

Approved 4/7/11

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

February 3, 2011 - 806 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Bruce Irving, *Vice Chair*; Robert Crocker, Chandra Harrington, Frank Shirley, Jo Solet *Members*; Shary Page Berg, Susannah Tobin, *Alternates*

Members absent: William B. King, *Chair*; M. Wyllis Bibbins, *Member*; Joseph Ferrara, *Alternate*

Staff present: Charles Sullivan, Sarah Burks

Public present: See attached list.

With a quorum present, Vice Chair Irving called the meeting to order at 6:08 P.M. He made introductions and designated both alternates to vote on all matters.

Cambridge Heritage Trust

Consideration of the termination of the Cambridge Heritage Trust.

Mr. Crocker recused himself because of his position as an officer of the Cambridge Historical Society.

Allison Crump, a trustee of the Cambridge Heritage Trust, provided some background. CHT was established in the 1960s to rescue threatened buildings. After fixing several buildings up, moving them, and selling them for profit, the trust built an endowment to fund other projects. By law, CHT is required to disburse 5% of its endowment annually. She explained that due to record low interest rates, the endowment was rapidly being depleted. The increase in Cambridge real estate values had eclipsed its usefulness. [Mr. Shirley arrived]. The CHT trustees had decided to pursue a final investment of funds and dissolve. They had requested and received a proposal from the Cambridge Historical Society for a ten-year internship fund to research and design thematic tours of Cambridge; the program would be funded by a \$30,000 grant that represented the remaining endowment. She explained that the Declaration of Trust set up a formal relationship between the trust and the Cambridge Historical Commission, with the commission to administer any net assets of the trust at the time of termination. In the proposed plan, there would be no net assets after disbursement of the final grant.

Ms. Berg asked if there would be flexibility in the types of internship projects that would be funded by the grant over the ten year period. Ms. Crump answered in the affirmative. The Society had some initial ideas, but she assumed the program could remain flexible. She suggested that the Commission could be deputized to act in the future if the Society needed to make major adjustments to the internship program. In answer to Ms. Harrington, she described other recipients and projects considered by the trustees for the money, including the Cambridge Community Foundation and the Cambridge Public Library. The Commission had also been considered, but the trustees felt that the preservation grant program was generously funded through the Community Preservation Act.

Mr. Irving asked for questions or comments, but there were none. He closed the public comment period.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the CHC was the beneficiary of the CHT under the Declaration of Trust. The CHC's role in this matter was uncertain, but the City Solicitor wanted a formal request from the Commission before he would offer an opinion.

Ms. Tobin moved to ask the City Solicitor for an opinion on the proposal. Ms. Harrington noted her role as an advisor, but not officer, of the Society. She said she would abstain from voting. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0 with Dr. Solet, Mss. Berg and Tobin, and Messrs. Irving and Shirley voting.

Mr. Crocker returned to the table.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2515: 1797-1803 Massachusetts Ave., by Lesley University. Consider updated design proposal for selected demolition of rear additions and basement, relocation of church building, replacement of steeple, repair and restoration, installation of skylights, and construction of 4-story building with connection to church building.

Ms. Tobin recused herself from the case because she had made a purchase agreement on a property across the street from the church. She left the table.

Attorney James Rafferty spoke on behalf of his client, Lesley University. He noted that the Commission had approved the project in concept on June 3, 2010, including moving the church, removing the lower level and rearmost addition, and constructing a new building at the corner with a connecting structure to the church. He distributed copies of the minutes from June 3, 2010.

Dennis Carlone, an architect and urban planning consultant on the project, described the project goals: to provide vitality, identity, and sense of place; to preserve, appropriately reuse, and highlight the historic structure; and to create an inviting open space. He indicated it would be beneficial to lower the church, making it closer to the pedestrian level. The connector had been minimized and made mostly glass. The new building's design was quiet and not overly assertive. The setback to the church steps was approximately 7½ to 8 feet. The sidewalk on Roseland Street would be widened. The arts library on the first floor of the church would be open to the public. The wall of the rear mass was broken up, per zoning regulations. The mechanicals had been reduced as much as possible. The number of mechanical units had been reduced and some were located off site.

