

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 6, 2011 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William B. King, *Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: Bruce Irving; *Vice Chair*; Frank Shirley, *Member*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

With a quorum present, Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. He made introductions and explained the consent agenda procedure. He reviewed the items on the agenda.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the following cases per the consent agenda procedure, subject to approval of details by the Executive Director:

Case 2654: 25 Craigie St., by Katherine Ryan. At north and west, alter doors and windows; construct ramp.

Case 2657: 21 Berkeley St., by Janet Axelrod and Tim Plenk. Construct screen porch at rear.

Dr. Solet seconded. Mr. King designated alternates Berg and Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

[Ms. Tobin arrived].

Public Hearing: Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Designation Proceedings

Consider petition requesting initiation of an NCD designation study for the properties at **0-12 Blanchard Road and 149-267 Grove Street**. Also consider adding the property at **777 Huron Avenue** to the proposed NCD study area.

Mr. King said he would abstain from voting on the matter since he had not been present at the December meeting. He designated all alternates to vote.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the discussion at the December hearing. He described the NCD study process.

Mr. King asked for statements in favor of the petition to study the area for an NCD.

Amy Nadel of 265 Grove Street said she was not opposed to expansion in the neighborhood, but the current A-2 zoning would allow a lot of development. Of the two recent projects, one blocked neighbors' views and the other was incongruous in scale and materials. She noted that there was no building moratorium during an NCD study, but only an application process. There was no evidence that property values have been hurt in other NCDs. The neighborhood was unique in Cambridge, with the Fresh Pond Reservation in the back yard. Many of the houses were innovative in their design. She asked the Commission to initiate a study.

Ann Sicari of 169 Grove Street noted that many of the houses were pictured in a recent book about Fresh Pond. It was an area to be proud of. She expressed support for the petition because it would help maintain the integrity of the area.

Abby Zanger of 207 Grove Street distributed a handout summarizing the proposed goals for the NCD: to preserve sight lines, establish design guidelines, and include local representation on the board. They had a responsibility to protect Fresh Pond. A year was a short time and it would be a missed opportunity not to do the study.

Mr. King described the Commission's experience with NCDs and how they came about as a preservation tool in Cambridge. They were set up to do something zoning could not. He described the existing NCDs and other

neighborhoods that had studied the option. He noted that the studies were time-consuming and were most successful when the public attended and participated. He asked for comments in opposition.

Duncan MacArthur of 245 Grove Street agreed that Fresh Pond was an asset to the neighborhood, but he did not believe there was a threat to the character of the area. He noted differences between the streetscapes on Blanchard Road and Grove Street. Many people thought the issue was a personal one between himself and Ms. Nadel; they did not see a threat and did not want to attend meetings and spend time on a study. The burden of time was not warranted. There were no houses for sale. He was working with his abutter on a project at 255 Grove.

Steve Samuel of 7 Blanchard Road opposed the study. Change and variety were sometimes good, and the zoning regulations were sufficient for the neighborhood. A significant number of neighbors were also opposed to the study. Because the neighborhood was not unified about the issue, it would be a waste of time.

Mr. King asked the staff for information about the current zoning. Mr. Sullivan replied that the A-2 district had a height limit of 35' (3 stories). It was a neighborhood of mostly one- and two-story houses. The redevelopment at 245 Grove Street was a good example of what was allowed as-of-right. Les Barber at Community Development was willing to discuss zoning options with the neighbors.

Mr. Samuel and Mr. MacArthur indicated that there could probably be a consensus among the neighbors about a zoning approach to the development issues.

Ms. Berg said she did not see the situation as urgent.

Dr. Solet asked how many of the houses were less than 50 years old and not subject to demolition review. Mr. Sullivan replied that most were over 50, but much could be changed without a demolition permit.

Ms. Nadel said one house was likely to be sold because of the recent death of the owner.

Ben Wilson of 265 Grove Street said the opposition to the study seemed to hinge on the undefined review guidelines during the study period. He asked if current zoning regulations could be used as those guidelines. Mr. King replied that an NCD was not a substitute for zoning. He suggested that the neighbors pursue the zoning opportunities and see if they could find consensus on an approach.

Dr. Solet pointed out that review by the Historical Commission can result in free advice. An NCD study would bring information to the residents' attention. A study would not necessarily have to last the full year. Professional support to help the neighbors study the issues would be helpful.

