

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

June 4, 2015 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: William Barry, Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Jo M. Solet, *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: William King, Bruce Irving, *Members*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

In the absence of the chair and vice chair, Jo Solet as the senior member assumed the chair and called the meeting to order at 6:08 P.M. She made introductions and reviewed hearing procedures. She designated alternates Berg and Tobin to vote on all matters. Dr. Solet then explained the consent agenda procedure. She reviewed the cases on the Commission's agenda and asked if anyone present wished to have a hearing on those cases.

Hearing no requests for a full hearing on Cases 3422 and 3424, Mr. Barry moved to approve them per the consent agenda procedure, subject to the approval of construction details by staff.

**Case 3422: 41 Winthrop St., by President & Fellows of Harvard College.** Install temporary shed and gate.

**Case 3424: 6 Berkeley Pl., by Adrian & Yun Soo Vermeule.** Alter window arrangement on rear dormer; replace windows in all dormers.

Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 3423: 115 Brattle St., by Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Inc.** Demolish office wing. Construct new rear addition and detached garage.

Ms. Burks showed slides. Mr. Sullivan arrived and explained that the existing office addition had limited visibility from a public way, but was visible from the back of the Longfellow House/Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site and from the west across the lawn of 121 Brattle Street.

James Rafferty, attorney for the Lincoln Land Institute, explained that the lot was owned as a condominium with a second detached dwelling in the former carriage house at the rear of the property. He explained that the addition to be removed had been constructed in the 1960s by former owner Arthur Brooks for his architectural office.

Rick Kobus, principal at Tsoi Kobus & Associates, described the buildings on and surrounding the property. He described the existing interior plan and the proposed addition and garage. He displayed elevations of the proposed conditions. He noted that a 3-bay garage had been contemplated and a proposed location for it included in the condo documents.

Dr. Solet asked for questions from members of the Commission.

Mr. Barry asked what elements of the existing and proposed additions were visible to the public. Mr. Sullivan said the greatest visibility was from the Longfellow House property. There would be oblique views through the *porte cochère* of the addition. The roof of the proposed garage might be visible across

the lawn of 121 Brattle Street. Mr. Barry asked if the new addition would be set back at the corner. Mr. Kobus answered in the affirmative, adding that they would preserve the corner board.

Dr. Solet asked for questions of fact from the public.

Dr. Susan Rowley of 11 Berkeley Place indicated that she was the closest abutter. She asked how close the garage would be from her property line. Mr. Rafferty answered that the garage was an accessory structure and must be 5' from the side or rear lot lines and 10' from the ~~principle-principal~~ structure. It would be 5' away from the property line at the closest point and no more than 15' high.

Chris Ridman, architect for the Rowleys, asked what the dimensions of the garage were and if the trees in that area would be retained. Steve Oppenheimer of Tsoi Kobus showed the existing trees on the site survey. The trees on the property line would remain. Two other trees (a 6" diameter and an 18") might need to be taken down.

Marilee Meyer, of 10 Dana Street asked if materials other than the proposed zinc had been considered for the cladding of the addition. Mr. Kobus answered that there was no masonry visible at the base of the existing building. The zinc was muted in color and would distinguish the addition from the original building.

Meg Koerner of 121 Brattle Street asked about the 2<sup>nd</sup> story of the garage. Did the style of the garage relate to the main house? Why have a cupola? Mr. Kobus answered that the reason for the dormered windows on the garage was just to make the roof shape more attractive. The cupola idea came from #113, which had a cupola. Ms. Koerner suggested that if the 2<sup>nd</sup> story was not needed the garage roof should be lowered.

Dr. Solet asked how tall the cupola was. Mr. Kobus replied 4-5' high. Dr. Solet opened the floor to comments from the public.

Lansing Fair of 5 Berkeley Place noted that the Rowleys have a glass living room wall and would see the new garage prominently from there.

Ms. Berg suggested removing the cupola. Mr. Barry agreed it would be better to simplify the garage. Mr. Kobus agreed to remove the cupola from the design.

Dr. Solet asked if the garage could be moved fully within the footprint of the contemplated garage as indicated on the earlier plan. Mr. Kobus agreed to consider moving the garage away from the lot line.

