

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

April 7, 2016 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge Senior Center - 6:00 P.M.

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

Members absent: Robert Crocker, *Member*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

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

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:07 P.M. He made introductions and dispensed with the Consent Agenda. He described the hearing procedures and invoked a three minute limit to public comment.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 3551: 45 Brewster St., by Robert & Alicia von Rekowsky. Construct second floor addition and deck above existing kitchen at rear of house.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the house (built c. 1896), pointing out that public views of the proposed construction were limited. The property was located in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood, where alterations during the study period for an historic or neighborhood conservation district were subject to review. During this period the rules of the Old Cambridge Historic District would apply.

Peter Quinn, the architect, showed slides of the property and proposed plans. The addition was for a study and deck as well as to rebuild the rear entry porch. The addition would have a hip roof. He had spoken with the neighbors at 35 Brewster about their concerns and showed a rendering from their perspective. He noted the existing fence and showed shadow studies of existing and proposed conditions.

Mr. Barry asked how the hip roof related to the rest of the house. Mr. Quinn answered that one of the dormers had a hip roof. The hip would keep the height of the addition lower and keep it from interrupting the window in the gable end.

Mr. King asked if there were members of the public with questions or comments. There were none. Mr. Sullivan summarized letters received from Milo Fay of 33 Brewster and Annette LaMond and Joe Moore of 7 Riedesel Avenue in support of the application and a letter in opposition from Jean Little of 35 Brewster. Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving moved to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as submitted. Mr. Barry seconded the motion with the comment that a full hip (rather than clipped) would also be acceptable. The motion passed 6-0.

Case 3573: 2 Berkeley Pl., by Virginia Coleman. Install solar array.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and noted that Berkeley Place was considered a public way.

Jamie Leef of Sunbug Solar said that the panels would sit 4.5 inches above the roof. He described the perforated metal fence around the array to keep the racks hidden and squirrels away from the wiring. [Ms. Tobin arrived].

Dr. Solet asked if the panels were reflective. Mr. Leef answered that they were similar to a skylight. Any reflection would go up. He passed around samples of the panel and fence.

Mr. Barry asked if there were constraints on the placement of panels. Mr. Leef described the location of the chimney, plumbing vent pipe and dormers. Mr. Barry said that when possible it would be better to push an array back rather than aim for symmetry. Mr. Leef said that the fire department preferred to have at least a foot setback from the front and side edges for fighting fires.

Richard Vendetti of 24 Winter Street asked if the wiring could be put inside the wall rather than outside. Mr. Leef replied that in most cases that was possible and his preference, but not with this house.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He observed that it was a modest proposal. Some installations he had seen were not as sympathetic to the building.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application as presented with the finding that the installation was appropriate and not incongruous to the district. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 6-0 with Ms. Tobin not voting.

Case 3574: 3 Church St., by Cambridge First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church. Install temporary banner.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application to maintain a “Black Lives Matter” banner until the end of the year.

Dr. Solet noted that it would cover part of the lower windows on the front of the building.

Mr. King noted that a similar sign had been vandalized in Arlington so the height of this banner would help prevent tampering. He reminded the commission it did not review the content of signs.

Ms. Harrington asked about the agreement reached with Christ Church for temporary signs. Mr. Sullivan said it added up to approximately 140 days for multiple signs. He recommended approval on a one-time basis, with the sign to be removed by the end of 2016. Ms. Harrington so moved.

Mr. King asked for questions or comments from members of the public, but there were none.

Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 3575: 23 Hawthorn St., by 23 Hawthorn Street Nominee Trust. Renovate exterior. Reconfigure west side roof lines. Construct two car detached garage. Change paint colors. Alter landscape structures including fences, paths, lighting, and paving.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the house in the Old Cambridge Historic District. It had previously been owned by Dr. Brazelton, who added a stair tower in 1996. There was one curb cut and a gravel pad for two cars. The proposal included a new garage and driveway.

Steven Hart, the architect, described the 1885 house by architects Van Brunt & Howe. There had been additions and alterations by architect Alan Jackson in 1919 and more alterations in 1972. He showed photos of the office entry and stair tower added by Dr. Brazelton. He described the proposed site plan, garage location, floor plans, and elevations. The stair tower would be removed along with the northwest chimney. Two other chimneys would remain. A new back entry would be constructed. The entry porch

would be removed and reconstructed, slightly narrower and taller. Some existing materials could be reused. The height of the garage needed zoning relief for exceeding 15'. The house was 45' high so the new rear gable would exceed the 35' height limit.

Gregory Lombardi, the landscape architect, described the removal of the existing parking pad and driveway, selected tree removal, and the details of the landscape plan. He described an entry garden, a green side yard, a planting bed to screen a window well, and a patio. The fence would be 4' high near the front of the driveway, then step up to 6'. He described proposed path lights and rear flood lights, a downlight for a grill, and lights on the garage and back porch.

