

## Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

November 2, 2023 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (893 5830 4107) - 6:00 P.M.

Members present (online): Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, Chandra Harrington, Liz Lyster, Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate Members*

Members absent: Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*

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

Public present (online): See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation pursuant to Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by the Mass. General Court and approved by Governor Healey. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. He explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures and introduced commissioners and staff. He designated the alternate members to vote in rotation.

### Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

**Case 5028: 95 Irving St., by Fox Prince 86 LLC and IML 45 LLC.** Replace fence and install emergency generator.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and displayed photographs of the property, including the existing fences.

Troy Sober, landscape architect of Gregory Lombardi Design, shared his screen, showed slides of the design plans, and described the proposed new fence and emergency generator.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the commission members.

Dr. Solet asked about the proposed color of the fence. Mr. Sober answered that it would be a dark gray green matching the shutter color. Mr. Irving noted that paint color for landmarked properties was not within the Commission's purview. Dr. Solet asked about the proposed location for the generator, noting that it would be forward of the front façade. She asked if the generator would be only for emergencies. Mr. Sober noted that it was for emergencies but would meet the noise ordinance limits.

Mr. Sheffield asked if the transformer was required by Eversource. Mr. Sober answered in the affirmative, noting that its installation behind the existing fence, with a gate for access, was approved by CHC staff.

Ms. Harrington asked about the height and color of the lower fence. Mr. Sober said the lower fence was approximately 4' tall and would be the same color. Ms. Harrington asked ~~if~~ about the locations considered for the generator. Mr. Sheffield also asked about the siting of the generator. Had they looked at sinking it in the ground and pushing it further back. Mr. Sober answered that the generator needed certain setbacks from the house and they also didn't want to disturb the tree roots. The condenser could not be too close to combustible surfaces so placing it near the garage wasn't possible.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the height of the existing fence. He said it was solid up to about 6'. The proposed fence was solid up to the same height with a lattice above that, so there would be no improvement to sight lines of the house. Mr. Sober said they did not intend to increase the height of the fence. The

existing height could be confirmed with staff. Mr. Sullivan noted that emergency generators don't run all the time but did run for monthly tests and during emergencies. He noted that the construction project was proceeding as approved.

Mr. Irving asked if there were questions of fact from the public.

Suzanne Blier of Fuller Place noted that a 7' fence in her neighborhood had been disallowed because of its expanse. She suggested a combination wall and fence with the fence set back.

Mr. Sober said the application was intended to improve upon the existing fence design.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Ms. Blier said the property would look better if the fence was lower and setback.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet asked what would screen the generator. Mr. Sober explained that there would be deciduous and evergreen plantings to screen it.

Mr. Sullivan said he could support the application on the condition that the fence not be taller than the existing.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application with that condition. Ms. Lyster seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote with Ms. Paris voting as alternate. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Paris, Irving).

Mr. Irving noted that Mr. Kleespies had arrived at the meeting.

**Case 5029: 11 Garden St., by First Church in Cambridge.** Remove and store the cockerel weathervane.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and introduced the case. This church building was constructed in 1870 and the cockerel was added in 1873. The original steeple was 170' high. It was taken down in 1938 and replaced with the existing cap on the bell tower. The cockerel, made in 1721 by Shem Drowne for a church in Boston, was approximately 5' tall and rotates on the shaft of the weathervane. Drowne was the same coppersmith responsible for the grasshopper weathervane on Faneuil Hall.

