

Approved 9/8/11

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

August 4, 2011 – Cambridge Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. – 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, *Members*;
Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, *Members*; Shary Berg, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and made introductions. He designated alternate members Susannah Tobin and Joseph Ferrara to vote on all matters. He reviewed the agenda and noted that there were several items for which requests had been received to either withdraw or postpone:

Case 2751: 0 Garden St., by Christ Church Cambridge. Change exterior paint colors.

Ms. Tobin moved to accept the applicant's written request to withdraw the application, without prejudice. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Case L-100: Kendall Square Building, 238 Main St. (1917, William Mowll, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Case L-101: J. L. Hammett Building, 264 Main St., a.k.a. 290 Main St. (1915, Densmore & LeClear, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Case L-102: Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main St., (1920, John Spofford, architect), owned by M.I.T. Investment Management Co.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the requested continuance to September 8. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Case L-103: 45 Fayerweather St., (1940, Walter Bogner, architect), owned by Sigmund E. Herzstein, Jr., Tr. of the Fayerweather Trust.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the requested continuance to September 8. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2739: 153 Brattle St., by Tom & Jeanne Hagerty. Construct new stone landing and path, new deck and pergola at rear, extend granite paving at side of existing driveway.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and explained that the house had undergone major renovations about 12 years ago. The construction of the garage had originally been permitted with a temporary Certificate of Hardship because of a physical disability of the then-owner. A subsequent owner later applied to retain the garage and another temporary Certificate of Hardship was issued, based on the continued existence of the garage on the adjacent property. The certificate will expire at such time that the adjoining garage is demolished.

Guy Grassi, the architect, noted that the property had recently changed ownership. He described the proposed granite cobble pavers to extend the driveway by 3' x 13'. He described the proposed new bluestone terrace at the side yard, behind the fence and plantings and a new deck and pergola in the rear yard.

Mr. King asked where Azek trim was proposed on the north elevation. Mr. Grassi replied that it would be used to trim around the deck at the rear yard. Mr. Sullivan said there was limited winter visibility of that area from Brewster Street, but he had no concerns about the use of Azek on the deck.

There being no questions or comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the proposed changes. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Case 2746: 192 Brattle St., by Caroline & Phillip Loughlin. Enlarge existing garage.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the lack of visibility of the existing garage from Brattle Street and Elmwood Avenue. He noted that the house had originally been accessed from by driveway off Elmwood Avenue, which was relocated to Brattle Street when 15 Elmwood Avenue was constructed. He displayed a slide of the existing garage that was taken on the property, not from the public way. There would be very limited if any visibility of the proposed larger garage.

Mr. King questioned if the Commission had jurisdiction if the proposed conditions were likely not going to be visible. He asked the architect to provide additional information about the proposal.

Charles Myer, the architect, described the existing one-bay garage. It was covered with stucco like the house. He proposed extending the garage to make room for two cars. It abutted the garage behind it at 15 Elmwood. He described the proposed three windows facing south.

Charles Wood of 15 Elmwood Avenue said he was there on behalf of himself, his wife, and David Epstein of 11 Elmwood Ave. He hoped that the contractors would be very careful when doing the work, so as not to threaten the structural stability of his garage. He noted that the roof on his garage was new.

Mr. Myer assured him that they would be very careful, and noted that any damage related to the work would be repaired by his clients.

Mr. King noted that the front edge of the addition might be visible from Brattle Street.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1214: 152 Sixth St., by ARE-MA Region No. 34, LLC. Building previously found significant but not preferably preserved. Consider amended design for replacement building.

Mr. Sullivan reported that in January 2011, the 1946 building at 152 Sixth Street was found significant but not preferably preserved in the context of a proposed replacement building. Since January, the replacement design had changed and the applicant was asked to return with the new design.

Attorney James Rafferty distributed a copy of the architect's presentation. He noted that the stepped gable building at 146 Sixth Street, which was going to be rotated on the site in the previous design, would now stay in place. The long buildings on Fifth Street would no longer serve as access to the garage, another benefit to the new design. The new tenant would be Biogen. The Planning Board gave the new design good reviews. He noted that many years ago, Biogen had applied to demolish the entire block.

