

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

July 10, 2014 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: William Barry, M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, *Members*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He made introductions and designated Ms. Berg, an alternate, to vote on all matters. He described hearing procedures and reviewed the agenda. The Commission dispensed with the Consent Agenda, preferring to have full discussion on all matters.

Public Hearing: Landmark Designation Procedures

Case L-100-101-102 (continued): Kendall Square Building, 238 Main St., J. L. Hammett Building, 264 Main St., and Suffolk Engraving & Electrotyping Building, 292 Main St., MIT Investment Management Co., owner. Consider requested further extension of landmark designation study and associated protections.

(Ms. Tobin arrived).

Mr. Sullivan explained that the landmark study had been extended twice already. He reported that he had consulted with MITIMCo about the status of the university's internal study process and agreed that the best course of action was to extend the study to the January meeting in 2015. MITIMCo had agreed to extend the interim study protections as well.

Mr. King asked for comments or questions, but there were none.

Mr. Irving moved to continue the landmark study hearing to the January 2015 meeting, with the understanding that the interim protections were extended through July 6, 2015. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Ms. Tobin, an alternate, to vote on all matters. The motion carried 6-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3284: 168 Brattle St., by Swanee Hunt. Install new architectural roofing shingles and copper gutter liner.

(Mr. Ferrara arrived).

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the house and its asphalt 3-tab shingles. He noted that the roof was quite high and not a major feature of the design. He had no objection to the proposed new shingle, a sample of which he had seen on site.

Hal Davis of Landmark Roofing Co. described the proposed new composite shingles, the Certainteed Grand Manor line in the color Brownstone. He noted that the color was similar to the existing shingles. He displayed a sample board of the product.

Mr. Irving indicated that the Grand Manor was imitating another material, like slate, but the bicolor, high relief effect was not a neutral field like a charcoal 3-tab shingle. He supported the Commission's earlier preference for charcoal three-tab shingles, but if no precedent would be set by

approving the product in this location, he would agree to it, based on the lack of objections by staff due to the height and angle of the roof.

Ms. Harrington asked why the Grand Manor had been selected. Mr. Davis answered that it was a more durable product, with a long warranty, and the shadow lines would give it a substantial look.

Dr. Solet asked about the original roofing material. Mr. Sullivan answered that it probably was wood shingles.

There were no comments or questions from the public.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the application for a certificate of appropriateness, as presented. Ms. Berg seconded. Mr. King designated Mr. Ferrara, an alternate, to vote on all matters. The motion carried 7-0.

Case 3285: 151 Brattle St., by Sikander Ilyas and Heidi Greiling. Exterior rehabilitation of carriage house, construct new foundation, install new doors, skylights, windows, and HVAC equipment.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides, noting that the front of the carriage house was situated a little less than 100' from Brattle Street and was more visible during winter months.

Daniel Steger, the architect, said the proposed work would be the second restoration project undertaken by the owners, they having already completed substantial repairs to the house. The scope included removing rotted sills and a concrete floor, lifting the building temporarily while a new foundation was constructed, new copper flashing, gutters, downspouts, a new overhead door that would look more like the existing carriage door, new casement windows, new single-pane sash elsewhere, and new HVAC equipment for the first floor. He distributed drawings and reviewed the design in further detail. Mr. Sullivan noted that the dormers were additions, and not original.

Mr. Steger noted that the grade had been raised around the carriage house over the years, which had contributed to the rotting sills. In order to build a proper foundation by today's codes with 8" clearance above grade (and without increasing the height of the building which would trigger zoning review), he would need to remove 2-3 courses of the wood shingles around the base of the building.

Mr. King asked how much of the foundation would be visible from a public way. Mr. Steger estimated that only 0-5% would be visible.

Dr. Solet asked if full thickness brick could be used to face the foundation, rather than a veneer. Mr. Steger indicated that the thickness of the foundation in relation to the wall would have to increase. He proposed to instead use real bricks shaved down to size for the same appearance. He noted that the roof of the carriage house would be shingled with a Certainteed XT30 Moiré black 3-tab shingle, similar in appearance to what was on the main house. The wall shingles would be all new cedar shingles.

Mr. Ferrara asked if the existing door trim would be replicated or if the trim would match trim around the windows. Mr. Steger said he had not yet decided on that detail.

Ms. Harrington asked why all the shingles would be replaced. Mr. Steger explained that they had reached the end of their lives. It would also offer the opportunity to insulate the building from the outside.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application as presented. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Case 3286: 40 Brattle St., by Brattle Square Associates o/b/o Michael Scelfo. Install blade sign for new restaurant, Alden & Harlow.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Brattle Theatre. He noted that the Alden & Harlow restaurant was located in the former Casablanca space.