Ralph Sorenson of 117 Brattle Street (the carriage house condo behind 115) said he and his wife both supported the proposal. It would be nice to have the house restored. They were happy with the proposed garage design compared to the existing conditions. There were some cupolas in the area. The removal of trees was unfortunate but he indicated they could work together on that.

Mr. Ridman said the Rowleys' house was a copy of the Gropius House. It was located just 20' away from a 6' fence. A quarter of the garage would be in their view. He urged the Institute to move the garage further from the property line to save trees and protect views.

John Sanzone of 540 Memorial Drive said the garage was making too strong a statement and should be simplified; the primary relationship should be between the main house and the carriage house. Adding a third structure was confusing. The addition to the main house looked very good.

Carole Perrault of 9 Dana Street agreed. She said the design of the garage was out of character with the Colonial Revival house and should be simplified. She noted that her main concern was the view of the shed from the National Historic Site. She suggested the Commission make a site visit.

Mr. Kobus said they had started out with a simpler design for the garage but it looked very mid-century suburban, so they added the dormers. Mr. Rafferty noted the applicant's agreement to eliminate the cupola and weather vane in order to simplify the design.

Mr. Barry moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the design as modified, based on the minimal public visibility from Brattle Street (though with somewhat more visibility from the Longfellow House), but in either case with the finding that the changes were not incongruous to the property or the district. He further moved to delegate approval of any changes to the siting of the garage to the staff. Ms. Berg seconded the motions, which passed 6-0.

#### Public Hearings: Landmark and Neighborhood Conservation District Designation Procedures

**Case L-117: 145 Elm St. Edward B. Seldin, owner.** Consider initiation of landmark designation study.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Ivory Sands House and its history, noting that it was under agreement to be sold. He noted the importance of the brickmaking industry in Cambridge and how it had moved from East to West Cambridge in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house had been listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. He commended the restoration and renovations of the current owner, Edward Seldin, who purchased it in 1979.

Mr. Crocker said he had toured the house and supported the study.

Ms. Meyer asked if it were designated could inappropriate additions be removed. Mr. Sullivan said all features would be studied and recommendations made for future guidelines but the point of a landmark designation was not to remove all changes and return the building to its original 1830s appearance. Some alterations had their own significance and period character.

Mr. Sanzone also supported the landmark study.

Shawn Henry, the future owner, introduced himself. He said he was supportive of landmark study and was not deterred by the prospect of some extra time that it might take for administration of landmark designation and permitting. He said he planned regular maintenance, paint, and eventually window work.

Ms. Tobin moved to initiate a landmark study. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion, which passed 6-0. Dr. Solet called for a short break and reconvened the meeting at 7:26 P.M.

**Reservoir Hill South Slope.** Consider initiation of study for designation of area as a neighborhood conservation district or as an extension of the Old Cambridge Historic District.

Dr. Solet explained the purpose of the hearing was to decide whether to study the Reservoir Hill area for a district designation, either an extension of the Old Cambridge Historic District or as a neighborhood conservation district.

Mr. Sullivan provided background on recent actions by the Commission about 29 Highland Street, first with a demolition review case and then the initiation of a landmark study. The landmark study was followed by a petition for a neighborhood conservation district (NCD) study of the neighborhood around Highland Street. He explained that there were two kinds of districts in Cambridge that can be designated by the City Council: historic districts (pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 40C) and NCDs (pursuant to Cambridge City Code Ch. 2.78). He explained the evolution of the Old Cambridge Historic District from 1963 to present and the creation of the NCD enabling ordinance, first used in Half Crown and Mid Cambridge. He described the regulatory effects of both types of district and the interim protections available during a NCD study. These types of planning studies typically take 9-12 months with many public meetings and the participation of as many people as possible from the neighborhood. He explained that a NCD study requires the appointment by the city manager of a seven person-study committee. The historic district study would consist of the existing members and alternates of the Historical Commission. The two committees would meet jointly. He recommended that the study, if initiated by the Commission, not take effect until October both to allow time for a committee to be appointed and because many people would be unavailable during the summer months. He did not feel a sense of urgency for the interim protections to take effect immediately.

