

Approved 9/12/13

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

August 8, 2013 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; William Barry, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, *Alternate Member*

Members absent: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternate Members*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*; Susan Maycock, *Survey Director*; Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM with a quorum of four. He made introductions. [Mr. Barry arrived]. Mr. King designated Ms. Berg, an alternate member, to vote on all matters.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3067: 30 Elmwood Ave./393 Mt. Auburn St., by Anne Church Bigelow MacFarlane. Consider application for certificate of hardship for previously installed stockade fence along Mt. Auburn Street side.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the 18th century house that had been moved to its present site in the 1960s. He stated that a fence had been installed last fall without prior approval of the Commission and without a building permit. The owner was contacted and subsequently applied for a Certificate of Hardship. The approximately 8' tall fence was a structure as defined in MGL Ch. 40C.

Anne MacFarlane said she was living in England, but intended to return to Cambridge when she retires. She summarized the hardship of living at a very busy intersection with many lanes of traffic, where debris from auto accidents had sometimes flown onto the property. Her contractor had wrongly stated that an application to the Historical Commission was not needed. She read a letter from her neighbor, Bridget Murnane, who liked the fence because it reduced noise at her house and where children were at risk. She indicated that the cost of removing the fence and planting a hedge would be a financial hardship. She noted that the lilacs her father planted had died back and were not an adequate barrier. She concluded that the fence improved the quality of life of the residents without negatively impacting the district.

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

Dr. Solet noted that it was a very busy area. As a noise and sleep expert, she accepted the argument that the fence was a necessity. She would consider it a health and safety issue due to the impacts of noise on sleep.

Ms. Berg indicated that she did not know of other 8' fences in the district. She recommended a shorter fence with a lattice top. She suggested that plantings would grow better if the soil was built up.

Mr. King said the fence was very severe. The fence company should have known that it would require approval, as they did a lot of work in the city. Perhaps they would agree to mitigate the cost.

Ms. Harrington questioned the appropriateness of the fence.

Mr. King read the section of 40C relative to the granting of certificates of hardship.

Dr. Solet moved to grant a Certificate of Hardship for the fence as installed, for the hardship reasons cited by the applicant and with the finding that failure to approve the fence would involve a substantial hardship to the

applicant and that the fence could be approved without substantial detriment to the public welfare and without substantial derogation from the purposes of the Old Cambridge Historic District. She noted that the property's setting was unlike others in the district. Ms. Berg seconded the motion for the purposes of discussion.

Ms. Berg then offered a substitute motion to deny the certificate of hardship for an 8' fence and to grant a certificate of hardship for a fence reduced to a height of no more than 6', with the finding stated by Dr. Solet and an additional finding that the location on a busy corner was unique in the district. Mr. Barry seconded.

On the motion to deny the existing 8' fence, the Commission voted 4-1 with Dr. Solet opposed. On the motion to approve a certificate of hardship for a modified fence of no higher than 6', the Commission voted 4-0, with Dr. Solet abstaining.

Case 3091: 20 Follen St., by Twenty Follen Street LLC. Change exterior paint colors.

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Commission had approved a Certificate of Appropriateness in July as a ten-day-notice case, but an abutter had objected to issuance of a certificate without a hearing. In the meantime, the staff had reached a compromise with the owner and neighbor for a softer white color.

Mr. King opined that he would allow colors chosen by property owners, unless the paint color expert on the staff were to advise the Commission that the color was inappropriate.

Susan Maycock described the 1949 Mid-Century Modern house designed by architect Arthur Brooks. The most prominent feature was its broad front-facing gable, which had always been painted white. She noted that the house had substantially maintained its original colors of dark brown clapboards on the first floor and white trim including the gable end, except for the east side wall that had originally been painted a bright turquoise. Mid-Century Modern homes with broad center gables were typically painted white, while the body colors had more variation but were usually grays and browns. The compromise color was a softer shade of white. The abutter had indicated he would accept the softer white, but would prefer a darker color like a green or a gray. She explained that in the Old Cambridge Historic District, the staff meets with owners to describe the colors that would have been available for the period of construction and that were appropriate to the style of the building, and then works with the owner to choose something they like.

