

Approved 7/2/09

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

May 7, 2009 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Chair King; Vice Chair Irving; Mss. Harington and Berg; Dr. Solet
Messrs. Bibbins, Crocker, and Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and introduced the commission and staff. He designated alternate Shary Berg to vote as needed.

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-88: 64 Pearl St. Review landmark study report and consider recommendation to City Council.

Mr. King reviewed the case. The Commission had reviewed a demolition application and determined that the building was a preferably preserved significant building. Before the expiration of the demolition delay period, the Commission initiated a landmark designation study. [Mr. Shirley arrived].

Ms. Burks summarized the preliminary landmark report and showed slides of the property. She described the building's significance and the alterations that had been made to the building in the mid twentieth century. Though the architectural details of the house were recoverable, the house's integrity had been compromised.

James Rafferty, attorney for the owner, agreed with the staff assessment that the house had lost many original features. He asked that the Commission accept the staff recommendation and not forward the matter to the City Council for designation.

There was no further public testimony, and Mr. King closed the public comment period. He offered a few corrections to the report including suggestions that the house be circled on the location map and that street names be added. He said the substance of the report was good and he concurred with the staff conclusions.

Mr. Crocker also offered corrections. They both submitted their corrections in writing to the staff.

Dr. Solet asked if there were any remaining interior features in the house. Tony Bevilacqua, the realtor, answered that the interior had been completely gutted and there were no significant features remaining.

George Makrigiannis, the property owner, explained that the brick cladding had been added in the 1980s by the previous owners, and the chimney had been changed.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the exterior detailing of the house was gone, but the shadow lines probably existed under the siding and could inform a restoration. He urged the owner to pursue restoration of the house but indicated that it would be at the owner's discretion how to proceed at this point if the Commission accepted the staff recommendation to not forward the landmark study to the City Council for action.

Mr. Crocker moved to accept the staff recommendation. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-1, with Mr. Shirley voting in opposition.

Mr. King asked the owner to contact the staff prior to demolition to photograph the house.

Case L-91: University Hall, 1815 Massachusetts Ave., Lesley University, owner. Consider citizen petition to initiate a landmark study.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the preliminary evaluation report. She described the reasons why the former Sears Roebuck building was significant and explained that it had been reconstructed, altered, and enlarged during the 1980s.

Dr. Solet asked whether a landmark study would pertain to the whole parcel or just to the building.

Mr. Sullivan answered that the petition described the area as bounded by Roseland Street, Massachusetts Avenue, and the Somerville line, which would be the whole parcel, not just the building. It was standard practice to undertake a study of an entire parcel or parcels, and not just the portion occupied by the building.

Mr. King read a letter from Lesley University dated May 6, 2009 and opened the public comment period.

Gordon Moore, of 9 Rutland Street, said the petition had been stimulated by the discussion with the Commission at the last hearing on the North Prospect Church, at which the Sears building was discussed. He thought it was worthwhile to do further investigation and evaluation of the Sears building. He had not remembered the extent of demolition and reconstruction of the building during the 1980s. He said the staff report was appropriate as were the recommendations. He remarked on the importance of setting to the significance of buildings and requested that more attention be paid to existing and proposed settings when evaluating properties in the future. The landmark reports were based more on aesthetics than on area context. If the old Sears building were to go it would be a huge loss to Porter Square. Its relationship to the church was also important.

Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Mr. Irving moved to accept the staff recommendation not to initiate a landmark study of the property on the basis that the building's historical associations and architectural integrity were negatively impacted by the degree of reconstruction that took place in 1986 and for the further reason that no physical threat to the building is evident at this time. Mr. Bibbins seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2341: Fountain at Brattle and Craigie streets, by City of Cambridge o/b/o Cambridge Plant & Garden Club. Install bronze plaque on granite post.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application to install a plaque on the inside face of the existing granite pier to recognize the gift of the land and fountain by Pat Pratt and John Ross.

No members of the public commented on the matter.

Dr. Solet noted that there was a commemorative marker at the intersection in honor of George Kennedy. She asked if the new plaque could be put in a more prominent location.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the plaque would be placed on the inside of a granite pier. The donor was a modest person and did not wish to make a display.

Dr. Solet moved to grant a certificate of appropriateness for the plaque, as proposed. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Case 2344: 330 Mt. Auburn St., by Mount Auburn Hospital o/b/o The King of Thailand Birthplace Foundation. Install marker at Parsons Building, Surgical Wing.

Dr. Solet recused herself because the applicants had a similar proposal before the Commission for location at her home.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides of the proposed marker location and summarized the application. The other locations on the King of Thailand Trail were either outside the jurisdiction of the Commission or awaiting approval of the property owners.