Dr. Solet recognized the many letters sent to the commission. She noted that all the members had received copies of the letters and petitions and they were part of the public record. She thanked the public for participating through correspondence and attendance at the hearing. She asked for questions of fact from the public.

Ms. Perrault asked about binding vs. non-binding reviews. Mr. Sullivan explained that some NCDs had been organized to allow for advisory (non-binding) reviews of projects, depending on the scope of work and National Register status.

Paul Maeder of 16 Fayerweather Street asked if there had been studies conducted to determine the effect of historic district designation on property values. Mr. Sullivan answered affirmatively. Studies had shown that historic districts can help maintain or increase property values over time. Circumstances of individual properties would differ depending on the allowable density per zoning. Mr. Barry remarked that the economist Donovan Rypkema had published several books that touched on this type of issue.

Harold Nahigian of 23 Highland Street asked how designation would impact efforts to tame global warming. Would solar panels and low E glass be allowed? Mr. Sullivan answered that solar panels had been approved by the Historical Commission and NCD commissions. Storm windows and applied films could achieve the same thing as low E glass in replacement windows without actually removing the original building fabric.

Hugh Warren of 30 Reservoir Street asked what regulatory gain would be achieved that the Commission did not already have the power to protect. Mr. Sullivan answered that the current protections included only demolition delay for buildings more than 50 years old and landmark designation procedures for individual properties.

Ann Marie Wilkins of 55 Appleton Street asked what pressures were evident in the neighborhood that would warrant a district study. Mr. Sullivan explained that there had been a trend for major intervention and demolition in the last 10-20 years rather than slow incremental changes. It was common to see projects that skin the entire exterior of a building rather than trying to preserve sound historic building materials.

Dr. Solet spoke from her experience as an owner in the Old Cambridge Historic District. When she first bought her house on Berkeley Street she found the review process and advice from the Commission helpful to her project. The intent was not to restrict freedom but to provide guidance.

John Gilmore of 47 Reservoir Street said the changes in the last five years had been far greater than in the previous forty. New owners of greater means meant higher development pressure. Six houses had been torn down in recent years. Underground garages and auto courts were not uncommon now. A district designation would protect exterior features visible from a public way.

Len Edgerly of 165 Mt. Auburn Street noted that his house was in the Half Crown-Marsh NCD. He had applied to add an entrance vestibule and found it to be a favorable experience. He received suggestions for how to tweak the design to positive effect.

Mr. Sanzone commented that other considerations of district guidelines were treatment for infill construction and massing of additions and new construction.

Christian Nolen of 29 Highland Street stated that the petition to initiate a district study had been signed by 30 people but those signatures represented only 6 households in the study area. He had circulated his own petition in opposition to starting a study and got 46 signatures representing 40 households in the study area. The neighborhood as a whole was not asking for the Historical Commission to come in. Only a small number of people in the district had expressed support for a study. It was a burden to start the study when it was not wanted by the majority of owners.

Ms. Harrington asked if Mr. Nolen had encountered people in favor of a study when he was knocking on doors. Mr. Nolen replied that he had encountered about four.

Annette LaMond of 7 Riedesel Avenue said she had not canvassed everyone in the neighborhood with the initial petition because only 10 signatures were needed for a valid petition.

William Edgerly of 32 Highland Street said the study would be a wonderful opportunity for neighbors to talk to each other about the unique qualities of the neighborhood. As opposed to piecemeal decision making, neighbors could agree on review criteria for the neighborhood.

Mr. Gilmore said he had gotten signatures on the petition from some people in the Old Cambridge Historic District, which could be considered an endorsement of living in such a district. He noted that if, at the end of the study, a vast majority of property owners are opposed to designation, then it would not be passed by City Council.

Linda Kaboolian of 23 Highland Street said she had renovated her house without it being in a district. Six months of discussion the project at 29 Highland had not increased good feelings of community in the neighborhood.

Hugh Warren noted that when he bought his house and cut down Norway maple trees, the Commission had gotten involved. Mr. Sullivan clarified that the issue then had been the Reservoir wall, not the trees.

Grace Young of 88 Appleton Street said a study would be okay if the community wanted it, but she was not sure that was the case.

