

Approved 1/5/12

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

November 3, 2011, 6:00 P.M. Lombardi Building, 831 Massachusetts Ave.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, *Members*; Shary Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and made introductions. He designated alternates Shary Berg and Susannah Tobin to vote in turn beginning with Ms. Berg. He reviewed the consent agenda procedures and asked if there were any cases which members of the staff, Commission, or the public thought did not require a full hearing.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the following cases according the consent agenda procedures and subject to review of construction details by the Executive Director.

Case 2790: 42 Brattle St., by Cambridge Center for Adult Education. Remove and replace sign and catalogue holder.

Case 2793: Radcliffe Yard, by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Alterations to landscaping, paths, accessibility.

Bill Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2772 (continued): 64 Dudley St., by AA Flori Realty Trust. Construct dwelling, landscape and parking.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reported that the Commission had a public hearing on the matter in September at which the staff report, replacement design, and public testimony were presented. The applicant had agreed to continue the hearing and meet with the neighborhood group.

Ms. Berg and Ms. Harrington indicated that they had not been present in September.

Ted Regnante, attorney representing the AA Flori Realty Trust, said they had met with the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee (NCSC) on October 5. Since then, he had received an e-mail from the NCSC requesting that the parking lot be cleaned up and the fence removed. This work was done. He had not received any further communications from the NCSC about the proposed replacement.

Mr. Bibbins asked if the proposed parking plan had 13 spaces. Mr. Regnante replied in the affirmative. The lot was currently licensed for 11 spaces but up to 25 would fit. He distributed the preferred site plan showing 13 parking spaces and landscaping in the parking lot. There were three lots under common ownership, so the Board of Zoning Appeal (BZA) would review it as a single lot. The present buildings were non-conforming. Ms. Burks explained that an alternative parking plan had been provided in the Commissioner's packets because there was a possibility that the BZA would approve something other than the preferred plan.

William Hubner of Incite Architecture said that the plan showing 25 cars was a study requested by the BZA to demonstrate the maximum capacity of the site. The 18-space alternate site plan would require sacrificing some of the landscaping and would reduce the side yard from 15' to 6'.

Mr. Bibbins said that the parking matters would be best handled at the BZA. The design of the proposed residence was appropriate for the site and streetscape.

Michele Furst of 63 Reed Street said the parking lot would become a busy passage. Would the structural integrity of the historic building be impacted? Mr. Hubner said it was unlikely that McLean Place would become a cut-through. It would be a one way from Dudley to McLean Place. He noted that the drive had been open formerly. Mr. Regnante said there would be no structural impact to the landmarked building.

Michael Brandon, of 27 Seven Pines Avenue and the NCSC, said the neighborhood meeting had been well attended. The NCSC had requested that the junk and the fence be removed. Landscaping and parking were important for the Historical Commission to consider. The NCSC did not reach a consensus in support of a 3-story residence. He suggested a mockup of the parking arrangement and footprint of the new building.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He said the Commission should deliberate on the specific proposal before it. In his opinion, the style of the proposed building is not incongruous with the landmark and the neighboring buildings.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve the application with either 13 or 18 parking spaces. Ms. Tobin seconded and the motion passed 6-0, with Ms. Tobin voting.

Case 2791: 1400 Mass. Ave. (rear facing Palmer St.), by Harvard Cooperative Society. Complete phase II of Palmer Street art project including triangular frames and banners on building and fiberglass panels on skybridge.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and recalled that the Commission had approved the public art installation, “Hyphen” by Jodi Pinto, as part of the Harvard Square Design Improvement project in 2006. At that time, the design also included a retractable movie screen and banners on the buildings.

Paul Champagne of the Coop said that private investment in the project had been scaled back. The Coop was the only private party participating now. He showed pictures of the amended design. As in the original approved design, the sides and bottom of the pedestrian bridge would be covered with fiberglass panels. Lights were already installed inside the bridge. Banners would be installed on one building on the west side of the street between the bridge and Church Street.

Mr. King asked if the screen was still part of the proposal. Mr. Champagne replied that they had never found a suitable retractable screen that could be installed on the bridge with the fiberglass panels. Movie screens could be and had been rented for use at street parties.