Mr. King suggested tabling the petition for two months and to take it off the table if there had not been a zoning petition filed by then.

Mr. Ferrara noted that several of the proposed review guidelines could be addressed by zoning. He moved to table the discussion until March and to see what the neighbors could accomplish via zoning measures. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-3 with Messrs. Ferrara and Crocker and Mss. Berg and Harrington voting in favor and with Dr. Solet, Mr. Bibbins, and Ms. Tobin voting in opposition.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2644 (continued): Fay House, Radcliffe Yard, 10 Garden St., by President and Fellows of Harvard College. Repair and replace windows.

Mr. King explained that the bulk of the application had been approved at the Commission's last meeting, but the portion pertaining to the repair and replacement of windows had been continued. A site visit to observe the existing conditions of the windows had taken place on December 15.

Mark Verkennis of the University Planning Office introduced the project team and distributed new drawings. He noted other buildings on Harvard's campus where the window sash had been replaced, including Harvard Hall and freshmen residences in the Yard. The windows in the freshmen residences had not failed and were not difficult to repair when broken. Several factors were being considered by the university, including character and appearance, operation and maintenance, energy efficiency, and longevity.

Nancy Rogo Trainer of Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates (VSBA) said the university wanted to preserve the appearance of the windows and also to improve thermal performance.

Dan McCoubrey, also of VSBA, noted that the windows had been replaced at Byerly Hall with true-divided-light insulated windows. Storm windows affected exterior appearance. Institutional windows needed to be easily operated. Storms were easily left open. He reviewed the dates of Fay House (1807) and its major additions (1890 and 1892). A window inventory revealed that over 40% of the existing windows dated to the late 20th century. The current proposal was to restore the windows on the oldest part of the house and install storm windows there. The other windows would get new true-divided-light insulated replacement sash. He reviewed the drawings which highlighted the windows to be restored.

Mr. King asked for public comment or questions. There being none, he closed the public comment period.

Mr. Bibbins asked how the energy study turned out. Ms. Trainer replied that the two approaches (restoration with storms and double glazed replacement) were similar in their thermal performance.

Mr. Sullivan noted that several recent university projects included restored windows, including the Fogg Museum and Sever Hall (where the sash were restored and fitted with insulated glass). The original and historic windows at Fay House were intrinsically important. The storm windows would protect them.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the repair and replacement of windows on the building as described in the supplemental drawing package received on January 6, 2011. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with alternates Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara voting.

Case 2649: 98 Winthrop St., by Paul Overgaag. Change grade of front yard, remove fence, remove or repurpose front wall, install additional seasonal seating and oyster bar.

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the 1806 late Federal house, a Cambridge landmark. The house had been converted to offices and most recently a restaurant. An addition and a bridge linking the building to Charlie's Kitchen had been approved by the Historical Commission in the past.

Paul Overgaag, the owner, described how Winthrop Street had changed in recent years as a result of the 11AM to 2AM closure of the street to vehicular traffic. There were six restaurants with outdoor seating on the street. He described his proposal to take the picket fence at the front of the property down and to lower and extend

the patio in order to make the restaurant more approachable to the pedestrian. He described his plan to add an oyster bar to the restaurant, along the side fence. The lower grade of the new patio would make the foundation of the house visible again; it had been obscured when the existing patio had been raised. The only covering would be seasonal umbrellas provided by beer companies. The existing umbrella/heater on the upper patio would remain. He intended to seek approval from the License Commission for seasonal seating in front of the masonry wall. The front wall would remain but the grade behind it would be lowered (by approximately 14" at the wall and 24" at the house). A movable fence would be designed to provide a barrier between the sidewalk seating and the street.

Denise Jillson of the Harvard Square Business Association spoke in support of the application.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the width of the street between the Red House property and the planters of Upstairs on the Square. Mr. Overgaag replied that there was 17' now. The patio would be extended 3' into the street, leaving 13' for emergency vehicles. Ms. Meyer expressed dislike of the close proximity of pedestrians and restaurant patrons.

Mr. King closed public comment and reported that he had received a phone call from a former president of the Harvard Square Defense Fund who said that Winthrop Street had become too busy and noisy. He said that restaurant activities and sidewalk seating were issues for the License Commission. He noted that one of the goals of the Harvard Square Conservation District was to promote commercial vitality. The proposed changes would not negatively affect the physical integrity of the house. Viewing more of the foundation could be beneficial.