Brian Lesser and Michael Scelfo, the proprietor and proprietor/chef, were introduced. Mr. Lesser proposed a blade sign at the corner to help indicate the new entrance. Many people were trying to enter through the old entrance.

Mr. Irving asked how the sign would attach to the building. Mr. Scelfo indicated that stainless steel screws would be used to fasten it to the brick. The bracket was similar to others on Brattle Street.

Dr. Solet questioned whether the proposed location would really direct people to the correct entrance. Mr. Scelfo clarified how the sign was to be oriented and where the entrance was located.

Mr. Ferrara asked if this would be the only blade sign on the building. Mr. Scelfo answered that there was an existing blade sign on the lower level for another business.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the protections of the 1988 preservation restriction. The intent of the restriction was to keep signs off the front façade for a clean appearance. He recommended not allowing the sign bracket to be attached to the brick but to allow a bracket on the side of the building.

Mr. Irving agreed that it was not a good idea to penetrate the brick. A blade sign could still be oriented perpendicular to the street, with a bracket that attached to the wood corner board.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. King said he was sympathetic to the commercial need for a sign and the desire for visibility to enhance the success of the business. He agreed the sign could be hung in a different way.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the blade sign at the corner location, in principle, on the condition that the bracket be attached to the wood trim on the side of the building, and subject to approval of construction details by the Executive Director. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1346: 7 Channing St., by Gary Hilderbrand & Pamela Gorgone. Demolish house (1935).

Mr. King explained the demolition delay ordinance and review procedures.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff report about the architecture and history of the house.

Mr. King asked about the architect, Parker J. Brown. Mr. Sullivan described the architectural firm of Silverman & Brown, which mostly designed apartment houses.

Mr. Irving moved to find the house significant for the reasons stated in the staff report and for its associations with developer John J. Shine. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Gary Hilderbrand introduced his wife and co-owner, Pamela Gorgone, and his architect, Nick Winton. Mr. Hilderbrand said he was a landscape architect and that he very much liked Channing Street and its mature tree canopy. They had considered both renovation and demolition but the last 30 years had not been kind to the house. The proposed new house would be zoning compliant. It would have 2,356 sf of living space and at 25' would be 6' lower than the existing house. Its construction would be very efficient and quick due to the wall construction. He described the variety of house types on the street. He said the trees on the lot, all volunteers Norway Maples, Black Cherries, and one Black Oak, were not in good condition. He wanted to establish a significant garden. Hornbeams would be planted in the rear. The neighbor at #5 was concerned about shadows so no canopy trees were proposed on that side. The street tree was dying so he proposed replacing it with 3 trees in the front lawn. He thanked his neighbors for attending and/or sending letters of support.

Mr. Ferrara asked about exterior materials. Mr. Hilderbrand answered that the existing materials were a brick veneer, clapboards, and asphalt shingle roofing. The new house would have a rain screen of wood that would weather to a silver color. The windows would be metal. The second floor would project and would be differentiated in material from the first floor.

Mr. King asked if the owners had considered rehabbing the existing house. Mr. Hilderbrand answered that the house had been used as a rooming house with deadbolt locks on every room, and had generally not been cared for in recent years. While it could be rehabbed, it would be very difficult. They wanted a two story (not three story) house. They liked the architecture of 2 Hemlock Street and hired Nick Winton to design a new house.

Nick Winton, the architect, indicated that both designs used Ipe, a South American hardwood that was very durable. It would be much smaller than the house on Hemlock Street and would not use zinc as a material. It would have a pronounced undercarriage and protruding second floor.

Dr. Solet noted that the existing house was part of a suite of three houses. How would the new house relate to the other two houses in that suite? Mr. Winton replied that the footprint was similar, and the house would have a projecting second floor. The new house would speak to and acknowledge the other houses in its form and how it occupied the site.

Roberta Gordon of 5 Channing Street asked why the owners did not want a third floor, which would allow for a smaller footprint. Mr. Hilderbrand answered that they preferred to have a compact house that was not vertically oriented. They planned to grow old in the house and did not want many levels. Ms. Gordon noted that the increased depth of the footprint would negatively impact her house and light; her house was set back further on the lot than the other two.

John Sanzone of 540 Memorial Drive asked if there would be a roof deck. Mr. Hilderbrand said there would be a terrace but no roof deck because they preferred to live at garden level.

Ms. Gordon said the house should be found preferably preserved because of its history. The street had texture and the new house would be pretty but belonged somewhere else. It did not have the same feeling as the rest of the nineteenth and twentieth-century neighborhood. She had only received the requested ~~shade~~-shadow studies two days ago and had not had time to study them. Her house would be left with no sunlight at all starting in October. It would diminish the value of her property.

