

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 4, 2024 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (847 6926 1276) - 6:00 P.M.

Members present (online): Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Chandra Harrington, Liz Lyster, Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Gavin Kleespies, Paula Paris, Kyle Sheffield, *Alternates*

Members absent: Joseph Ferrara, *Member*

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. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:06 P.M. He explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures and introduced commissioners and staff. He designated Ms. Paris to vote as alternate.

Mr. Irving recommended the following case for the consent agenda: **Case 5006 (amendment): 124 Brattle Street**, by Gerald & Kate Chertavian for exterior renovations including replacing clapboards and trim and installing HVAC equipment. He asked if anyone had objections to approving it without a full hearing. There being no objections raised, Ms. Paris moved to approve Case 5006 per the consent agenda procedure, delegating approval of construction details to staff. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, and Mr. Irving designated alternates Paris and Sheffield to vote. The motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Irving, Paris, Sheffield)

[Mr. Kleespies arrived.]

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1670 (continuation): 38-40 and 48 Banks St., by Lubavitch of Cambridge, Inc. Partial demolition of 38-40 Banks St. and relocation and partial demolition of 48 Banks St.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and reviewed the photographs of the subject buildings. He explained the difference between a demolition case review with schematic level drawings and the more detailed design review done for historic district cases. The Commission's role in this case was to determine whether the greater public interest lay in delaying demolition in the interest of preservation or allowing the project to proceed as proposed.

Sarah Rhatigan, attorney for Harvard Chabad, said they had met with staff following the December hearing to understand the comments and direction from that meeting. She noted there had been a great deal of correspondence sent in, including letters of support and a letter from a group of concerned Kerry Corner neighbors. The applicants did not agree with the description of parties of interest in the letter from the Kerry Corner Neighborhood Association. It wasn't the Commission's role to determine if the Chabad could expand but to weigh in on the historic preservation aspects of the project. Issues like trash storage and traffic would be addressed as part of the Board of Zoning Appeal process. They hoped the Commission would agree that the design had been improved, especially with respect to the two historic buildings.

Jason Jewhurst, architect of Bruner Cott, shared his screen, displayed the revised project materials, and summarized the comments heard at the previous meeting. He noted changes since the first

presentation, including changing one large dormer into two small dormers, darkening and reducing the mass of the connectors, reducing the cornice height, reducing the sunshades, enclosing and reducing the third-floor roof terrace, and more articulation of color and depth on the rear elevation.

Mr. Irving asked for questions of fact from the Commission.

Ms. Harrington asked about the tree in back. Mr. Jewhurst showed its location between buildings.

Ms. Lyster asked about the change in Gross Floor Area. Was there a net increase? Mr. Jewhurst explained that the terrace was smaller, but its enclosure added to the GFA.

Dr. Solet noted she had been absent at the December hearing but had reviewed the Zoom recording and minutes. She noted that several issues raised by the neighbors were outside of the Commission's jurisdiction. She encouraged the applicants to include acoustical barriers for the mechanical units. She noted that 48 Banks would be lowered and asked if potential flooding had been considered in that decision. Mr. Jewhurst replied in the affirmative. He said the city had rigorous resiliency requirements and all of those would be met in the design. Dr. Solet asked if the door was lowered for accessibility reasons. Mr. Jewhurst replied affirmatively. Dr. Solet referenced Ms. Zhang's comments at the last meeting about horizontal relationships between the existing buildings and the new construction. She suggested that the windows in the connector could be better aligned with those in the existing buildings.

Ms. Paris asked to see the views of the enclosed terrace from both front and back. She noted that the enclosed terrace was hardly visible from a straight on front view.

Dr. Solet asked about the elevator headhouse, not visible from a front view; had it been added since the last meeting? Mr. Jewhurst said it had been obscured by the mechanical screen in the previous iteration, but the screen had been moved.

Mr. Sheffield also asked about the headhouse. Was it meant to provide access to a fourth-floor terrace, or could a smaller hatchway access the roof mechanicals? Mr. Jewhurst said the preference was for an elevator. It was not yet certain if there would be a terrace space on the fourth-floor level, but they wanted to have that option if it were possible in the context of green roof and mechanical requirements. Mr. Sheffield noted that he had watched the zoom recording and visited the site. There had been concerns expressed at the last meeting that the massing was too large. The changes resulted in an increase in the building mass, not a reduction. Mr. Jewhurst responded that the occupancy numbers had not been increased and they were working hard to keep the massing as minimal as possible.