Dr. Solet asked if the front door had always been white. Ms. Maycock did not know.

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

Ms. Harrington moved to approve BM HC167 (Amherst Gray) for the body color and a mix of 75% BM OC-51 (Intense White) and 25% plain white for the trim and door. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. King explained the consent agenda procedure. He recommended cases 2986, 3110, and 3116 for consideration. There were no objections from the public, staff, or members of the commission. Ms. Berg moved to approve the following cases without a full hearing and subject to the ten-day notice procedure:

Case 2986 (Amendment): 126 Brattle St., by Brown and Brattle Realty Trust. Alter fence.

Case 3110: Washburn Hall, 10 Phillips Pl., by Lesley University. Replace two sets of entry doors.

Case 3116: 213 Brattle St., by Frederick S. Carr, Jr. Change door on 2nd floor to a window.

Mr. Barry seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Case 3099: 1341 Massachusetts Ave. at McKean Gate, by City of Cambridge o/b/o Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Reconstruct brick sidewalk and install bus shelter adjacent to McKean Gate.

Case 3100: 1341 Massachusetts Ave. at Johnston Gate, by City of Cambridge o/b/o Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Install bus shelter and two benches; relocate bus stop sign and post.

Case 3101: 1496 Massachusetts Ave. at Dawes Island, by City of Cambridge o/b/o Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Remove and relocate wood fence rails; reconstruct brick sidewalk; install new bus stop signs and post.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of conditions at the three bus stops.

Erik Schier of the MBTA reported that Federal stimulus money had been awarded to the T for upgrades of their busiest bus routes. There were approximately 1,000 boardings per day at these stops. The Boston Redevelopment Authority had a strong influence on the design. There would be no advertising. The sidewalks would be glass, not Lexan. The shelters would be maintained by the T. Sandra Clarey, a consultant for the T, noted that a narrow shelter had been selected because of the width of the sidewalks.

Dr. Solet asked if there was room for people to pass each other in front of the shelters, even with walkers or other equipment. How many people could be accommodated under a shelter? Ms. Clarey replied that there was room to pass and the shelters could accommodate 8 or more people.

Mr. Barry said the benches specified were severe in design. Black metal frames and benches would be more in keeping with the metal found around Harvard Yard. Mr. Sullivan said that black or bronze posts would be more appropriate than brushed aluminum.

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

Dr. Solet moved to find that the brushed aluminum was not appropriate in the context of Harvard Yard, but the shelters would not cause substantial detriment to the public welfare or substantially derogate from the purposes of the Old Cambridge Historic District. She further moved to grant a Certificate of Hardship for a black or dark bronze anodized aluminum shelter at McKean and Johnston gates, with the authority granted to the staff to approve the brushed aluminum finish if the manufacturer could not deliver the darker colors. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. Schier described the proposed changes to the post and rail fence at Dawes Island in order to improve the boarding and disembarking areas. The grassy areas along the curb would be paved with brick.

Mr. King asked if any work was proposed for the concrete sidewalk with the horseshoes representing Dawes' horse's hoofprints. Mr. Schier confirmed that no work would take place on that part of the sidewalk.

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

Dr. Solet moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed alterations at Dawes Island on the condition that the brick match the existing brick at Dawes Island and that no harm be done to the hoof prints. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Case 3102: 28 Fayerweather St., by Vartan Keshishian. Enlarge breakfast room addition; construct dining room addition and patio; alter dormers on the south side; alter landscape structures; construct circular driveway and excavate drive to new basement garage; exterior alterations including expansion of front stairs.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the landmarked property, an early example of the Colonial Revival style. He noted that the breakfast room was added when Governor Weld owned the house. He described other alterations and noted that the house originally had a circular drive off Reservoir Street.