Cholthanee Koerojna, President of the King of Thailand Birthplace Foundation, said the hospital administration had indicated that it wanted the marker on the ground at the left corner of the Parsons Building. She indicated the location on the slide.

Mr. Sullivan said he had been shown a different location in the grassy area near a newly planted tree. He recommended that the Commission approve a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed marker with the size and materials indicated in the application to be located on the ground against or in the vicinity of the Parsons Building, with the ultimate placement to be decided by the hospital and the foundation.

No members of the public offered comment on the matter.

Mr. Shirley said the proposed marker was appropriate because it was not attached to the building. As a part of the landscape, it would be discreet. If the marker were to be proposed to be attached to the building, he would have a harder time voting in favor of it because of the precedent for other honorary markers.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed marker with the size and materials indicated in the application to be located on the ground against or in the vicinity of the Parsons Building, with the ultimate placement to be decided by the hospital and foundation. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 7-0, with Ms. Berg voting and Dr. Solet recused.

Mr. King changed the order of the agenda, at the request of Dr. Solet, applicant for Case 2345.

Preservation Grants

PG 09-1: 28 Sixth Street (JAS). \$30,000 approved to strip and restore exterior; request additional \$7,200 for unforeseen costs of removing asbestos siding, making a total grant of \$37,200.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the proposed work, including stripping the asbestos shingle siding and restoring the clapboards. A request had been received for an additional \$7,200 for unforeseen costs of removing the asbestos siding by an approved asbestos contractor.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the remaining preservation grants balance of \$58,000 (until September 2009). He recommended approving the request for an additional \$7,200.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the request. Ms. Harrington seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

PG 09-5: 124 Thorndike Street (JAS). \$14,000 approved to strip and restore exterior; request additional \$4,500 to reduce owner's contribution, making a total grant of \$18,500.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building. The original grant had been up to \$18,000. He had negotiated the amount down to \$14,000. A request for additional funds of \$4,500 had been received. The owner was investing \$80,000 toward interior rehabilitation. He recommended approving the additional money.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the additional \$4,500. Mr. Irving seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Director's Report

Mr. Irving asked about the gut rehab project at the corner of Sherman and Winslow streets.

Mr. Sullivan described the demolition of the garage, ell, and front porch. The neighbors were up in arms about the project, which is as of right in the Residence C-1 zone.

Mr. King reported that the manager had filled the member vacancy by promoting Chandra Harrington to full member. The interview process was underway for the two alternate vacancies. Twenty-one applications had been received.

Mr. Sullivan reported that the Community Preservation Act money for the next fiscal year had fallen to \$9.2 million from the \$12.1 million received a couple of years ago. The Historical Commission's departmental budget had been approved, including Sarah Boyer's next oral history project for Area Four.

Case 2345: 15 Berkeley St. by Jo & Maxwell Solet o/b/o The King of Thailand Birthplace Foundation. Install marker in flower bed behind iron fence.

Dr. Solet recused herself and left the table because the application pertained to her own property.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the proposed location inside the fence, close to the ground, to the right of a large tree.

Maxwell Solet, co-owner with Jo Solet, said he was proud to be part of a long history of close relationships between the United States and Thailand. As owners, he said their only concern was that of privacy, and they were not sure what it would be like to have their house part of an official trail. He did not expect to have people wandering through the yard or ringing the doorbell, but he didn't know for sure.

Ms. Harrington asked why the plaque would be located inside the property rather than on the fence.

Dr. Solet answered that a plaque on a low stone would make it look less like the entire house belonged to the Foundation. Also, the plaque would be less likely to be stolen.

Annie Shapiro of the King of Thailand Birthplace Foundation said that the owners (or future owners) could request that the plaque be removed if they were unhappy with being part of the official trail.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a temporary certificate of appropriateness, for a period of five years, for the plaque and materials proposed in a location in front of the house and behind the fence that was mutually agreeable to the owners and the Foundation, it being understood that removal of the marker could take place within the five year period without further review of the Commission. Ms. Berg seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0, with Ms. Berg voting and Dr. Solet recused.

Dr. Solet returned to the table and moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 7-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 5/7/09**

Jim Shannon	820 Massachusetts Ave #407
Peter Lang	1 Frost Terr
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St #404
Peggy Curtis	1775 Mass Ave
Amy Shapiro-Kaznocha	83 High St, Gloucester 01930
Gordon Moore	9 Rutland St
G. Makrigiannis	P.O. Box 391111
Tony Bevilacqua	151 Cambridge St
Cholthanee Koerojna	15 Given Dr, Burlington 01803
Mana Sanguansook	15 Given Dr, Burlington 01803

Note: Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.