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

Berl Hartman of 28 Banks Street asked if program needs represented an increase. Rabbi Zarchi answered that the proposed construction would accommodate but not increase program space.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked about the driveway access from Green Street. Mr. Jewhurst said there was a curb cut on Green Street, but it was not a through street. In the renderings they had opted to show it without the fence.

Alan Joslin of 36 Banks Street asked if the applicant would update the dimensional form to reflect

the changes. Mr. Jewhurst replied in the affirmative.

Gillian Diercks of 58 Banks Street also asked about the GFA. The increase of approximately 450sf did not include any fourth-floor terrace space. Mr. Jewhurst replied affirmatively.

Tom Serwold of 30 Banks Street asked about the existing total GFA. Ms. Rhatigan replied that there was 4,897sf in the existing 38-40 and 48 Banks Street buildings.

Mr. Irving opened the public comment period.

Shlomo Fellig of Newton spoke in support of the application. He asked the Commission to be mindful of the Dover Amendment regarding the religious use of the building.

Ori Porat of 24 Myrtle Avenue said it had been a difficult time to be Jewish in Cambridge since October 7th. Existing synagogues did not provide enough space for all the members of the Jewish community. Other houses of worship in the city varied widely in size, style, setbacks, etc. He asked that Harvard Chabad be treated equally to any other religious or affinity group. It would be nice to have the program space situated safely indoors.

Ms. Meyer said she was curious about the through driveway from Banks to Green Street. She wondered if it would be used as a cut-through to avoid the lights as is done at 929 Mass Ave.

Emily Anne Jacobstein expressed support. The public interest would be served by letting it move forward. She wanted a safe indoor space for her son and the other children in Tot Shabat.

Cap Dierker of 15 Surrey Street said the mass of the new building was very square and didn't fit the context of the street or the zoning guidelines worked out with Harvard for the other side of the street.

Boris Kuritnik of 16 Francis Avenue said the Chabad community currently congregated outside throughout the year. Doing that in the cold weather was just not sustainable. Building the indoor space was vital to the community going forward.

Alex Sagan of 14 Hubbard Park Road said he had been a member of the Chabad community for over twenty years. There was not enough indoor space for the current programs. He supported the proposed preservation of the two older buildings.

Ted Kaptchuk of 27 Bay Street said the project was urgent. The community was currently praying outside in cold and wet weather. They needed to move indoors for kids and old people.

David Friedman of Brookline said that he worked in the historic preservation field. He said moving 48 Banks forward would make it more visible. The overall design fit well in the neighborhood.

Doris Jurison of 22 Banks Street asked that the Kerry Corner Neighborhood Association's slides be shared on the screen. Ms. Jurison spoke to a plan view showing the context and size of the buildings in the surrounding neighborhood. The size of the proposed building was not compatible and would negatively impact the tranquility of the neighborhood. It would exceed the dimensional regulations of zoning.

Helen Walker of 43 Linnaean Street spoke in support of the application. She noted however the connector seemed to hover over the ground while the existing buildings more explicitly met the ground.

Jillian Paull, a Harvard graduate student living in Brighton, noted that a Rabbi had been stabbed

in her Brighton neighborhood two years ago. The Chabad activities should be moved indoors.

Ms. Hartman noted that she was one of seven Jewish members of the Kerry Corner Neighborhood Association. The association supported a modest increase in size of the Chabad's buildings, but the proposal far exceeded that. The association's concept for a "rightsized" plan would better fit in the context of the neighborhood but would be large enough to move the tent square footage indoors. Additional program space should take place off-site.

Deborah Epstein of 36 Banks Street noted that she was Jewish, an architect and an abutter. She said the proposal was nearly 2.5 times the size of what zoning would allow by right. The revised proposal was larger than what was presented last month.

Mr. Joslin noted that he was also Jewish, an architect and an abutter. He showed a slide representing the "right-sized" design alternative. He recommended moving the Mikvah offsite, replacing the tent space with indoor space on the second floor, moving the new building to the rear of 48 Banks Street and limiting it to two stories plus a mechanical attic.