Laurie Burt, a church member and member of the building and grounds committee introduced herself. She shared her screen and presented slides with information about the history of the cockerel, which started at the New Brick Church in the North End. She described its construction of cut and molded copper and gold leaf. She explained that the committee was concerned about the stability of the weathervane in light of stronger and more frequent severe storms due to climate change. A drone was sent up to take video of the existing conditions. The photography revealed several tears in the copper and failure of the gilding on one side. The last gilding was done in 1998. She also noted that emergency stabilization work of the bell tower was needed and the staff had approved a certificate of nonapplicability for that work. She described the logistics of removing the cockerel, bringing it down by crane, and packing it in a custom crate for transport and storage to a secure storage facility. The facility would be climate controlled and the crate would be available to the church and its consultants to further document the condition of the cockerel. She said the church would gather more information and have a congregational discernment

process about next steps which could include repair and reinstallation or replacement with a replica. She said they planned to return to the Historical Commission within six months to present their action plan.

Mr. Irving called for questions of fact from the commission members.

Ms. Paris thanked the applicants for their presentation. She stated that she was a member of the church. She asked Mr. Sullivan if the question before the Commission was only removal of the cockerel or removal and storage. Mr. Sullivan explained that the church was located within the Old Cambridge Historic District so alterations to the weathervane was subject to review and approval by the Commission. Ms. Paris asked the applicants which experts had been consulted. Ms. Burt said Nancy Duckman and Molly Ott Ambler had been asked to consult on the condition of the cockerel. Lindsay Miller, a historian and church member, said that both Duckman and Ambler had worked for antiques auction houses and that Nancy was a expert on weathervanes.

Mr. Kleespies thanked the applicants for the presentation. He said the cockerel was a remarkable piece that had been visible to the public for hundreds of years and a witness to historical events. He asked if the church saw itself as a keeper of the public trust and caretaker of this historic piece. He asked if they would engage the public in their discernment process. Ms. Burt answered that some of the listening and learning sessions to date had been open to the public and that there had been members of the public in attendance. She would recommend more public participation.

Ms. Lyster asked about the logistics of the Commission's review process if they allow the weathervane to be taken down and stored. Mr. Sullivan recommended that the Commission issue a temporary Certificate of Appropriateness or Hardship to take the cockerel down and store it on the condition that the church return with more information and a proposal for the cockerel.

Ms. Burt said they would come back with more information. She said they did not yet know how much it would cost to repair and reinstall the weathervane.

Dr. Solet said the weathervane was always on her Cambridge tour when she had guests visiting town. She said it was sad to learn that it was in bad shape and asked if it would be eligible for a preservation grant. Mr. Sullivan answered that the church had received preservation grant funding in the past for other restoration work.

Ms. Paris asked why six months was the chosen period of time for the process. Ms. Burt said they thought it was a reasonable length of time but would keep the process moving with due diligence.

Mr. Irving called for questions of fact from members of the public.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street said she had seen the grasshopper reinstalled at Faneuil Hall. She asked if the church had consulted Historic New England. Ms. Miller noted that the grasshopper was much lighter than the cockerel but they would gather information during the coming months.

Ms. Blier asked if it was a possibility that the weathervane would be sold. Would the church consider giving it to a local museum so that it would continue to be accessible to the Cambridge public? Ms. Burt said no decisions like that had been made, but they would investigate all possibilities including

making a replica or sale of the original but there wasn't enough information now to make that decision.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Ms. Blier said it would be a bad precedent to sell the original but she would support installing a replica if the original remained on view at the church or in a local museum.

Cory Gorczycki, a Harvard student and Cambridge resident, asked about the regilding process and the cost for that. Ms. Burt indicated that she did not yet know the cost of gilding or repair of the weathervane.

Ms. Meyer asked about the gilding done in 1998. Ms. Burt said the craftsperson who did that work did not remember much about it but they had photographs and were collecting other facts. Ms. Meyer said she hoped it could stay in Cambridge, even if in a museum, or at least in the Boston area. It was sad when a church sells its artifacts, such as a silver service.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Lyster said she appreciated the thoughtfulness of the church's process, taking into consideration historical research and consulting experts. She said she did not object to temporary removal of the weathervane from the tower and securely storing it but she was unsure what conditions to include in a motion.

Mr. Kleespies said the application didn't indicate that the weathervane might come back. He noted that funding for its repair might be available from various sources.