Ms. Berg noted that the driveway took up more space than if it were located on the south side. Mr. Lombardi said it had been studied there, but the formal rooms of the house look south. Elizabeth Kenrick of Lombardi Design noted that the neighbor's driveway was adjacent.

Mr. Irving asked if the driveway was the only reason for narrowing the entry porch. Mr. Hart answered that it was not necessary for the driveway, though the added space would be good. The entry door was hard to see and the porch seemed too short compared to the overall height of the house. Ms. Kenrick noted that the porch was probably added in 1919.

Alan Greene of 82 Fifth Street said the design looked fantastic. He asked where the slate would come from. Mr. Hart said it would be from Vermont, non-fading black or green. Ms. Kenrick showed a sample. There would be a band of clipped corner slates in the same color across the middle.

There being no other comments, Mr. King closed the public comment period. He said it was a very interesting house. He did not object to the removal of the stair tower or enclosed sleeping porch. The best aspects of the house were to be preserved and the material choices were respectful of the original. He commended the architects on the design.

Mr. Barry agreed. He said the presentation was clear and informative. He asked Mr. Sullivan if he had further comments. Mr. Sullivan said he had met several times with the team and had urged simplification of the additions and respect for original materials. The narrowing of the porch was a concern and the garage could be simpler and lower. He suggested half screens on the windows.

Mr. Barry spoke in favor of the proposed garage in relation to the size of the house. He said the porch changes would be a lot of work for not much improvement. Mr. Irving agreed about the porch. Mr. Hart asked if the lower garage would be approved if the necessary zoning relief was not granted. Mr. Irving said either would be acceptable, with a preference for the taller version. Mr. Hart noted that the rear gable and dormer also needed zoning relief and said a letter of support would be appreciated.

Mr. Barry moved to approve the project as proposed except for the changes to the entry porch (above the decking). Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Demolition Review

Case D-1389 (continued): 24 Winter St., by Richard & Diane Vendetti. Demolish 2-story ell (1838).

Mr. Sullivan noted that the hearing was a continuance. He described the existing house, which was a contributing building in the National Register district.

Richard Vendetti, the owner, reported that he had met twice with the East Cambridge Planning Team and received a letter of support from the group. He also had a letter of support from Jacob Albert, who had made some design suggestions. He presented the amended design and noted what had changed from the original proposal. The house would have clapboards, no balconies, no front cantilever, a hip roof, and a narrowed cantilever on the side. Additionally, he said he would restore clapboards to the historic house and paint both.

Ms. Harrington asked about the parking arrangement for the back house. Mr. Vendetti showed it on the site plan.

Mr. King asked if there were chimneys on either building. Mr. Vendetti said there was a chimney on the back house but not the new building.

Dr. Solet commended Mr. Vendetti for the creative thinking and modifications to the design. Mr. Irving agreed. Mr. Sullivan remarked that the design was greatly improved and the use of a hip roof and clapboards were compatible with the vernacular architecture of the neighborhood. He recommended finding the existing ell not preferably preserved in the context of this revised replacement building.

Alan Greene and Al D'Isidoro of the East Cambridge Planning Team expressed their support for the proposal. Mr. King thanked them for coming and closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet moved to find the ell not preferably preserved in the context of the current design. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Mr. King called for a short break at 8:07 and reconvened the meeting at 8:15 P.M.

Case D-1384: 207 Cambridge St., by Mark Lechmere LLC. Demolish 3-story building (1857).

Case D-1385: 227 Cambridge St., by Mark Lechmere LLC. Demolish bank building (1917).

Ms. Burks showed slides and described the history of the 1857 three-story mixed-use building at 207 Cambridge Street and the 1917 Lechmere National Bank building at the corner of Cambridge and Third streets. She also described the former bank and Odd Fellows buildings between them that had been demolished in the 1970s.

Mr. King corrected portions of the staff report. Though savings banks were owned by their depositors, they were not non-profit institutions. He explained the demolition review procedures and asked for questions from members of the public.

Marie Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street remarked that she lived in a house that belonged to Lewis Hall, the first president of the Lechmere National Bank. She showed a plaque from the bank's 75th anniversary

celebration. She described the former Maida store at 207 Cambridge Street as a superb Italian grocery store with homemade sausages, olives, and pickles.

Dr. Solet moved to find 207 Cambridge Street a significant building as defined in the ordinance for the reasons set forth in the staff report. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Mr. Irving moved to find 227 Cambridge Street a significant building as defined in the ordinance for the reasons set forth in the staff report. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Mr. King invited the proponents to describe the proposed replacement building.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, reported that they had appeared twice before the East Cambridge Planning Team and had met several times with Commission staff to discuss design proposals. The current proposal would retain the street facades of the existing bank building.

