

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

May 1, 2014 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William King, *Chair*; Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Joseph Ferrara, *Alternates*

Members absent: William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, *Executive Director*, Sarah Burks, *Preservation Planner*; Samantha Paull, *Preservation Administrator*

Public present: See attached list.

Mr. King called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He designated Ms. Berg and Mr. Ferrara to vote on all matters.

Preservation Grants

Case IPG 14-5: 1450 Massachusetts Ave., by First Parish Unitarian Church. (Application #2). Wall repairs. \$80,000 requested.

Case IPG 14-6: 1 Follen Street, by Longy School of Music of Bard College. \$100,000 requested for envelope repairs, including roof, flashing, gutters and associated masonry. Years of deferred care of building but first grant request.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the request for \$80,000 to make exterior envelope repairs on the church. He noted that a grant of that amount would exceed the 50% of the total project cost and that the church had already received a previous grant from the Commission. He also pointed out that the available fund balance was less than the total amount requested.

He then described the second grant request, which was made by the Longy School of Music of Bard College. The request was for \$100,000 for a large exterior restoration including roof, gutters, and masonry repairs. He explained that maintenance of the building had been deferred for a long time and he had been encouraging Longy to apply for a grant. The school had hired an architect to help write up the scope of work, specifications, and make drawings for the project. He noted that the building was in a prominent location in the Old Cambridge Historic District. He recommended that the Commission encourage Longy so they would keep going with more preservation projects.

He recommended approving a \$50,000 matching grant to First Parish Church and a \$50,000 outright grant to Longy with a second \$50,000 matching grant to Longy contingent upon available funds.

Mr. Bibbins asked about how much of the historic terra cotta tiles they would be replacing at 1 Follen Street. Mr. Sullivan responded that they did not know yet.

Mr. King asked Mr. Bibbins if the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) ever asked about individual grant projects. Mr. Bibbins replied that they did not. Mr. Sullivan added that he reports annually to the CPC about how funds have been spent.

Dr. Solet asked if there was a way to check the financial need of an institution in a way similar to what is required of homeowners. She noted that the Longy School's closure of its programs for children

disappointed many. Mr. Sullivan said there was no established method of checking financial need for institutional grants. He noted that the School still served a public function as an educational institution.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a \$50,000 matching grant to First Parish Church. Mr. Ferrara seconded. The motion carried 6-0.

Mr. Bibbins moved to approve a \$50,000 outright grant to Longy. Ms. Berg seconded with the amendment that a \$50,000 matching grant, contingent upon available funds also be approved. The amendment was accepted by Mr. Bibbins. The motion passed 6-0.

Proposed Preservation Restriction

50 Fayerweather St., by Dr. Jane Rabb

Mr. Sullivan explained that Dr. Rabb had asked to appear at a later meeting. He had been discussing a preservation restriction with her since 2008. He described the former carriage house, which had been relocated from Reservoir Street and then converted to a residence designed by Lois Lilley Howe. It retained some interior finishes from its days as a stable. He noted that the owner wanted to protect the interior as well as the exterior. The Commission held about forty preservation restrictions but only two protected interior features.

Mr. King asked how the Commission enforced the interior restrictions. Mr. Sullivan replied that the Commission could request an interior inspection once a year and already monitored building permit requests. Mr. King asked if the public would receive any benefit from interior restrictions.

Mr. Bibbins noted that Christ Church had a 30 year interior restriction that had since expired.

Minutes

The Commission reviewed the April 3 minutes. Mr. King asked for clarification of the meaning of the term *woonerf*. Ms. Burks stated that it referred to a road design with pedestrian and roadway spaces all at the same level for a shared street experience, such as had been constructed on Winthrop and Palmer streets a few years ago.

Mr. King noted several typographical errors which he submitted to staff for correction. Ms. Berg moved to approve the minutes subject to the corrections provided by Mr. King. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which carried 5-0. Mr. Barry did not vote as he was not present at the meeting.

Informational Presentation

57 John F. Kennedy St., by Raj Dhandu, owner and Peter Quinn, architect. Presentation of new design direction and discussion.

Mr. King stated that the Commission had not had an informational presentation in quite some time, though other boards, like the Planning Board, used the format more often. He explained that the meeting was open to the public but was not a public hearing, so there would be no public comment and no

votes would be taken. Any comments made by the Commission would be informal, and even if there was a consensus it would not be binding and the project would still need to come before the Commission as a formal application to be considered at a public hearing.

Mr. Sullivan stated he had met twice with the proponents since last month's denial. The owner had requested the opportunity to appear and show new design ideas for the building.