Doug Okun, the architect, described the proposal to restore architectural features, expand the dining room and bedroom, reintroduce a circular driveway, and construct a new breakfast room, basement-level garage, and third floor addition. The Commission asked questions to clarify existing conditions of the fence, windows, and front porch. Mr. Okun noted that the proposal included restoring original windows but removing the shutters, which did not appear to be original.

Mr. Sullivan commented that the circular driveway appeared to be wider than the original. What material was proposed for paving and how would the trees be protected? Mr. Okun replied that the paving material had not yet been selected and the width was to allow a car to pass a parked car on the driveway. Vartan Keshishian, the owner, said that his family included several children of driving age. They had five cars and they wanted to be able to pass and park on the driveway.

Mr. Berg remarked that the three-dimensional features of the landscape, such as the seat wall, could not be adequately understood in plan. Elevations were needed. Ms. Burks asked if the grade around the house would change. She noted that the number of porch steps proposed were fewer than existing or shown in the historic photos. She noted that grade changes could negatively impact the trees. Mr. Okun explained that the drawings were incorrect and he had already made corrections. Several other inconsistencies in the drawings were pointed out.

Mr. Barry asked if any of the 3rd floor addition would be visible from the public way. Mr. Sullivan answered that if there was any view, it would be from Reservoir Street across the roof of the next door garage.

François Vigier of 27 Fayerweather Street commented that the redesigned breakfast room on the north elevation was an improvement. The proposed band of windows to light the third floor addition on the south elevation was inconsistent with the style of the house. The mature trees were one of the great things about the property and they should be protected during construction. He expressed concern that the excavation of the driveway to the basement garage could damage the trees.

Mr. King noted a letter received from Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street. He said the letter contained good questions that should be considered by the proponents and commission.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that the major aspects of the project, the garage, the dining/bedroom extension, the kitchen addition, the deck restoration, and the 3rd floor addition be voted on in principle, then the Commission could request that the proponents return at a future meeting to present more detail and receive a final vote on the application.

Mr. King said he was delighted that the house was being renovated in a way that respected the publicly visible elevations. He complimented the idea for the location of the garage.

Mr. Barry commented that the 3rd floor addition was not consistent with the character of the house, but if it was not publicly visible, there would not be grounds to deny it. He moved to approve in principle the five main

components of the project as outlined by Mr. Sullivan and to continue the hearing, Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. Keshishian asked for a vote allowing demolition of the breakfast room and deck so that he could get started on that phase of the project. Ms. Berg so moved and Mr. Barry seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1309: 24 Kelly Rd., by 24 Kelly LLC. Demolish house (1868).

Mr. King explained the demolition delay ordinance and review procedures. Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the staff memo on the history and significance of the house. It had been constructed in 1868 by a soft drink manufacturer in the Italianate style and remodeled as a Queen Anne by his wealthy widow in 1885.

Fred Meyer of 83 Hammond Street said the historic context of houses in Cambridge was important to his real estate clients. He appreciated new architecture, but Kelly Road had all old houses. The architect's featured designs on his website were often stand-alone buildings and were not designed in the context of a tight urban street. He read the construction dates of the houses on Kelly Road. He described features of the existing building that were of value. He encouraged the Commission to find the house significant and preferably preserved and even to start a landmark study if necessary to protect the building and the block.

Sebastian Mariscal, the owner and architect, said the house was neither purely Italianate nor Queen Anne, but a mix of the two. The property had been neglected for years. The floors were not level and tree roots had damaged the foundation. The roof of the rear addition had collapsed. Renovation was not economically feasible.

Brian Militana of Mr. Mariscal's office presented information about the house and the neighborhood. He noted that the house was an example of vernacular architecture and was not a scarce resource in Cambridgeport, where there were over 200 houses built within 15 years of this one. It was not a significant example of the Italianate or Queen Anne styles. Change should happen incrementally, but there were very few examples of contemporary architecture in Cambridgeport. He reported that only 16 houses had been constructed in the area in the last 30 years. There should be more, especially if they were well designed.

Mr. Mariscal described the design of the new two-family house, including its massing, materials, and garden features. He described the green aspects of the design, and stated that green construction was just as important as preserving historic buildings.

