

Approved 12/4/2014

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

October 2, 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, *Alternates*

Members absent: William Barry, M. Wyllis Bibbins, Robert Crocker, *Members*; Susannah Tobin, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. He made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures. He designated alternates Berg and Ferrara to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3335: 41 Winthrop St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College. Extend approval for temporary construction trailers through December 31, 2024.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the property and explained that he had administratively approved two temporary construction trailers two years ago. The College had recently requested to extend the approval for an additional ten years, to service the ongoing renovations of the River Houses.

Alexandra Offiong of Harvard Planning & Project Management explained that the house renewal project included code and accessibility upgrades as well as historic building restoration. Nine of the 12 houses were located in the river area and could be serviced by the existing trailers at 41 Winthrop Street. Stone Hall and McKinlock Hall were complete and Dunster House was underway. She explained reasons for not moving construction trailers around (due to plumbing, electricity, fire alarms), difficulties of putting them at each construction site, the planning process, and the tight schedule for each house.

Dr. Solet asked if there were any interior spaces where the construction offices could be housed. Ms. Offiong answered that they had conducted a search at the beginning of the multi-year project but there was no vacant space available.

Ms. Berg suggested that a period shorter than ten years be approved.

Mr. King asked for public questions or comments; there were none. Mr. Sullivan reported that an e-mail had been received from Doug Brown suggesting a shorter time allowance.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the house at 41 Winthrop Street had been constructed in the 1840s and had been vacant for several years. He asked how the house would be used in the future after the construction trailers were removed. Ms. Offiong answered that there was no intention of demolishing the house, though it needed significant upgrades before it could be used by the University. Mr. Irving asked if the house could be used instead of trailers for construction offices. Mr. Sullivan indicated it would be damaging to the building to put it to such hard use.

Mr. Ferrara moved to grant a five-year extension for the temporary certificate, which would be terminated if program activity ceased for an academic year (15 months) or longer, with an option to further extend the approval. He further moved that the approval be conditioned on the maintenance of the

house at 41 Winthrop Street and suggested that a plan for its future use be decided before reapplying for any future extension of the certificate. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case 3336: 164 Brattle St., by 164 Brattle Street Realty Trust. Install a transformer cabinet near the front fence and screen with evergreen plant materials. *Owners have requested to withdraw application, without prejudice, at this time.*

Mr. King noted that the owners had withdrawn their application. They could reapply at any time.

Case 3337: 30 Brattle St., by Thomas Hadley Trust, Jean D. Knapp, Trustee. Install signs for retail occupants including Citizens Bank, Leather World, and Bob Slate Stationer.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building, which was built in 1974. At that time, the zoning code encouraged split level retail designs, but it did not end up being a successful model. He noted that the lower level of the building had been vacant for a long time before Citizens Bank leased it. He showed the existing conditions and pointed out the signs for the three retail tenants. He noted that visibility of the signs changes as one moved around the curved building. The proposed sign package comprised well over twice the signage allowed under the zoning code.

James Wagner, attorney for Citizens Bank, introduced the other bank representatives present and Laura Donahue of Bob Slate. He explained that the new location was not as easy for customers to find as the old location in the center of the Square. He explained the challenges of the building with its split level and curved façade. The bank had spent \$300,000 to make code improvements, abate the space, and achieve LEED Gold office space. The bank had worked closely with the landlord and the other tenants on building signage. They had developed 23 designs to date. He said the proposed banners would help with visibility for all three retailers. The channel letter wall signs would be more attractive than box signs. The proposed green stripe would delineate the Citizens Bank space on the lower level. The green color around the ATM machines was important to help customers identify their bank.

Dr. Solet suggested a mobile app to help customers find the bank. The proposed signage was more than the building could handle.

Mr. King asked for public comment.

Denise Jillson of the Harvard Square Business Association remarked that customers of Citizens Bank had been going to Eastern Bank and asking for directions to Citizens. She commented that having the lower level space at 30 Brattle occupied was a benefit to the Square. Most businesses had not wanted the space or to make the investment in it that was required.

John Sanzone asked which signs would be illuminated. Mr. Wagner replied that the band, channel letters and ATM surround would be lit.

Daryl Janes of 45 Linnaean Street said the building was offensive and the proposed signs would make it more so. They should soften the signs a bit.

Mr. Irving said the sign package should be pared back. Banners were helpful to the pedestrian.

Ms. Harrington asked why Leather World got two wall signs. Mr. Wagner explained that Leather World occupied more space than the Bob Slate store and had two pre-existing signs.

Dr. Solet said Bob Slate's blade sign was effective and suggested Citizens substitute a blade sign for the banners. Mr. Wagner commented that the banners integrated into the curving design of the building better than a large blade sign.

Laura Donahue, owner of Bob Slate, said having a wall sign for her store near the entrance to the store would be very helpful.

Mr. Ferrara remarked that this was a great opportunity for the building signs to get cleaned up and organized. He suggested putting the wall signs into the window bays rather than on the brick above.

Mr. King said the Citizens wall sign furthest from the bank entrance was unnecessary.

Several commissioners objected to pinned letters above the second floor for Citizens. Mr. Sullivan tried to summarize the commission's comments: the green band was acceptable; the amount of lettering was excessive; lower the wall signs.