Mr. Ferrara moved to approve the application, on the condition that construction details including the water table, masonry repairs, and movable fencing around sidewalk seating be approved by the staff. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. Mr. King designated alternates Tobin and Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case 2655: 101 Brattle St., by Lesley University. Exterior rehab including removal of fire escapes, replacement of two windows, replacement of missing shutters, exterior painting and lighting, wheelchair lift and new porch platform (per previous approval), new handrails, condenser units with fence enclosure, and exterior fixtures.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Hastings House, now owned by Lesley University. He summarized the application for exterior renovations.

Oliver Radford of Perry & Radford Architects reviewed the elevation drawings and described the alterations. He displayed a revised rear elevation and described the painted wood fence that would hide the equipment.

Dr. Solet explained the cumulative sound impacts of three condensers. She expressed concern that it would have negative impacts on the Longfellow House next door. Mr. Radford submitted an e-mail from Accentech acoustical consultants indicating that the noise would be below the levels required by the ordinance. He said an alternate location was on the other side of the masonry steps to the back entrance. In reply to Mr. King, he said the equipment could not be put on the roof or inside the building.

Mr. Sullivan relayed a conversation with the director of the Longfellow National Historic Site, who was concerned about noise disturbing their summer concerts. Mr. Sullivan suggested moving the equipment to the alternate location where the masonry steps could help insulate the Longfellow garden from the noise. Additionally, he recommended that the commission condition approval on the use acoustical baffles or blankets on the back of the fence and removal of the existing window air conditioning units.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application with the conditions suggested by Mr. Sullivan. Ms. Tobin seconded. Mr. King designated Ms. Tobin and Ms. Harrington to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case 2658: 1380 Massachusetts Ave., by 1834 Realty Inc., owner o/b/o Starbucks, tenant. Install awnings at second floor windows; install one wall sign and two blade signs with lighting.

Mr. King and Mr. Bibbins recused themselves from the case because they were both incorporators of the Cambridge Savings Bank, the property owner. Dr. Solet assumed the chair and designated all alternates to vote.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Read Block and its 1896 façade that had been restored when the site was redeveloped in the late 1990s.

Dan Brennan of Starbucks described the eight awnings proposed for the eight second floor windows. The application also included the uplighting of the façade in between those window bays.

Ms. Burks described the property's status in the Harvard Square Conservation District and as a Cambridge landmark. The awnings and lighting required approval, as did the blade signs because of their internal illumination.

Rich McIlvene of Starbucks explained that the awnings would help earn points for LEED certification.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the large windows faced north, so there no a need for awnings on the façade. The uplighting would be unique in Harvard Square. He discouraged calling out only one section of the building with awnings and uplighting because it would negatively impact the unified appearance of the restored façade. The awnings had no function except advertising and were not the traditional retractable canvas awning design.

Ms. Harrington and Dr. Solet asked about design details of the blade signs and lighting. Mr. McIlvene replied that the signs would be installed with four bolts and a metal bracket. There would be no exposed wiring on the façade. The awnings would convey a feeling for the store's design and would convey the fact that the store was occupying the second floor space as well. He asked if the Commission would approve the awnings and uplighting if it were carried across the whole building.

Ms. Berg noted that the property owner had gone to great lengths to accurately restore the façade. Dr. Solet suggested that the store communicate its presence from the inside instead.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the wall sign and two blade signs and to deny the uplights and awnings for the reasons stated by the Executive Director and recorded in the minutes. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0 with all alternates voting.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-98/D-1204: 23-25 Cottage Park Ave., Cottage Park Realty, Inc., owner. Consider whether to initiate a landmark designation study for Quonset hut.

Mr. King and Mr. Bibbins returned to the table. Mr. King resumed the chair.

Ms. Burks explained that the Commission had found the Quonset hut to be a preferably preserved significant building at its August 5, 2010 hearing. Per the Commission's regular procedure, the matter was advertised for a follow up hearing in the fifth month of the demolition delay to consider whether or not to initiate a landmark designation study. She showed slides and described the building, a so-called "elephant hut" because of its size. She reported that letters had been received from Ruth Silman, the property owner's attorney, and from Michael Brandon of the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee.