Jo Solet noted that some bollards were broken and questioned the reasoning for installing the fiberglass panels on the bridge. She preferred seeing the activity of people passing on the bridge. Lillian Hsu of the Arts Council explained that the artist’s concept was to provide more active space on the street. The artist incorporated lights into different aspects of the design because the street was mostly in shade during the day and could be livelier at night with additional lighting. The lights would shine through the fiberglass panels on the bridge. The Council was supervising the repair of the bollards.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

Mr. King asked about the graphics on the banners. Ms. Hsu said that from a distance they would read "NOW," but would look more abstract up close. The banners would be replaced when they were worn out.

Mr. King suggested a temporary Certificate of of 5 or 10 years in order to have public input on the condition of the installation at that time. Mr. Sullivan said he would trust the Arts Council to maintain the installation.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the banners, separately from the cladding on the bridge. Mr. King asked if the cladding was still an important part of the artist's conception for the piece. Ms. Hsu replied that the cladding would cast a special light, activating the street. Ms. Harrington agreed that it would be an exciting look after dark.

There being no second to the original motion, Mr. Irving made another motion to approve the application as submitted. Robert Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Case 2796: 1350 Massachusetts Ave., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Relocate and replace arcade entrance doors facing Forbes Plaza.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application to move the doors back into the arcade by several feet and to leave the screen of glass above the doors in its existing location. He noted that the arcade had originally been open at both ends, and asked whether the screen should be removed when the doors were moved.

Mark Verkennis of Harvard Planning & Project Management explained that the existing doors had been installed in the mid to late 1990s when the arcade was enclosed. The doors had required extensive ongoing maintenance because of the pivot mechanism. He noted that in a few years Harvard would be addressing repairs to the building envelope as a whole.

Andy Enright, the architect, displayed an elevation and described the proposal to relocate the doors. Only the doors facing Forbes Plaza were in need of replacement. The new doors would match the height of the existing doors, but would have a different type of hinge.

Mr. Irving asked why Harvard was not planning to remove the screen at the same time. Mr. Verkennis replied that it was mostly a scheduling issue. The new doors were scheduled to be installed over the Christmas break. Removing the screen would take more time.

There were no questions or comments made by members of the public.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the application, as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-97: 40 Norris St., former Ellis/North Cambridge Catholic High School, owned by LaCourt Family LLC. Review preliminary landmark study report and make recommendations to City Council.

Mr. King described the landmark designation process.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the preliminary report about the history and significance of the former Ellis/North Cambridge Catholic High School property at 40 Norris Street. Mr. King commented that he enjoyed reading about the history of the public schools and commended the staff on the report.

Dr. Solet noted that the interim protection would expire on December 3.

Jai Singh Khalsa, the architect, said that Dr. Rizkallah, the owner, wanted to see the building properly restored and would be happy to enter into a preservation restriction whether or not the landmark designation goes forward. He commended the report and guidelines. He had no drawings to present but would describe the project in general. The rehab would include 28 residential units and two commercial spaces. It was undetermined whether the existing (but not original) windows would be replaced. Under the new zoning regulations, 1/3 of the building's square footage had to be devoted to uses other than residential units, such as common areas and commercial space. The exterior work proposed included adding skylights and removing fire escapes. There would be one central cooling system for the building with a cooling tower in an 8' pit in the front yard with a fence around it. Roof top vents would be grouped and located in the existing chimneys to minimize the number of new penetrations. The inter-floor space in the attic would be kept away from exterior walls. They had met with the neighbors and would meet with the NCSC. The owner did not plan on filing for historic rehab tax credits.

Mr. King asked about parking. Mr. Khalsa said there would be 28 spaces in back with some landscaping.

Ms. Berg asked if both landmark designation and a preservation restriction could be implemented. Mr. Sullivan replied that it would be either one or the other. The staff was available to discuss a restriction with the property owner, but he recommended proceeding with the landmark process.

Mr. King suggested that the staff recommendation on page 16 be changed to reflect the discussion and actions of the Commission at the November 3 hearing.

Young Kim of 17 Norris Street thanked the staff for the report and applauded Dr. Rizkallah for his commitment to preserve the building. He noted that the slate roof was a prominent feature of the building and was visible from far away. He expressed concern about the visual impact of skylights and vent pipes. He urged the Commission to add a provision about the roof in the report.

Charles Teague of 23 Edmunds Street commented on the fine brick masonry with its narrow mortar joints. He agreed that the slate roof was an important architectural feature.