Jonathan Cole of 15 Hemlock Road indicated that his interest was in getting a resolution to the project at 29 Highland Street because the barn needed stabilization work and would not benefit from a delay. He stated that the owners of 29 Highland could not do any work. Dr. Solet said the Commission would welcome a proposal for restoration of the barn on the 29 Highland property during the landmark study, then Mr. Sullivan ~~clarified~~ confirmed that the landmark study at 29 Highland did not create a moratorium on all building permits. The owners could apply to work on the barn during the landmark study.

Sue Denny of 29 Highland Street asked the Commission to examine the two petitions and consider the difference in participation of neighborhood residents.

Ann Kania of 175 Brattle Street said the fear of a district designation was not necessary. She had been living in the historic district for years and found it to be valuable and beneficial. She remarked that the area around Brattle Street ~~it~~ was the best neighborhood in the country and a lot could be gained by the study. She did not want Brattle Street to be a historic strip, but part of a larger historic neighborhood.

Ms. Berg noted that she had served on the Half Crown-Marsh study committee and it was a fascinating process. There were tours, lectures, and everyone learned a lot about the neighborhoods. There was a good dialogue.

Leslie Jeng of 43 Appleton Street said there were other people in historic districts that found it caused unnecessary delays. She asked to be recorded as opposed to a study.

Ms. Berg suggested a continuance. Dr. Solet suggested a walking tour and continuance of the hearing on site.

Mr. Crocker, a resident of Avon Hill NCD and a realtor, stated that the Avon Hill district had not affected property values negatively. If anything, they had gone up. It also had not stopped renovation activity by the homeowners. The “us against them” attitude at play on Reservoir Hill was sad to see in any neighborhood. The study could be a chance for neighbors to get together.

Mr. Crocker moved to accept as of October 1, 2015 the petition for an NCD study and on that date to initiate ~~both~~ both a study to establish such an NCD and a study alternatively to expand the Old Cambridge Historic District, the area subject to such studies being that shown in yellow on the map presented to and discussed at the meeting ~~district studies, effective October 1, 2015~~. Ms. Harrington seconded.

Mr. Barry remarked that he had observed a misunderstanding that a study would freeze properties and not allow any change during the study, which was not correct. He also said that the district initiative and opposition stemmed from 29 Highland Street. He said the Commission tried to always do things thoughtfully and deliberatively. He was in favor of a study and the information that it could reveal.

Allison Crump of 9 Kinnaird Street said she had been a member of a study committee for a neighborhood in Cambridgeport that did not result in the designation of a district there.

Mr. Nolen pointed out that the interim protections would apply during the study.

Mr. Cole asked for more information to be sent out over the summer.

Mr. Barry suggested continuing the hearing to October.

The motion to accept the NCD study petition and to initiate both ~~district~~ studies, both effective October 1, 2015, was adopted 4-2 with Ms. Berg and Mr. Barry voting in opposition.

#### Public Hearing: Demolition Review

**Case 1364: 11-13 Kinnaird St., by 11-13 Kinnaird Street Realty LLC.** Evaluate work done under building permit for conformity with demolition delay ordinance. Consider demolition application.

Ms. Burks showed slides and reviewed the history of the house and its former occupants.

James Rafferty, attorney for owner Ara Barsoumian, reviewed the events that landed his client with a stop work order and hearing with the Historical Commission. The calculations of demolition for the building permit were less than 25% of the volume. The intention was to remove the ell, left dormer, and left bay and to reframe the affected areas of the roof but to reuse some of the rafters. A framing plan was included in the building set. Conditions discovered in the field were such that the roof was not stable and needed to be replaced. If that had been known in advance, the owner could have applied for a demolition permit. The intent was not to demolish the whole house.

Campbell Ellsworth, the architect, said he had conducted the analysis of anticipated demolition as less than 25% of volume and GFA. A new ridge beam was approved in the structural plan included with the permit set. He showed a photo of the roof framing taking during construction. The contractor had tried to brace the roof, maintain the rafters and the first floor sills.

Mr. Barry asked who had drawn the roof framing plan. Mr. Ellsworth answered that a structural engineer had drawn the plan after he had drawn the architectural. He had advised the builder to maintain as many of the rafters as possible. Mr. Barry said the structural drawings gave him the impression that it was a stick by stick replacement, or demolition one member at a time. Mr. Rafferty explained that if the rafters had been sistered they probably would not be here tonight.