Eleanor Stein Adler of 28 Kelly Road said the house needed a lot of work. It was run down, but its design fit in with the street. She could not envision a house of the new design fitting in comfortably.

John Sanzone of 540 Memorial Drive said that vernacular architecture was not synonymous with being not significant. The contextual significance of the house was quite apparent.

Mr. King closed the public comment period regarding the significance question.

Ms. Harrington noted that the historic associations of the house were just as important as its architecture. Who lived there and what they brought to the City was important. She moved to find the house significant for the reasons given in the staff report and as defined in the ordinance. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. King asked about the structure of the new house. Mr. Mariscal replied that it was mostly wood frame. A lightweight soil would be utilized for the green roofs.

Mr. Barry asked how the design would engage and relate to its surroundings. Mr. Mariscal replied that the presence of Dana Park nearby showed the importance of green space to the neighborhood and his design would add to the green space and vegetation of the street. The horizontal siding would be stained to show the natural grain. The wood would be highly crafted and porous, recalling historic features such as leaded glass. The massing and proportions of the building were similar to nearby houses, preserving the rhythm of the street.

Ms. Berg questioned the placement of so many windows on the sides of the new house, in view of the narrowness of the lot and privacy issues. She commended the quality of the design, but questioned the appropriateness of it for this location. Mr. Mariscal said he had received good feedback from his neighbors.

Dr. Solet asked how much of the year the gardens would be dormant. Mr. Mariscal said they would be dormant during the coldest 4 or 5 months of the year.

Mr. Meyer said he would like to see the house built in Cambridge, but in another location where it could be on a larger lot.

Mr. Mariscal said his family and friends were in Cambridgeport and he wanted to live there too. He asked what new architecture would exist to preserve in 100 years if the Commission did not let new designs get built. New architecture should not be relegated to only a few areas of the city like Kendall Square.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet commented that the proponents made one of the best presentations she had heard in her time on the Commission. It was an extremely innovative design. She moved to accept the proposal and find the existing house not preferably preserved. There was no second to the motion.

Mr. Barry moved to find the existing building preferably preserved in relation to the proposed replacement. He said he wanted to support creative design, but the proposed building would be inappropriate in the context of Kelly Road. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 4-1 with Dr. Solet opposed.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the July 11, 2013 minutes.

Page 1: Ms. Harrington noted that Susannah Tobin had been in attendance

Page 2: The main problem with reusing residential reuse of the building was its depth.

Page 3: ... façade, which was a consistent ...

Dr. Solet moved to approve the July 11 minutes as corrected. Shary Berg seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

There being no further business, Ms. Berg moved to adjourn. Ms. Harrington seconded, and the motion passed 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 8/8/13**

John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr
SN MacFarlane	17 Sunderland Ave, Oxford, England
ACB MacFarlane	17 Sunderland Ave, Oxford, England
Kate Eyre	P. O. Box 4003, Cambridge 02140
George Smith	Lesley University, 29 Everett St
Nao Harashima	10 Dunner St, Brookline 02446 (a visiting student from Japan)
Sebastian Mariscal	35 Medford St, #211, Somerville 02143
Brian Militana	35 Medford St, #211, Somerville 02143
Patrick Donato	35 Medford St, #211, Somerville 02143
Armando Plata	44 Highland Ave #1B, Somerville 02143
Alberto Meovdin	35 Medford St, #211, Somerville 02143
Eleanor Steinadler	28 Kelly Rd, #1
Philip Gerstein	28 Kelly Rd, #1
Douglas Okun	156 Mt Auburn St
Viviana Belbusti	1035 Cambridge St, #21E
Seda Ebrahimi-Keshishian	17 Morningside Ln, Lincoln 01773
Vartan Keshishian	17 Morningside Ln, Lincoln 01773
Stephen Way	156 Mt Auburn St
François Vigier	27 Fayerweather St
Wesley Wirth	20 N. Main St, Sherborn 01770

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.