George Emerson, an owner, explained that he and the other owner(s) had been trying to sell the buildings for a couple of years. He expressed concern that a landmark study would get in the way of the sale.

Ruth Silman, Mr. Emerson's attorney, noted that the demolition application submitted by a former prospective purchaser of the property was no longer active. A new prospective buyer was looking at the property and preparing schematic plans for residential redevelopment. A 1957 zoning decision ordered that the Quonset hut be razed by 1962. ISD had cited the building for unsafe conditions and required the windows to be boarded up. The owners were trying to work with the neighbors and North Cambridge Stabilization Committee.

Charles Teague of 23 Edmunds Street asked why the hearing was called if the demolition request was no longer active. Ms. Burks explained that the application was made by the current owners on behalf of the then-prospective buyer, but it was never withdrawn. The decision would carry with the property if sold. If a new buyer had a different proposal for a replacement project, it might be necessary to hold a new hearing.

Ms. Silman said the owners would withdraw the demolition permit application. Mr. King said there would be, in that case, no reason to consider a landmark designation study.

Michael Brandon said the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee's concern was that the building not be left unprotected without review of a replacement project. If the permit application was withdrawn, it would be sufficiently protected. The other purpose of the delay was to explore options. He noted that Ms. Silman's letter indicated that the owner was open to discussion with museums or other parties who might be willing to move the hut.

Ms. Burks indicated that there were a couple of area museums that the owners could talk to if they wanted to have that discussion. She offered to make contact information available.

Mr. Brandon noted that the BZA decision required only that the building be "removed," not "demolished." He was not aware of any actions that had been taken by the city to enforce the decision.

Mr. Teague said he had done some research on elephant huts, finding that there were two forms and only 300 of the earlier version had been manufactured. He noted that people today often forget about World War II history, especially now that the veterans of the war were dying off in great numbers.

Dr. Solet moved that the Commission not commence a landmark study at this time, on the basis of the owner's representation that the demolition application would be withdrawn in writing within a week. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1214: 241 Binney St. (152 Sixth St.), by ARE-MA Region No. 34, LLC. Raze 2-story office building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the buildings affected by the proposed bio-tech development. He had found 152 Sixth Street, one of the buildings proposed for demolition, to be significant per the demolition delay ordinance, and reviewed his memo to the Commission. He described three significant stepped-gabled warehouses at 219 Fifth Street, 231 Binney Street, and 146 Sixth Street, which had previously been proposed for demolition, but were now to be incorporated into the new construction. He had found the other five buildings to be not significant.

James Rafferty, attorney for the applicant, reported that the Planning Board had granted a special permit for the project and would have further design review jurisdiction for the project.

Dr. Solet moved to find 152 Sixth Street to be a significant building as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Tobin and Mr. Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Mark Allen of Elkus Manfredi Architects displayed a site plan and a rendering of the proposed new building, which would incorporate the three stepped-gable buildings. He described the architectural and urban design intent and exterior and interior circulation of the site. In answer to Dr. Solet, he pointed out the mechanical penthouse, which would be lower along Binney Street and taller along Rogers Street.

Joe Maguire, of Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc., explained that the corporation owned primarily life science buildings. It owned 15.7 acres of property in the neighborhood. He described the master plan review that had already occurred with other city boards. In answer to Dr. Solet, he said the building was being marketed to potential tenants. The project would go to the Planning Board this winter. He described the below-ground parking and 2.2 acre park that would be beneficial to the area.

Mr. Sullivan noted that Alexandria Real Estate had a great track record of incorporating preservation in its projects in Cambridge. He recommended that the Commission find the building at 152 Sixth Street to be not preferably preserved in the context of the replacement proposal.

Mr. Ferrara so moved. Dr. Solet seconded. Mr. King designated Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

IPG 09-2: 13 Waterhouse St, First Church of Christ, Scientist. Masonry restoration. Requesting additional \$2,047, 50% of the additional cost of the project beyond the original \$40,000 grant.

IPG 11-3: 134 Norfolk St. (St. Mary's Girls School, now Prospect Hill Academy), by St. Mary's Church. 100% masonry restoration. Requesting \$75,000; total project cost \$259,200.