Al Spagnolo, the architect, made his presentation, including the proposed site plan and building renderings. The old buildings would be transformed from storage to community-based uses and a training facility. A gathering space would be created next to 146 Sixth Street.

There being no questions or comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan said he had accepted the previous design because it preserved the three stepped gable buildings, but the new design was much better. He recommended that the Commission find the building at 152 Sixth Street not preferably preserved in the context of the new replacement design.

Dr. Solet asked how difficult it would be to clean the white paint off of 146 Sixth Street. Andrea Gilmore of Building Conservation Associates said the white coating was a rubberlike, impermeable material which had trapped moisture underneath. It was not clear yet what kind of condition the brick would be in once the coating was removed but they would approach the problem very carefully.

Dr. Solet moved to confirm the Commission's previous determination that the building at 152 Sixth Street was significant but not preferably preserved in the context of the new design. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Joseph Maguire, the owner's representative, discussed the timing of the project. It was projected to be completed in about 29 months.

Case D-1235: 119-135 Harvey St., by Leonard Katz, Tr. Demolish house (1845) and office/storage buildings.

Mr. King noted the receipt of two letters in support of the demolition of 119 Harvey Street, one from John Grant and Nathan Raines and the other from Amelia Westmark and Harold Jensen.

Ms. Burks showed slides and presented background information about the Armstrong House at 119 Harvey Street. It was built in 1845 in a transitional Greek Revival/Italianate style. The house predated the closure of the race course and subsequent subdivision of the area into suburban house lots. The house was one of four buildings on the 1854 Walling map overlooking the race course on the north side.

Mr. Sullivan concluded the staff report by describing the history of the Dix Lumber Company on the abutting 135 Harvey Street property. All three buildings were proposed for demolition by the current owner, Leonard Katz of Cambridge Lumber. Mr. Sullivan described Mr. Dix's progression from a housewright, to a lumber yard owner, to a developer and seller of house plans. The company was the precursor to today's home supply companies like Home Depot.

Jai Khalsa, the architect, said the project proposal was in a state of transition following community meetings and a hearing with the Planning Board. He showed site plans and elevations that had been revised since those submitted with the application. The proposed new buildings along Harvey Street would be one and two-family homes, designed to look like they had been there a while and changed a bit from the builder's pattern to meet individual needs. The new buildings would be sited in such a way as to give the abutters as much air and space room as possible. The neighbors at 115 Harvey Street wanted to put solar panels on their home, which would be obstructed by the existing house at 119 Harvey. The larger buildings at the back of the site, near the bike path, would be more contemporary in style but use traditional materials. About half the site would remain open green

space. The existing house at 119 Harvey Street was unsafe, but some of the detailing could be replicated on the new building such as the door surround. The garage doors would face the interior circulation area, accessed by two driveways on Harvey Street. 27 townhouse units were proposed.

Dr. Solet asked about paving materials. Mr. Khalsa replied that both printed asphalt and concrete pavers would be used in the project.

Ms. Harrington asked about the capacity of the garages. Mr. Khalsa answered that they were one-car garages, but many of the units would have room for guest parking in front of the garage space.

Ms. Burks asked if the proposal still included fully accessible units. Mr. Khalsa replied that there would be 3 accessible units.

Mr. Sullivan asked if consideration had been given to re-using the house at 119 Harvey Street. Mr. Khalsa answered that it had been discussed, but the house was in such bad shape that it was deemed to be not practical and not cost effective. A structural engineer had looked at it and indicated that it was in condemnable condition. The fire department had put a do not enter X on the building in case of fire. It was not sound enough to move.

Dr. Solet asked if the interior contained original finishes. Mr. Khalsa answered that he did not believe it did, but he had not been inside.

There being no questions or comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Ms. Tobin moved to find 119 Harvey Street significant, as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff memorandum. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Dr. Solet moved to find the buildings at 135 Harvey Street significant, as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff memorandum. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Dr. Solet moved to find the buildings at 135 Harvey Street not preferably preserved, in the context of the conceptual design proposal. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. Sullivan recommended finding 119 Harvey Street preferably preserved because there was no documentation to support the claim that it was in irreparable condition and because of the building's significance to the neighborhood. He suggested that the owner might allow the Commission to inspect the house during a delay.

Mr. King said the changes to the development proposal had greatly improved the design. The proposed streetscape was very nice.