Lilla Johnson of 23 Rice Street described the view of the roof from Rice Street. She asked about a preservation restriction. Mr. King explained the preservation tools of landmark designation and preservation restrictions, and then closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the staff add to the guidelines in the preliminary report to include a guideline about the roof. The guideline could recommend minimizing, but not prohibiting, the installation of skylights and regularizing and clustering roof penetrations. He suggested that the Commission move forward with a recommendation to the City Council for landmark designation, but authorize the staff to enter into discussion with the owner about a preservation restriction.

Mr. Irving moved to amend the report as described by Mr. Sullivan, forward a positive recommendation for landmark designation to the City Council, and authorize the staff to enter into discussion with the owner about a preservation restriction. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Mr. King commented that chimneys are important architectural features and he was glad to see that the ones on this building would be made use of. He called a break and reconvened the meeting at 8:45 P.M.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1243 (continued): 23-25 Cottage Park Ave., by Beantown Properties. Demolish Quonset hut (by 1946) for parking lot associated with residential conversion of 22 Cottage Park Ave.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reviewed the previous demolition permit application. She reported that the property had been purchased by Beantown Properties and a new demolition request had been received.

Marc Resnick of Beantown Properties distributed two letters from abutters in favor of demolition. He said the Quonset hut was beyond repair.

Bob Purdy, the project manager, reported on their communications with the Seabee Museum and the Battleship Cove museum. The Seabee Museum had indicated they did not have the manpower or funding to disassemble and move it, but could use some of its parts for repairs to other huts in their collection. Beantown offered to dismantle the hut and ship the parts to the museum, if the museum could provide the expertise. Battleship Cove had not expressed interest because of the condition of the hut.

Mr. Resnick said the Emerson Co. building across the street would be rehabbed for residential use and named "Emerson Lofts at Cottage Park." He said they had considered building on the Quonset hut lot, but decided to use that only as parking for the brick building. There would be 25 parking spaces for 16 units.

Mr. James Williamson asked for a staff opinion about the Quonset hut. Mr. Sullivan agreed that it was in poor condition. Mr. Resnick noted that the bolts holding the pieces together had been in the weather since 1946, and that the building could not be easily disassembled.

Mr. Brandon said there was a strong consensus in the neighborhood that the Quonset hut in its present condition was undesirable. He would like to see it moved or preserved or at least used for parts by one of the museums. He suggested conditioning a finding of significant but not preferably preserved on the owner's making further contact with the museums and keeping the staff and the NCSC apprised. The staff could review the progress and when it determined that all reasonable efforts had been made, sign off on the demolition permit.

Mr. Williamson said he liked the building. Ideally it could be reused as a garage.

Mr. King recommended finding the building significant and preferably preserved until the other permit approvals for the Emerson Lofts project were granted or until there was a satisfactory reuse (such as by one of the museums in whole or for parts), whichever comes first, at which time the remainder of the demolition delay would be waived. The public would be better served by getting a first class reuse of the Emerson Co. factory building than in preserving the Quonset hut.

Mr. Bibbins said the proposed conditions were ~~a little manipulative~~ unnecessary. It might be a significant building, but it wasn't valuable. He noted that he had lived in a Quonset hut in Iceland. Ms. Harrington agreed.

Mr. Irving moved to find the building significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-1, with Ms. Tobin voting as alternate and Mr. Bibbins voting in opposition.

Ms. Harrington moved, on the understanding a) that the owners would continue to consult the staff on the exterior features of the brick building and b) that the owners continue working with the staff on the disposition of the Quonset Hut, as pledged by the applicant at the hearing, that the Commission find the

Quonset hut not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project (Emerson Lofts with associated parking). Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

Case D-1244: 2 Hemlock Rd., by Rich Miner. Demolish house (1954) and accessory building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo. He described the unusual architecture of the house, perhaps based on a Swedish vernacular precedent, but not a typical American first period Colonial Revival. He described the first owner and designer of the house, Dr. Uno Helgessen, a psychiatrist born in Sweden.

Rich Miner, the owner, said that an inspection revealed numerous deficiencies.. He worked for a Swedish company but his associates did not recognize the house as particularly Swedish in style. He had considered rehabbing the house before hiring architect Nick Winton of Anmahian Winton Architects to design a new one.

Mr. Winton showed photos of mid 20th century houses nearby. The house would need near complete reconstruction if it were to be preserved. He said the neighbors supported new construction. The derelict potting shed would also be demolished. The new building would be zoning compliant and clad in natural materials.

No members of the public had questions or offered public comment.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house significant for the reasons stated in the staff report. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-1 with Ms. Tobin voting and Mr. King opposed.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement project. Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Berg voting.