Mr. Servold described some impacts of the demolition and construction activity on the neighborhood. The neighborhood would be over-burdened with traffic, parking and service access. Having access through the site would reduce safety. Banks Street already had significant traffic. The proposal was too large. The neighborhood would lose tranquility, safety and historic appeal.

Yefim Luvish of 6 Cambridge Terrace asked the Commission to approve the application. Harvard Chabad had been there for twenty-five years and proven itself to be a beneficial community organization, especially during COVID when other houses of worship shut their doors. If the Commission considered the public interest for the Cambridge community at large it would see the benefits of the project.

Ms. Diercks expressed concern about the outdoor trash storage, rodents, and bins blocking sidewalk access on collection day. The proposal exceeded the current use on the site. She recommended that the trash storage be moved indoors and that the extra dining space, lobby space and double height space be eliminated.

Joan Weinfeld Wing of 701-703 Green Street said she was another Jewish member of the neighborhood association. She was very supportive of Harvard Chabad and its great work but was concerned about the impacts on the neighborhood. Noise when people leave the building was already an issue. Lights intruded into her home. The glass-enclosed terrace would increase light intrusion.

Elizabeth Foote of 27-29 Surrey Street said she and her husband Eric supported the "right-sized" alternative massing.

Amy Wagers of 30 Banks Street supported Chabad and the services it offered but the proposal was way out of scale for its site. The preservation of the historic buildings was very minimal, reducing them to mere facades. They had tried hard to work with the applicants by sending a memo and design ideas that would double the indoor space but were disappointed in the lack of response. She asked the Commission to reject the current proposal and to ask the applicants to come back again.

Lily Shen of 23 Banks Street said she had emigrated from China over 30 years ago. She had witnessed changes to neighborhoods in China and the negative impacts that had on the culture of the neighborhoods.

Darman Wing of 701-703 Green Street said Green Street could not be used as a service road to the Chabad property. The storm drain is immediately behind the property. Climate change was increasing drainage problems. The bottom of Green Street was a good example. The Resilient Cambridge report shows that flooding will be an increasing problem in the neighborhood.

Jordan Jakubovitz of 320 Harvard Street said he was a member of the Harvard Chabad. He was disappointed to hear the neighborhood presentation, which favored their own concerns rather than the larger public benefits of the project. The proposal would preserve the two existing buildings and bring 48 Banks forward on the lot. The Chabad group deserved to have indoor space for their activities.

Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi of Harvard Chabad said this was an historic moment for the city and its Jewish community. There were close to 10,000 Jewish people in Cambridge, the vast majority of whom did not have a home in which to convene. There were hundreds of houses of worship in the city, most of which did not conform to current zoning regulations. Some neighbors had told him explicitly that the Chabad did not belong there or that it shouldn't have the amount of space that it needed. He committed to addressing all the issues that had been raised by the neighbors as the project moved on to the BZA but did not think they were appropriate to discuss as part of the Historical Commission's process.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Ms. Harrington was concerned that communication between the applicant and the neighbors hadn't productively addressed the needs and concerns of both sides.

Mr. Kleespies said the proposal was a good example of a preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. It was consistent with what the Commission generally advocates for other demolition review projects. Discussions about mitigation of the larger building can occur during the zoning process.

Dr. Solet asked about the size of the tent and if it had gone up during COVID. She said the proposed building was very large for the site and she couldn't support something that big.

Ms. Lyster said it was a complicated topic. She said she was a practicing Jew. It was hard to balance the religious considerations and the size limitations for the site. She was disappointed in the lack of communication between the applicant and the neighbors. She couldn't tell if the outdoor space was being replicated inside the building or if it was growing. The proposal would keep the historic buildings in a prominent relationship to the street. She appreciated the changes that were made to the design, which were a step in the right direction.

Ms. Zhang thanked the applicants for the presentation and to Mr. Jewhurst for clarifying the design changes and intent. She said her comments would be from a design perspective and might not be achievable. The fenestration of the new building did not align with either the top or the bottom of the windows on either of the existing buildings. The enclosed terrace would not be as transparent as it appeared

in a rendering. She asked if some of the interior spaces could do double-duty and be multi-functional.