IPG 11-4: 21 Linnaean St. (Cooper-Frost-Austin House), by Historic New England. Wood shingle roof restoration. Requesting \$48,500; total project cost \$97,000.

PG 11-2: 49-53 Columbia Street, by Homeowners Rehab. Masonry, trim, windows, doors. Requesting \$100,000; total project cost \$288,283.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized each application and scope of work. He said that he would recuse himself because of his position on a Historic New England committee, and left the meeting.

Ms. Burks described the balances available for preservation grants: \$295,250 (Community Preservation Act funds) and \$8,000 (Community Development Block Grant funds) for a total of \$303,449.

Tim Walsh of Historic New England explained that the non-profit was in the third year of a major drive to address building maintenance issues. A multi-million grant had to be matched.

Mr. King noted that he lived four properties away from 21 Linnaean Street but that he had no financial interest in the outcome of the decision or project.

Mr. Walsh described the scope of work, which included repair and replacement of copper-lined gutters, coating the chimney, and re-shingling both sides of the roof. It would be beneficial from a maintenance perspective

to replace both sides of the roof at the same time. The structural elements of the roof would not be replaced. New sheathing might be installed in areas over the original if the original was no longer viable.

The Commission deliberated on the applications. Mr. King expressed support for replacement of the front side of the roof at the Cooper-Frost-Austin House, because it was ten years older than the back side.

Mr. Bibbins moved to award \$25,000 to Historic New England for the roof project at 21 Linnaean St. Ms. Berg seconded. Mr. King designated Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Harrington moved to not grant further funding for the masonry restoration at 13 Waterhouse Street, because the additional costs of the project were small and should be manageable for the property owner. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Mr. Ferrara and Ms. Berg to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Sullivan was invited to return for discussion of the remaining cases.

Ms. Berg noted that the project at 134 Norfolk Street was very large. She questioned if the owner would be able to get the job done. They might need to tackle it one side at a time. Mr. Sullivan explained that the building was leased to a charter school, giving the owner an income stream.

Ms. Berg moved to approve up to \$50,000 for 134 Norfolk St. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve up to \$50,000 for the restoration project at 49-53 Columbia Street. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Tobin and Mr. Ferrara to vote, and the motion passed 7-0.

New Business

There was no new business.

Minutes

Mr. King said he had no corrections to the November minutes.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0. Ms. Tobin did not vote as she had been absent at the November meeting.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the December minutes as submitted. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 5-0 with Messrs. Bibbins, Crocker, and Ferrara and Mss. Berg and Harrington voting. Mr. King, Ms. Tobin, and Dr. Solet did not vote, as they had been absent at the December meeting.

Ms. Berg moved to adjourn, and Ms. Harrington seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 11:06 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 1/6/11**

Tim Plenk	21 Berkeley St
Sharon Reynolds	33 Richdale Ave
Oliver Radford	33 Richdale Ave
Ann Sicari	169 Grove St
Amy Nadel	265 Grove St
Abby Zanger	207 Grove St
Ruth Silman	100 Summer St, Boston, 02110
Paul Ayers	2 Drummond Pl, Apt 1
Peter White	12 Blanchard Rd
Steve Samuel	7 Blanchard Rd
Jaap Overgaag	10 Eliot St
Binu Turso (?)	41 Vinal Ave, Somerville, 02143
Paul Overgaag	10 Eliot St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St, #404
Rob Ehlert	11 Blanchard Rd
Julliette Ehlert	11 Blanchard Rd
John Horst	10 Garden St
Joel Donlon, VSBA	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19127
Dan McCoubrey VSBA	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19127
Nancy Trainer, VSBA	4236 Main St, Philadelphia, PA 19127
Kate Loosian	10 Garden St
George Smith	29 Everett St
Denise Jillson	2203 Massachusetts Ave.
Dan Brennan	52 Hold Rd, Andover 01810
Alissa Devlin	183 Harvard Ave, Allston 02134
Rich McIlvene	85 Wells Ave, Newton 02549
George Emerson	143 Warren St
Ben Rogan	121 Mystic Ave, Medford 02155
Julia Bishop	9 Cottage Park Ave
Charles Teague	23 Edmunds St
Mark Allen	300 A St, Boston 02110
Joseph Maguire	700 Technology Sq, #302
Michelle Lower	700 Technology Sq.
William O'Reilly	60 State St, Boston 02109

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.