Kevin Patton of BKA Architects described the project. The two street facades, the roof, and the basement of the bank would be preserved. The new the building would be an addition to the bank. The facades would be restored. The addition would be constructed of similar materials, without replicating the bank exactly. The bank frontage on Cambridge Street was 28' and the addition would be 102'. The 1960s addition at the back of the bank would be demolished and the rear of the building extended 25'.

Dr. Solet asked about the grade changes on the site. Mr. Patton answered that the grade dropped 3' from the corner of Third Street to the far side of 207 Cambridge Street.

Mr. Barry asked about the organization of the addition. Mr. Patton said the cast stone facade was broken into three bays to provide some relief in the wall and roof planes and to provide a focus point for the building.

Dr. Solet asked if consideration had been given to preservation of 207 Cambridge Street. Mr. Patton replied that the multi-story building did not easily relate to the proposed single story retail use.

Mr. King noted that the letter from the East Cambridge Planning Team expressed a desire for smaller local businesses in this location. He noted that while much of the character of Cambridge Street was formed by the series of small retail stores, the Historical Commission did not rule on matters of use.

Robert Korff, president of Mark Investments (the owner), said they had done a lot of market research for the site and had been unable to attract small tenants to the location. An independent drug store nearby had recently closed, so it seemed to be a needed amenity.

There being no questions of fact from the public, Mr. King asked for public comment.

Mr. Greene read a letter on behalf of the East Cambridge Planning Team opposing demolition of the buildings. He suggested restoring both buildings and rebuilding the missing buildings between.

Ms. Saccoccio said the missing buildings had been demolished for a drive through bank, but there was no reason to exacerbate the damage that had already been done to the block.

Mr. D'Isidoro said he would like to see the bank preserved.

Jason Stockmann of 103 Gore Street asked if multi-story retail development had been considered. Denser development might make it possible to preserve 207 Cambridge Street.

Bill Dines of 69 Otis Street supported saving 207 Cambridge Street.

Betty Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street said an elderly neighbor, Agnes Dotero of 38R Gore Street, was unable to attend but had been contacted by the developers about purchasing her property.

Heather Hoffman of 213 Hurley Street agreed that something could be built on the parking lot. She noted that Cambridge Street was made up of smaller buildings. Taller buildings would be okay if they were more in character with East Cambridge. There was a CVS at the mall and a Rite Aid at the Twin Cities plaza. The existing buildings were preferable to the proposed.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Barry asked if original details remained beneath the asbestos siding on 207 Cambridge Street. Mr. Patton said he had not investigated but the quoins and window surrounds had clearly been removed.

Mr. King noted that a similar neighborhood issue was being experienced between Harvard and Porter squares with a lot of small stores and a couple of vacant lots attracting redevelopment. He noted that a group of neighbors had submitted a rezoning petition to the council with the goal of preserving the existing storefronts and enhancing the retail focus of the area.

Mr. Rafferty offered clarification that the bank was not proposed for demolition in the current design, only 207 Cambridge Street. The two street walls and the roof of the bank would be preserved. Only the 1960s addition and two concrete block fire walls would be removed.

Dr. Solet commended the proponents for keeping the bank. If other businesses could be found for the site it could be re-used in its existing format.

Mr. Barry said the reused bank and new addition would read as a single-occupancy building, resulting in a negative impact on the character of the street. The addition was neither clearly distinct from the bank nor a matching addition.

Mr. Irving said the current isolation of 207 Cambridge Street was not a good rationale for demolishing it. It had not been thoroughly investigated for its viability or potential for restoration. Perhaps the CVS store could be smaller and 207 could be preserved for something else.

Mr. Irving moved to find 207 Cambridge Street a preferably preserved building in the context of the proposed replacement design. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion. Mr. Barry said there was still a development opportunity for infill on the site. This finding would not preclude development of the parking lot. Mr. Irving agreed. The motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Barry moved to find 227 Cambridge Street preferably preserved in light of this particular proposal but with a finding that noted appreciation for the preservation of the street walls and roof of the bank and encouraged a modified proposal for a smaller-deferential addition. Mr. Irving seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case D-1393: 399 Binney St., by DWF IV One Kendall Garage, LLC. Demolish two buildings (1912, 1919) in Boston Woven Hose complex and ground level connector, and bridge across Binney Street.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the staff memo on the history of the Boston Woven Hose (BWH) complex, of which these two buildings were a part. The Commission has already found them significant in 2002. Building 1500 was built in 1912 for polishing brass castings and Building 1900 was built in 1919 for producing rubber coated fabric for automobile tops. He had initially thought the structure of 1500 was reinforced concrete, but he now understood it to be more lightly framed. He recommended finding both 1500 and 1900 significant again for their associations with the economic history of the city and the Boston Woven Hose company. [Ms. Berg left the meeting].