Mr. Sanzone said the structure had no siding on it. Was there any intention to retain the wood sheathing and siding? Mr. Ellsworth answered that the intent had been to ~~keep~~ replace the siding but keep the sheathing where possible.

David Solomon of 9 Kinnaird Street said he was a licensed builder and had worked in the industry for over 35 years. He asked if the architect was under contract for full administration of the job. From what he had observed, the job looked uncontrolled. Mr. Ellsworth said he was not under contract for the administration of the project.

Ms. Crump said that when they bought the house next door in 1980, they had removed the asphalt siding and worked hard to restore the integrity of the original design. She said this project looked to have been carefully designed to avoid any public hearing process and to avoid demolition review. The penalty for violation of the ordinance was two years with no permits.

Kalman Glantz of 12 Kinnaird Street said he was appalled that there were no signs for any permits at all. Nothing had been posted. The neighbors had no idea what was going on. He said he did not want it to sit unchanged for two years. He hoped there would be some other remedy.

Ms. Harrington moved to find that demolition had occurred illegally and that the maximum penalty should apply. Mr. Sullivan said the penalty should not be mentioned in the motion. The motion was not seconded.

Ms. Tobin moved to find that more than 25% of the volume had been removed so, functionally, a demolition had occurred. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Rafferty noted that in some past cases where a plan to mitigate the situation had been accepted the full two year stay had not been imposed. He had learned from the architect that the staff had initially advised that the side entries be retained rather than re-orienting the entrance toward the street because it would help preserve the character of the house. They had explored going back to that option now and would like to show the commission a proposal to modify the final design and give the Commission design review that it would have had if the normal demolition review process had occurred.

Mr. Ellsworth showed plans and elevations for the alternate design that would keep the front entry on the driveway side, though recessed because of the driveway, and four windows returned to the first floor of the street elevation.

Dr. Solet asked for an explanation of the unusual window arrangement on the elevation facing the driveway. Mr. Campbell replied that the raised sills were to accommodate the kitchen design.

Mr. Sullivan said the alternate plan was a definite improvement and more like the original elevations of the building. The details of the design required more thought about details such as the dimensions of the corner boards, window sills, and mouldings. He recommended continuing the hearing and until those details were developed.

Mr. Barry said he wanted to see the house returned to its original design. Dr. Solet agreed.

Mr. Barry moved to continue the hearing to the next meeting to keep open the possibility that the Commission would consider shortening the moratorium if the design could be made more like the original. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-1 with Ms. Harrington voting opposed.

Mr. Crocker moved to adjourn. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Who Signed the Attendance List on June 4, 2015**

Rick Kobus	1 Brattle Square
Steve Oppenheimer	1 Brattle Square
William Edgerly	32 Highland Street
Lois S. Edgerly	32 Highland Street
Nina L. Pickering-Cook	Anderson & Kreiger, 1 Canal Park
Len Edgerly	165 Mt Auburn Street
Richard Probert	10A Kinnaird Street
Dennis Freeman	15 Kinnaird Street
Carole Perrault	9 Dana Street #41
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana Street #404
Robert MacArthur	106 Appleton Street
George McCarthy	113 Brattle Street
Tootie Larios McCarthy	80 Fawcett Street
Ralph Sorenson	117 Brattle Street
Levering White	113 Brattle Street
Chris Ridman	711 Pleasant Street, Belmont 02478
Geoffrey Rowley	11 Berkeley Pl
Susan Rowley	11 Berkeley Pl
Julia Fair	5 Berkeley Pl
C. L. Fair	5 Berkeley Pl
M. Koerner	121 Brattle Street
Anne Marie Wilkins	55 Appleton Street
John Sanzone	540 Memorial Dr.
Shawn Henry	157 Cherry Street
Edward B. Seldin	145 Elm Street
Brace & Landis Young	88 Appleton Street
Annette LaMond	7 Riedesel Ave
Hugh Warren	30 Reservoir Street
Kay Calvert	10 Appleton Street

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.