Ms. Harrington moved to find 119 Harvey Street preferably preserved in the context of the replacement building and for the reasons stated by Mr. Sullivan. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-99: 13 Kennedy Rd. (1963, James Freeman, architect), owned by Maryan & Richard Chapin.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the house designed by Cambridge architect James Freeman for the Chapin family in 1963. He described the layout and materials of the house, noting that it was the subject of an article in *House Beautiful* magazine in 1968. The house is currently for sale by the Chapins, the only owners to date. He had received inquiries from potential buyers interested in redeveloping the site. The house was not yet 50 years old and therefore was not protected by the demolition delay ordinance. David Fixler, an expert on modern

architecture, said it was worth discussing preservation options. He explained that the house is landlocked and not visible from a public way, which would mean that even landmark status might not protect it from alterations. He noted that his slides were taken from within the private property, when he toured the house with a Realtor.

James Rafferty of Adams & Rafferty distributed a copy of the landmark ordinance and emphasized the fact that only elements visible from a public way could be protected. He said a landmark study would be a hardship on the owners who are trying to sell the property to provide for their futures. The Chapins hoped someone would buy the house and enjoy it in the same way they did. He asked the Commission to consider ways in which the house could be documented (through interviews with the family, photographs, etc.) rather than initiating a landmark study. He distributed a letter from Mr. Chapin, who was not well enough to attend the meeting.

Maryan Chapin said it had been a difficult decision to put the house up for sale, but they lived in Maine most of the time and could no longer keep it. They had to plan for the future when one of them would be gone. She explained that it had been a long process to buy the property in the 1960s, but they eventually won out. The seller had asked them to build only a one-story house, which they agreed to do. They had selected Jim Freeman, who was on the zoning board at the time. A buyer today might prefer a larger house. She had some wonderful pictures of the house and could produce a very nice memoir about it.

Dr. Solet asked if it had been advertised in journals specializing in modern architecture or historic houses. Mrs. Chapin replied that it had been advertised in the *New York Times*, *Harvard Magazine*, and the *Economist*.

Ms. Harrington said she looked forward to learning more about the house through the memoir methodology that had been suggested.

Mr. King said he shared the jurisdictional concerns outlined by Mr. Rafferty and Mr. Sullivan. A memoir would be a great idea. He recommended that the Historical Society work with the family to conduct interviews and document the house. Perhaps the new owners would also participate.

Mr. Ferrara moved to not initiate a landmark designation study for the jurisdictional reasons discussed. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

New Business: Determination of Procedure, Alteration to Designated Property

Case 2762: 2 Appleton St., by Laura Chasin. Alter landscaping at front for Japanese garden including changes to fencing, paths, paving, and low wall.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application. He passed around a sample of the bamboo material for the proposed fence. He noted that the front yard was already landscaped as a Japanese garden, and the proposed changes would be in the same style. He displayed the proposed garden plan and described the support structure for the fence.

Mr. King noted that the City Council had recently passed an order regarding means of preventing bamboo from spreading from one property to another. Mr. Sullivan said the staff could provide a copy of the order to the applicants.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the proposed plan, subject to the 10-day notice procedures. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on the progress of the siding and painting at Christ Church. He reported on Harvard's plans to remove Norway maples from Elmwood. The trees would be thinned and native species would be planted. The Commission had no jurisdiction to review the work.

Dr. Solet asked for a tour of Kendall Square so that she could be more familiar with the area before the hearing on the potential landmark study. Mr. Sullivan said he would arrange a site visit.

Minutes

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the May 5, 2011 and the July 18, 2011 minutes, as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Ms. Harrington moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 8/4/11**

Charles Myer	875 Main St
Caroline Loughlin	192 Brattle St
Philip Loughlin	192 Brattle St
Jai S. Khalsa	17 Ivaloo St, #400, Somerville, MA 02143
Joe Wilfong	130 Prospect St
Guy Grassi	46 Waltham St, #3A, Boston, MA 02118
Charles Wood	15 Elmwood Ave
Maryan Chapin	13 Kennedy Rd
Joseph Maguire	700 Tech Square, #302
Alfred Spagnolo	200 High St., 2 nd Fl., Boston MA 02110

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.