Dr. Solet agreed. She asked if the Commission had approved removal of the cockerel in 1998. Mr. Sullivan replied that it had been approved with the condition that it be re-installed after regilding.

Mr. Ferrara made a motion to approve a temporary certificate of hardship for six months to remove the cockerel for the purpose of assessing its condition on the condition that the applicants come back with a proposed course of action by May 2, 2024 at which time the Commission would make its decision based on the additional evidence provided about the condition assessment and facts about options such as restoration, repair, replication and the reasons for the church's proposed course of action. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote with Mr. Sheffield voting as alternate. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Irving and Sheffield)

Mr. Irving called for a short recess at 7:50 P.M. and reconvened the meeting at 7:55 P.M.

#### New Business: Determination of Procedure

**Case 5039: 15 Follen St., by Andrew Lo.** Change exterior paint colors.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the house. He said the applicants had met with Susan Maycock about changes to the exterior paint colors and she had determined that the proposed new colors (body: Rockport Gray, trim: Navajo White, and door: Onyx) would be appropriate to the style and period.

Dr. Solet asked if the Rockport Gray was tannish. Mr. Sullivan described it as a warm gray, not a cool blue gray.

There being no questions or comments from the public, Mr. Irving closed the comment period.

Ms. Paris asked what work the Commission had approved for this property recently. Mr. Sullivan answered that they had applied for a rear addition and replication of the chimneys.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the application, subject to the ten-day notice procedure to notify the abutters of the application. Ms. Paris seconded the motion, which passed unanimously in a roll call vote with Mr. Kleespies voting as alternate. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Irving, and Kleespies)

#### Preservation Grants

**Case IPG 24-1: 874 Main St., by Union Baptist Church.** Request for \$50,000 for roof replacement and egress improvements.

Mr. Sullivan shared the screen and summarized the request for a \$50,000 grant for roof replacement and to make the egresses code compliant. The grant would have to be matched by the church. He then presented the details of the second grant case.

**Case IPG 24-2: 1627 Massachusetts Ave., by Homeowners Rehab, Inc.** Request for \$150,000 for roof and window repairs.

Mr. Sullivan shared the screen and reported that the grant request of \$150,000 for the affordable housing project would go toward the roof and window restoration. He noted that the Commission had approved the project in principle and the applicant would return for final approval after the Planning Board design review.

Dr. Solet asked about deactivation of the existing front door. Mr. Sullivan said it would be an emergency egress but that the porch could still be used by residents. Mr. Sullivan said the grant funds exceeding the first \$50,000 would have to be matched by the applicant.

Dr. Solet moved to approve both grants as recommended. Ms. Lyster seconded the motion, which passed 7-0 in a roll call vote with Ms. Paris voting as alternate. (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Paris and Irving).

#### Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported on the City Council amendments to Ch. 2.78, Art. III and answered questions. He said there would be commissioner training for NCD commissions first and then CHC.

Ms. Harrington offered her congratulations on the successful CPA application for a Preservation Projects Administrator position.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Ms. Lyster seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote with Mr. Sheffield voting as alternate (Ferrara, Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Sheffield and Irving). The meeting adjourned at 8:33 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sarah L. Burks*

Sarah L. Burks  
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public  
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, November 2, 2023**

John Hawkinson	Cambridge
Don Johnson	First Church in Cambridge
Lindsay Miller	First Church in Cambridge
Laurie Burt	First Church in Cambridge
Troy Sober	Gregory Lombardi Design
William Taylor	Gregory Lombardi Design
Andrew Lo	15 Follen St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Cory Gorczycki	32 Mill St
Justin Deri	8 St Paul St
Moana Bentin	100 Harvey St
Suzanne Blier	5 Fuller Pl
Marc Levy	3 Potter Park
Leah Abrams	Robert A. M. Stern Architects
Danielle Bagwin	1 Park Ave

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.