Mr. Sheffield complimented the architect. It was a difficult design challenge to create an infill building that kept the identity of the historic buildings but presented a unified statement. The building at 48 Banks was currently an outlier in the neighborhood in the way it was set back from the street. Moving it forward would be a big change that may make the neighbors uncomfortable. There is precedent in the city for densely packed residences, including at both ends of Banks Street. He suggested deepening the connectors between the new construction and the existing buildings so as to create more relief and see more of the edges of the historic buildings. He suggested pushing the lunchroom wall further back to allow the back of the 48 Banks Street volume to read distinctly. He expressed concern about the way the enclosed third-floor terrace loomed over 48 Banks and about having a fourth-floor terrace. The overall style of the building was great. It was a great project headed in a good direction but would benefit from more work and communication with the neighbors.

Mr. Irving said he agreed with the comments of Mr. Kleespies. He didn't think the case needed to be continued again. He was satisfied with the design and the public benefits the project would offer.

Ms. Tobin said she appreciated the design changes and agreed that there was public benefit to the project overall. She encouraged the applicants and neighbors to communicate directly.

Dr. Solet asked the chair if he said the building was smaller. He answered that the visual impact of the building's size had been lessened by lowering the cornice and deepening the connecting pieces.

Ms. Lyster agreed the visual impact was lessened but the new construction could be pushed back again to further recess it from the two historic buildings.

Ms. Harrington said she was uncomfortable supporting the design when there were so many objections from the neighbors. She was trying to work out the overall public benefit equation.

Mr. Kleespies thought the Commission needed to keep a perspective on the number of requests for continuances and redesign. There should be a limit to how much of that is done.

Mr. Sheffield said continuances could be beneficial, as they had been with the Third St. project.

Dr. Solet agreed. She said she hoped the project would serve the community for decades. A few more months would be worth it and would benefit the zoning negotiations too.

Ms. Rhatigan said the Historical Commission's review was just the first step in a long process. Her client did not want to delay the start of a demolition delay period if that was the direction the Commission was going. She asked if she could have a moment to discuss the options with her client offline.

Rabbi Zarchi said this was the venue for discussing historic preservation goals and that is what they chose to focus on. The parties would be brought to the table to address things better suited to the zoning review process. Every room in the design was already multi-purpose. Additional continuances would require that he bring more and more people to testify to the benefits of the project.

Mr. Irving asked for a motion.

Dr. Solet asked if the applicant would consent to a further continuance. Rabbi Zarchi said he did

not think it would result in bringing the two sides together. Dr. Solet suggested a break. Mr. Irving called for a ten-minute recess. He reconvened the meeting at 9:15 P.M. Elkie Zarchi said they would commit to taking the architectural design suggestions of the Commission into consideration and to communicate and work with the neighbors regarding their concerns but explained that they felt an urgency to move forward with the process rather than continuing the hearing again. Zoning would be even more complex.

Mr. Kleespies moved to find the existing buildings at 38-40 and 48 Banks Street not preferably preserved in the context of the proposed project design and the applicants' commitment to consider the Commission's additional design recommendations, with encouragement to the applicants to communicate with the neighbors. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion. The motion was discussed. Ms. Lyster said she wanted to treat this property in the same way as any other project. Dr. Solet said she still encouraged a continuance and didn't want to establish a new procedural precedent. The motion passed 4 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention in a roll-call vote. (Harrington, Tobin, Irving, Kleespies in favor; Lyster and Solet opposed; and Zhang abstaining)

Preservation Grants

PG 24-3: 32 Rice Street, by Homeowners Rehab, Inc. \$25,000 to restore porches and entries.

PG 24-4: 901 Mass. Ave., by Homeowners Rehab, Inc. \$75,000 for replacement windows

IPG 24-2: 199 Auburn Street, by Cambridge Zen Center. \$103,400 for foundation repairs and egress.

IPG 24-3: 137 Allston St., by St. Augustine's Church. \$41,000 for access ramp.

IPG 24-4: 844 Mass. Ave., by St. Peter's Church. \$36,000 for emergency boiler replacement.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and presented photographs and background for the grant applications. 32 Rice Street was a three-decker of 1910 that needed to restore the porches (with fluted columns, curved balusters, and dentil moldings) and the entries. He recommended a grant of \$25,000. 901 Massachusetts Avenue was an affordable apartment building of 1907 that needed replacement windows twenty years after the previous renovation. He recommended a grant of \$56,000 (half the project cost). The Cambridge Zen Center had applied for foundation repairs on the failing east side and a required egress. He recommended a grant of \$50,000. St. Augustine's Church had applied for a grant for the proposed handicap access ramp. He recommended a grant of \$41,000. The latest request had come from St. Peter's Church, where the boiler that heated the sanctuary had failed. He recommended a grant of \$36,000 (half the projected cost). He said the remaining balance of CPA funds would be \$102,000 if all grants were made. He was reviewing past projects to see if any money had not been spent and could be recaptured for the fund.