New Business: Determination of Procedure

Case D-1176: 111 Clifton St., by Khaiser Bhuyan. Request for extension of time to commence demolition.

Mr. King provided the background on the case. The Commission found 111 Clifton to be a preferably-preserved significant building on October 1, 2009, but after the six month delay the owner, Khaiser Bhuyan, failed to act during the six-month window ending in October 2010 during which his permit was valid. After another year passed Mr. Bhuyan requested an extension of time to commence demolition. The plans for the replacement project were the same. The Commission had declined to initiate a landmark study. The Commission's permits are valid for six months, and its policy allows the chair to grant six-month extensions of time to commence work. Mr. King said his role in considering extensions was not to decide himself as to where the public interest lay at the present time, but to determine whether facts had changed enough to warrant bringing a previously-decided case back to the commission. In this case he believed that it would be a waste of the public's time to restart the process because he did not consider the house to be of landmark quality, and he had granted the requested extension.

Mr. Bhuyan explained that he was still occupying the house, but it was not in very good condition. He delayed the project because he had married and had difficulty getting financing when it was unclear if the house would be landmarked. He needed to move out (a baby was due in December) and find a new home for his family.

Mr. Williamson noted that there was an enormous amount of new construction putting pressure on the neighborhood. No workers cottage would reach the level of landmark significance on its own, but the danger was in losing the house type piecemeal.

Mr. Brandon commended the chair on bringing the matter to the Commission for broader input. He said he was unfamiliar with the policy on extensions. He requested further time to speak to the neighbors and provide comment. The immediate abutters were under the impression that the demolition threat had gone away. He recommended having a new hearing on the request.

Dr. Solet suggested a meeting to assist the owner in improving the replacement design. Ms. Berg said the Commission had already had its chance to influence the design or initiate a landmark study. It was not fair to be tinkering with it at this point. Ms. Harrington agreed; the issue with the design would not be settled in regard to this house. It should be a broader discussion between the Commission and the developer.

Mr. Bibbins moved to record a sense of the Commission that the chair was justified in granting the requested continuance. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. Mr. King said he would abstain and both alternates should vote. The motion passed 7-0 with both Ms. Tobin and Ms. Berg voting.

Dr. Solet asked that the minutes reflect that the staff should be consulted about the replacement design.

Case 2803: 160 Brattle St., by Joan Fitzgerald. Replace crown molding with gutter.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the defect in the original design, which caused water to run down the face of the building. He had suggested replacing a crown molding with a matching copper gutter.

Mr. Bibbins so moved, Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

Minutes

Mr. King proposed edits on page 5 of the September 8 minutes. The 2nd paragraph on page 5 should read, "Details such as door design were open to change, as long as they did not trigger the need for zoning relief." He agreed with Mr. Emery's suggestion on page 6 that the Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals should discuss the zoning regulations that make it harder to preserve old houses. Mr. Irving moved to approve the minutes as corrected. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the October 6 minutes as submitted. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0, with Ms. Berg voting.

Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan advised that he had addressed an MIT dinner at the dedication of Maseeh Hall, and that the *Cambridge Chronicle* had been digitized. The Commission requested that he send the link via e-mail.

Mr. King asked how the Cambridge Heritage Trust could spend its remaining balance of approximately \$30,000. Ideas included a research fellowship, a green building seminar, a lecture series, and hiring an archivist.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 with Ms. Tobin voting. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 11/3/11**

Jerry Wedge	42 Brattle St
William Hubner	55 Gold Star Rd
Ted Regnante	401 Edgewater Pl, Wakefield 01880
Charles Ian Stevenson	16 Cambridge Ter #1
Michele Furst	63 Reed St
Jai S Khalsa	PO Box 390971, Cambridge 02139
Paul Champagne	1400 Mass Ave
Anna Bhuyan	111 Clifton St
Kaiser Bhuyan	111 Clifton St
Ann Newman	72 Lexington St, Somerville 02144
Mark Verkennis	1350 Mass Ave
Andy Enright	11 Denton Ter. Roslindale
Lillian Hsu	344 Broadway
Arthur Flori	76 Pigeon Ln, Waltham 02454
Lilla Johnson	23 Rice St
Young Kim	17 Norris St
Marc Resnick	183 Harvard Ave, Allston 02134
Dick Clarey	15 Brookford Ave
Nick Winton	650 Cambridge St
Rich Miner	16 Brown St/2Hemlock
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
James Williamson	1000 Jackson Pl

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.