Fred Meyer, a realtor, noted that he had just sold a 1943 house on Brattle Circle to a preservation-minded buyer. Mid century houses could be restored but it took the right type of marketing. Stylistic preferences come and go. Though the Garrison Colonial was not a popular type, it might be more prized in 10-20 years. He spoke in favor of preservation. He noted that the land had once belonged to James Russell Lowell and recited a selection from one of the author's poems.

Marian Perry of 60 Martin Street suggested further discussion about the light impacts on the neighbors' houses. Light would be taken away from Ms. Gordon's house.

Mr. Hilderbrand said he appreciated Ms. Gordon's strong feelings on the issue. He had offered to remove the trees that were shading her house and yard. He had committed to not planting canopy trees on her side of the property.

Mr. Irving asked how deep an addition to the existing house could be. Mr. Hilderbrand answered that the lot was 51' deep and the required rear setback was 35'; it would be comparable in length to the proposed new house. Mr. Winton added that the existing house was non-conforming, so an addition would need zoning relief. The new house would be a better neighbor and have less impact on the neighboring properties.

Mr. King asked to what extent the zoning issues had influenced the decision to demolish rather than renovate. Mr. Winton agreed that zoning was strict in Cambridge. Renovation would result in removal of most of the existing building. The existing house was not the original house on the site. Modernism was not a foreign concept to Cambridge. Contemporary architecture wasn't inherently less valuable than older architecture if it was based on good design principles.

Dr. Solet noted that the Commission had not been shown the shadow studies. Perhaps further explanation could provide reassurance. Mr. Hilderbrand noted that no shadow would be projected on the neighbor during the summer months.

Mr. Sullivan reported on supportive correspondence received from neighbors at 12 and 16 Traill Street and 3, 6, and 10 Channing Street.

Dr. Solet asked if a structural engineer's report had been made. Mr. Hilderbrand said he could describe the problems with the structure.

Mr. King noted that one of the purposes of a demolition delay, such as that imposed on 20 Madison Street, was to allow time for another preservation solution, including another buyer, to be found. Mr. Irving said he had also seen the parallels to the project at 20 Madison Street, but there were

significant differences. The proposed replacement at Madison Street was 35' tall. All the neighbors who had weighed in on that project had expressed disapproval of the proposed design. It was the wrong design for that location. The Channing Street project was a more modest design from both an architectural and zoning perspective. If the Commission required the preservation of everything there would be no record of the architecture of the 2010s. There was a place for contemporary architecture in the community.

Dr. Solet noted that she had been the only vote in favor of the replacement building at 20 Madison Street. It was not part of a suite. This house was part of a suite of houses. Its demolition would cause a missing tooth in the smile.

Ms. Berg said the proposed house was modest in design and respectful in its massing and materials. Mr. Ferrara said the design spoke to the Garrison form with the projecting second story. It was respectful to its context but provided a modern interpretation. It spoke to its neighbors. The shadow issues were real, but it would have a modest impact.

Mr. Ferrara moved to find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement. Mr. Irving seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed 5-2, with Ms. Harrington and Dr. Solet voting in opposition.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the May 1 and June 17 minutes. Mr. King offered a correction to the first reference to Mr. Bibbins in the May 1 minutes.

Ms. Berg moved to approve the May minutes as corrected. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the June 17 minutes. Mr. King seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

Case IPG 15-1: 134 Norfolk St., by St. Mary's Church. (Grant #4) Repair front steps and repoint masonry.

Mr. Sullivan described the earlier grants made to St. Mary's Church. He recommended approval of the request ~~based on~~ subject to future availability of funds.

Dr. Solet asked where the accessible entrance was located. Mr. Sullivan did not know, but he said repairs to the existing stairs would be an eligible expense as they were a grandfathered condition.

Mr. Irving moved to approve a grant of \$49,025 on a matching basis and subject to availability of funds. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

New Business

Mr. King reported that a request had been made by the owner of 57 J.F. Kennedy Street for a follow-up informational meeting. The request came in after the staff had finalized the agenda and was not granted for that reason. It would be helpful to have a policy in place that would help the Chair and staff know when to add such a presentation to the agenda. He asked the Commission to consider whether a

policy was needed. Mr. Sullivan said that the application would probably come in for a hearing in September. He had advised the owner to shop the design around to other interested parties in the meantime.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on July 10, 2014**

J. Goldstone	5 Channing St
Roberta Gordon	5 Channing St
Marian Parry	60 Martin St
Brian Lesser	40 Brattle St
Michael Scelfo	40 Brattle St
Hal Davis	1273 Main St, Waltham 02451
Daniel Steger	66 Queensberry St \$415, Boston 02215
Anika Hedberg	650 Cambridge St
Nick Winton	650 Cambridge St
Gary Hilderbrand	130 Bishop Allen Dr
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr.

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.