Mr. Irving asked if the Commission had given grants for boilers in the past. Mr. Sullivan answered in the affirmative. If a building can't be occupied then it's not functional preservation.

Ms. Paris recused herself from the 137 Allston Street application because of her position on the board of Black History in Action for Cambridgeport.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve the four grants in the amounts recommended by the Director.

Ms. Tobin seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Irving, Sheffield)

Minutes

The Commission considered the minutes of the December 7, 2023 meeting. Dr. Solet noted the minutes did not include everything said at the meeting per the recording. Ms. Burks agreed and explained that the minutes were intended to summarize the presentations and discussions, not provide a complete transcript. Dr. Solet moved to approve the minutes, as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harrington and the passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Irving, Kleespies)

Executive Director's Report

Dr. Solet asked about the Markham Building landmark proposal. Mr. Sullivan answered that it had not been approved by Council.

Mr. Irving noted that The Garage project had been put on hold.

Mr. Sheffield asked about the Mayflower Poultry sign. Mr. Sullivan said that a replica would be installed on a public light pole on Cambridge Street.

Mr. Sheffield moved to adjourn. Mr. Kleespies seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Zhang, Irving, Sheffield) The meeting adjourned at 9:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, January 4, 2024**

John Hawkinson	Cambridge
Sarah Rhatigan	Trilogy Law
Karen Greene	Bruner Cott Architects
Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi	Harvard Chabad, 54 Banks St
Jason Jewhurst	Bruner Cott Architects
Elkie Zarchi	54 Banks St
Don Foote	124 Brattle St
Alan Joslin	36 Banks St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St
Amy Edmondson	7 Brown St
Amy Wagers	30 Banks St
Lily Shen	23 Banks St
Berl Hartman	28 Banks St
Hyman Hartman	28 Banks St
Joan Wing	703 Green St
Darman Wing	701/703 Green St
Gillian Diercks	58 Banks St
Pam Touloupoulos	694 Green St
Tom Serwold	30 Banks St
Doris Jurison	22 Banks St
Elizabeth Foote	27-29 Surrey St
Albert Lamb	21 Grant St
Deborah Epstein	36 Banks St
Marci Esrig	
Yefim Luvish	6 Cambridge Ter
Aaron Sarna	322 Harvard St
Emily Anne Jacobstein	6 Chauncy Ln
Alex Sagan	14 Hubbard Park Rd
Dov Kalton	730 Columbus Ave, NYC, NY 10025
Ted Kaptchuk	27 Bay St
Katherine Rose	5 Flagg St
Adina Lippman	825 Beckman Dr North Bellmore NY 11710
Boris Kuritnik	16 Francis Ave
Josh Friedman	Harvard Law School
Matt Auten	40 W. 57th St. 28th Fl NYC, NY 10019
Josh Leibowitz	3811 N 43rd Ave Hollywood, FL
Philip Carey	114 Western Ave
Rebecca Price	22 Athens St
Jordan Jakubovitz	320 Harvard St, Unit D
Marc Levy	3 Potter Pk #1
Marc Esrig	134 Bayberry Ln,
Shlomo Fellig	26 Everett St, Newton, MA 02459

Carli Cooperstein	14650 Valley Vista Blvd Sherman Oaks CA 91403
David Friedman	104 York Ter, Brookline MA 02446
Patrick Sardo	225 Friend St, Boston, MA
Cap Dierker	15 Surrey St
Helen Walker	43 Linnaean St
Nana Raskin	245 Hampshire St
Ori Porat	Mid-Cambridge
Keren Rimon	Brookline
Joshua Sydney	26 Morton Rd
Esther Leah Grunblatt	8 Museum Way
Elkie Zarchi	54 Banks St
Jillian Paull	Brighton, MA
Zalman Zarchi	54 Banks St
Mussy Altein	38 Pearl St
Sarah Gross	1008 Massachusetts Ave
Mendel Zarchi	54 Banks St
Pinchas Gniwisch	566 Montgomery St

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.