of the design are put together, which specific materials are chosen, and the level of workmanship of the job.

Mr. Kent asked for clarification between exterior architectural features and construction details.

Mr. Shirley said that some jobs needed additional oversight after being approved by the Commission to make sure they are carried out in an appropriate way. Materials and workmanship were important to both appearance and longevity.

Mr. Kent asked if records of staff decisions were kept.

Mr. Sullivan answered that there had been a miscommunication when Mr. Kent had asked that question to a member of the staff. He said there were records of all his decisions on the 45 Foster Street project in the file, which was available for the public to view.

Mr. Kent thanked the Commission for their attention.

#### Minutes

Mr. Shirley corrected the order of arrival on page one of the October 29, 2010 minutes.

Mr. Crocker changed the tense from "meet" to "met" on page one of the same minutes.



Mr. Shirley moved to approve the minutes, as corrected. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion passed 6-0, with Mr. Bibbins not voting because he had not been present.

Mr. Shirley moved to adjourn, and Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 10:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 12/2/10**

David Cayne	26 Craigie St
Audrey Cayne	26 Craigie St
John Morway	47 Prentiss St
Lilla Johnson	23 Rice St
Dan Bertko	13 Norris St
Paul Ayers	2 Drummond Pl, Apt 1
Stan Lee	55B Brookline St
Maryann (Mimi) Taylor	55A Brookline St
Ben Wilson	265 Grove St
Amy Nadel	265 Grove St
Elizabeth McLoughlin	195 Grove St
Ann Sicari	169 Grove St
Jeanne Fong	53 Norris St
Janet Malenfant	16 Blake St
Hessa Kader	215 Grove St
Peter White	12 Blanchard Rd
Kate Loosian	10 Garden St
Mark Verkennis	1350 Massachusetts Ave
Nancy Trainer, VSBA	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19127
Joel Donlon, VSBA	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19127
John Horst	10 Garden St
Gabrielle SD Weiss	288 Norfolk St
Adrian Catalano	267 Grove St
Diana MacArthur	245 Grove St
Duncan MacArthur	245 Grove St
Brigitte Huber	175 Grove St
Sean Hope	130 Bishop Allen Dr
Jason Parillo	425 Riverside Ave, Medford, MA 02155
Paul De Santis	425 Riverside Ave, Medford, MA 02155
John Greenup	65 Sparks St

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.