Mr. King suggested a continuance, if the applicants consented. Mr. Wagner agreed to waive the 45-day decision period and agreed to continue the hearing. Mr. Irving moved to continue the hearing to November or such later time as the applicants advise. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1338: 20 Madison St., by Todd Goulet and Konstantin Linnick, owners. Update on changes to design of proposed replacement building. Consider whether to amend findings or waive demo delay.

Mr. King allowed Daryl Janes to speak first.

Mr. Janes said he had the feeling that Cambridge allowed the demolition of more buildings than any city in the world. The city should consider a moratorium. The Read Block demolition was especially hard to watch. Mr. King commented that Cambridge had been the first city or town to adopt a Demolition Delay ordinance.

Todd Goulet, an owner of 20 Madison Street, introduced his architect, attorney, and co-owner. He said they had taken the comments of the commission and public at the first hearing very seriously and responded with an amended design for the proposed building. Mr. and Mrs. Libert of 11 Garden Terrace had been the most vocal neighbors at the last hearing, and they now supported the amended design. They had tried to work with the existing building rather than demolishing it, but it just wasn't feasible. The new building, as shown in the amended design, would be the smallest house on Madison Street. Most buildings were over 30' tall. It would be the only home with the zoning-mandated 20' front setback. It would be energy efficient with lots of green building features.

Campbell Ellsworth, the architect, noted that they had also pursued a sale of the property but it did not work out. He noted that the lot was at the intersection of three diverse zoning districts: C-1, C-2, and A-2. The lot at #20 was the smallest of eight single-family lots on the street. He showed existing

condition elevations, pointed out the non-conformities of the existing house and the difficulties of renovating it. He described the features of the new design including an overhang at the second floor (like the existing Garrison style), a green roof, wood exterior shiplap (flush) cladding, and street-facing entry door. The design was appropriate to the site in its materials, scale, spirit, and architectural qualities. There was a place for contemporary architecture on the street. The design was zoning-compliant.

Mr. King asked for a summary of the differences between the designs. Mr. Ellsworth said there was greater use of wood, the front door faced the street, the windows were pulled away from the corners, the balconies had higher, solid railings, and the footprint was smaller. It was a richer, more varied design.

Mr. King closed public comment.

Dr. Solet moved to find that the existing building was no longer preferably preserved within the context of the amended proposal for the replacement building, subject to evidence that the new design was permissible by DPW and ISD. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Minutes

Mr. King and Dr. Solet offered corrections to the June 5 minutes on pp. 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9. Dr. Solet moved to approve the minutes, as corrected. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Preservation Grants

Case PG 15-1: 27 Tremont St., by Just A Start. Request for \$30,000 grant to strip and reclad exterior and replace windows.

Mr. Sullivan reported that there was a balance in the Preservation Grant account of \$472,000. He showed slides of the double house at 27 Tremont Street. The Commission had given a grant to the owner of the left side about 10 years ago. The owner of the right side was now working with Just A Start to finish the exterior, including restoration of clapboards, water table, ell, roofing, and windows (the existing windows were not original). The project cost was estimated at \$32,000. Mr. Irving moved to approve a grant of \$25,000. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Case IPG 15-2: 838 Massachusetts Ave., St. Peter's Episcopal Church. Request for \$67,708 to restore stained glass windows.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and reviewed previous grant projects at St. Peter's (2007 for accessibility; 2011 to restore the Parish House windows, and 2014 for roof repairs and stained glass window storage for future restoration). He recommended a grant of \$50,000 to restore the stained glass windows. Mr. Irving so moved. Ms. Berg seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Case IPG 15-3: 580 Mt. Auburn St., by Friends of Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Request for \$100,000 grant to restore fence, gates, and masonry of front entrance.

Ms. Berg and Mr. Irving recused themselves because they were members of the cemetery's Council of Visitors.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the cemetery fence and gate house. He described the Egyptian Revival architecture of the ca. 1840 fence and gates and the ca. 1913 auto gates. He recalled that around

1980 the Cemetery had begun to destroy the 1-mile-long perimeter cast iron fence. The Commission and SPNEA got a court order and stopped the work, and reached a compromise that included preservation of the gate and part of the fence, which were then landmarked. The current restoration project was estimated at \$515,800. The Cemetery had received a Mass. Cultural Council grant and applied for \$100,000 from the Historical Commission.

Mr. King suggested a grant of \$50,000. Mr. Ferrara so moved. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 4-0.

Ms. Irving moved to adjourn. Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on October 2, 2014**

Alexandra Offiong	1350 Massachusetts Ave.
Chris Candiello	1350 Massachusetts Ave.
E'atimad Rizh	30 Brattle St.
Erick Drucker	30 Brattle St.
Steven Hess	30 Brattle St.
Anthony Bova	10 Post Office Sq., Boston 02109
James Wagner	10 Post Office Sq., Boston 02109
Laura E. Donohue	Bob Slate, 30 Brattle St.
Nao Harashima	175 Wilmington Ave, Boston 02124
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr.
Denise Jillson	18 Brattle St.
Campbell Ellsworth	267 Norfolk St.
Todd Goulet	21 Winslow St.
Suzanne Krmzian	30 Brattle St.

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.