Peter Quinn, the project architect, made a PowerPoint presentation with several massing studies, including one that would cast zero additional shadow on the park, another that would add no new shadows between October 13 and February 28, and a third that would create what he considered to be a reasonable amount of shadow. This last consisted of an addition of two stories plus arched dormers. It would contain 16-20 residential units of mostly one and two bedrooms. The addition would be co-planar with the Harvard Square Garage stair tower on the JFK Street elevation. He displayed pictures of other buildings in the vicinity with interesting roof forms. He described the potential materials for the building as weathered wood, aluminum windows, and painted trim. He noted that mechanicals would be set back toward the garage. The massing could be broken up with windows, pergolas and decks. He showed the worst-case shadow situation (January to March conditions) for this design scheme. The new shadows would be during the afternoon hours and only present until April.

Mr. Bibbins asked if there would be any parking. Mr. Quinn responded that they would make a contribution to the Harvard Square Parking Fund as provided in the special permit regulations.

Ms. Berg asked about the location of the residential entry. Mr. Quinn responded that it would be in the same position on Winthrop Street as in the previous proposal. Ms. Berg stated that the proximity to 96 Winthrop was her main concern. The alley was already tight with service equipment and trash storage. Mr. Quinn responded that there would be trash rooms on each floor of the residential addition.

Dr. Solet asked about the roofing material. Mr. Quinn answered that it would be a galvanized metal. She asked for a comparison of the square footage between the new proposal and the last one. Mr. Quinn said the last was for 25,000 sf, compared to approximately 17,000 sf in the new scheme.

Mr. Irving commented that the new design used the existing building as a base for a very different structure. The earlier proposal's orthogonal boxiness felt consistent with the bottom two floors, but this proposal used a different vocabulary for the addition. The problem with the previous proposal was its size, not its shape. He was hoping to see something more compact but with similar lines as before. Mr. Ferrara stated that the arches were incongruous and made the building feel like a podium for a rooftop set piece. The mass was still too close to the park and read as a wall. The rectilinear language of the previous scheme would rely on the details to make it successful. It needed rigor in its detailing to be an improvement to the existing building.

Ms. Berg commented that the proposed new addition called too much attention to itself.

Mr. Quinn asked for confirmation that the Commissioners would find some shadow acceptable, but not much. Several commissioners nodded affirmatively.

Mr. Irving said the shadow shown in the current proposal was too much. Adding above the front half of the building (closest to the park) created the problem. Ms. Berg said it would make the park seem smaller by blocking the view of the sky. Mr. Ferrara said they did not need to make a new facade on the park side. The cornice line of the garage was important reference point.

Mr. King noted that Hans Hollein passed away the previous week. The Commission had rejected his proposed replacement for the Harvard Pro as inappropriate for its site. He then asked Mr. Sullivan to review the district guidelines.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Hollein proposal for 90 Mt Auburn Street was denied in 2000. It was a design for a 60' high building with a gold mesh facade like a billowing curtain that sloped about 30 degrees. It was too tall and too aggressively indifferent to its context. He reviewed the district goals and highlighted those about parking, livability, conserving existing structures and settings, and mitigating impacts of development. He went on to discuss the secondary goals: sustain commercial vitality, support creative contemporary design for new construction if it contributes and complements the district, maintain a diversity of building forms, expand the high quality public environment, encourage residential projects, especially mixed-use buildings, and encourage a wide variety of uses. He noted that not all the goals were meant to apply to a single project. Mr. Sullivan then read the Commission's denial of the previous application for certificate.

Dr. Solet asked how to prioritize the goals. Mr. Irving said the Commission had started to do that as they described their concerns. He noted that trash removal methods were not among his own concerns. Mr. King acknowledged that a mix of uses in the building did not bother him. He further stated that he was not convinced that there could not be any new shadows cast by the building.

Mr. Bibbins noted that the two stories over two stories created two layers of a building in conflict with each other. This did not create a successful composition.

Mr. Quinn said he read the denial letter over and the operative phrase he saw was to minimize the shadows. He asked for clarification on what the Commission meant by that. He needed to know to move forward. He also pointed out that there was nothing in the goals about shadows.

Mr. Irving said he did not object to some new shadows. Pushing the mass back would be better. Shadows in the current proposal were too much. Mr. Ferrara said that some new shadow could be okay. The massing models were helpful. Park level views were important.

Mr. Dhanda, the property owner, thanked the Commission.

Jonathan King of 40 Essex Street asked if abutters or members of the public could make a similar informational presentation to the Commission. Mr. King directed him to contact the Commission staff ahead of time to discuss an addition to the agenda.

Determination of Procedure: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3246: 27 Garden St., by Longy School of Music of Bard College. Install brick patio at edge of existing brick walkway.

Mr. Sullivan explained that an application had been received from the Longy School for a small brick terrace along an existing brick path. It had been installed without asking for a certificate in advance.

Ms. Berg commented that the color of the brick may tone down over time.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the terrace, subject to the ten day notice procedure. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Bibbins moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on May 1, 2014**

John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr.
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Carole Perrault	9 Dana St, #41
Jeanne Petersen	1036 Berkshire Rd, Grosse Point Park, MI 48230
Jonathan King	40 Essex St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.