Richard McKinnon, the developer, said the earlier development had exceeded the allowable zoning and raised great opposition from the neighbors. His design was about half the size of the previous proposals and had support from both the East Cambridge Planning Team and the Wellington Harrington group. The proposed building had 178,000 square feet, 40,000 of which was below grade. It respected the setbacks and height limits. It was a modest proposal that respected the site. Neighborhood meetings had identified the corner of Binney and Cardinal Medeiros to be troublesome because visibility was limited with the building footprint tight to the property line.

Adam Wiesenberg, an attorney at Sullivan & Worcester, said they had information about the buildings that was relevant to the question of whether they should be found significant and preferably preserved. Joel Bargmann, the architect, showed a section of Building 1500. It had a steel frame with terracotta infill covered with stucco. There were some wood columns. It was not reinforced concrete. Building 1900 was built of wood and brick.

Mr. Sullivan said that evidently the use of the two buildings had not required the same reinforced concrete construction as elsewhere in the BWH complex. The buildings had been designed by the same architect, however, and he did not think the construction details detracted from their significance.

Mr. Weisenberg noted that the bridge over Binney Street might or might not be demolished, depending on who the tenant would be and how they would want to use the buildings. The project had received a special permit from the Planning Board.

Ms. Saccoccio said several members of her family had worked for BWH. The company unionized early; the workers were well paid and it was a good place to work.

Mr. Irving moved to find all three structures (including the bridge) significant as defined in the ordinance and for the reasons in the staff report. Mr. Barry seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Mr. Bargmann presented the design of the new building. The first floor would be accessible. The approaches to the theater would be improved; cars would enter on the other side of the garage, which would be reclad to address light trespass issues. A new retail space would open up on the theater plaza. The corner of the building would be stepped back to allow better site lines. A vest pocket park would be constructed opposite Bristol Street. Materials would be glass, wood and resin panels.

Dr. Solet said the design was exciting. The spaces were of human scale and the plaza was a place people would want to be. She asked about acoustics and mechanicals. The area was very noisy now. Mr. Bargmann said the noise issues were being addressed based on an acoustical report.

Ms. Saccoccio asked if there was something wrong with the existing structures. Mr. Bargmann answered that they were not accessible due to the floor levels, were lightweight construction, uninsulated, and had lots of interior columns.

Ms. Hoffman said the lights in the garage were terrible, and she was excited by the improvement screening them would have on her life. The banners would shield the lights in a way that was artistically interesting. Mr. McKinnon promised that the light abatement would be part of the project.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan recommended that Buildings 1500 and 1900 be found not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed replacement building. The bridge could be found preferably preserved, with the provision that the demolition delay be waived if the new tenant wished to remove it. Mr. Irving so moved. Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Preservation Grants

PG 16-10	1 Follen St.	Longy School of Music (#3)	\$170,000	Windows
PG 16-11	1950 Mass Ave	Cambridge Masonic Hall	\$20,000	Roof
PG 16-12	130 Norfolk St.	St. Mary's Church (#5)	\$75,000	Masonry

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the applications for preservation grants. The balance available was approximately \$60,000, far less than was requested. He recommended deferring a grant to St. Mary's, which had received four previous grants, and offering \$20,000 to the Masonic Hall and \$10,000 to Longy. He intended to keep a small balance in the fund for affordable housing projects that might come along before the next fiscal year began in September.

Mr. Irving moved to approve the grants as suggested by the Director. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Preservation Award Nominations

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the list of awards and described the program scheduled for May 25.

Minutes

Mr. Irving moved to approve the January and March minutes as submitted. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Mr. Irving moved to adjourn, Ms. Tobin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed the Attendance List on April 7, 2016**

Alfred D'Isidoro	69 Sixth St #2
Alan Greene	82 Fifth St
Peter Quinn	259 Elm St #301, Somerville 02144
Darnell Coleman	411A Highland Ave #312, Somerville, 02144
Jamie Leef	16 Thorndike St, Arlington 02474
Jennifer Lyford	179 Newport St, Arlington 02474
Stephen Mugford	67 Longfellow, Wellesley 02481
Stephen Hart	50 Church St, Belmont 02478
John Hawkinson	
Richard Vendetti	24 Winter St
Bill Dines	69 Otis St
Nate Cormer	90 St. Mary's St, Boston 02215
Betty Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
C. Billow	257 Charles St
Marcia Hams	First Parish in Cambridge, 3 Church St
Heather Hoffman	213 Hurley St
Jason Stockmann	103 Gore St #6
Kaj Vandkjaer	300 Main St #6, Wenham 01984
William O'Neill	23 Fifth St
Rich McKinnon	1 Leighton St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.