Jason Forney of Bruner Cott Architects reviewed the drawings in more detail and showed a video that walked the viewer from the front of the site into the connector structure. He showed renderings from the north and south along Massachusetts Avenue. He described the setbacks and design of the front plaza with seating, planter boxes, and trees. Loading and service would be located behind the new building. Transformers and gas meters would be located on the new building, not the church. He described the floor plans inside the church building and proposed a skylight on the north side to light the attic story. He described the grading and accessibility issues. The church would be approximately 3' above grade at the front left and 3'8" at the front right. He described the massing of the new building and the sawtooth roof of the glass connector as taking cues from the church. Boilers and a cooling tower would be located at University Hall. A 4' parapet on the new building would help screen mechanicals there. A 6' parapet on the addition behind the church would screen air handling units and possibly some small condenser units there. The project was being designed to attain LEED certification.

He described the proposed restoration work. They would retain as much original exterior material as possible. The stained glass windows would be protected in the short term and restored in the long term. The inappropriate steeple would be removed and the belfry and cupola would be restored to their ca. 1906 appearance. The missing acroteria and corner turrets would be restored or reconstructed. The corner finials could be replaced or not. The col-

umn capitols would be restored. The granite foundation would be matched as closely as possible with a veneer of stone. He described the materials for the new building as a creamy terracotta and glass. He submitted a hard copy of his digital presentation and a set of architectural drawings to supplement those submitted on January 13, 2011.

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

Dr. Solet asked about the comparative heights of the buildings and about snow removal from the sawtooth roof of the connector. Mr. Bruner answered that the roof was angled toward a gutter and the water would be directed to a holding tank.

Mr. Irving inspected the terracotta sample for the new building. How did the horizontal lines of the terracotta compare to the clapboard reveal on the church? Mr. Bruner answered that both were approximately 4”.

Ms. Berg asked about the materials and street furniture for the plaza. Skip Burck, a landscape architect with Richard Burck Associates, described the 4’ x 6’ scoring of the concrete paving, benches, and planters. The plaza was approximately 36’ by 42’ in size. The benches would be colorful, probably with steel supports.

Mr. Sullivan asked for explanation of the conditions that determined the proposed elevation of the church. Mr. Forney explained that the elevation of the church was determined by the need to make the floor accessible from the entrance at the link. A ramp with 1” of rise per foot allowed 30” of vertical navigation. The grade of the exterior would be lowered toward the street to maximize the height of the church at the front of the site.

Mr. Shirley asked for more information about the protective glazing on the stained glass windows. He noted that it was a complicated issue because of condensation between the glazing. Henry Moss of Bruner Cott Architects explained that they wanted to improve the U value across the whole assembly. Both interior and exterior panels were being considered. Further details could be brought back to the staff.

Ms. Burks noted that the church, a landmark, was exempt from the Stretch Code. She asked the height of the risers of the new front steps. Mr. Forney answered that they would be 5½” to 6”. She asked the proposed width of the skylight. Mr. Forney answered that 44’ was the preferred width. She asked about the proposal to insulate the church. Mr. Forney explained that it would be blown in cellulose (hydrophobic). The technical aspects of insulating the historic building were discussed.

Fred Meyer asked if there would be historic plaques on the site. Marylou Batt of Lesley University answered that there would be a plaque inside the church near the front door.

Mr. Irving asked for public comments.

Peter Lang of 1 Frost Terrace expressed displeasure about the review process and rezoning. He read from the landmark study report, which identified priorities for siting the church building, with the first priority being to leave the church in its existing location. Why wasn’t the Commission sticking to those priorities? He asked for the Commission’s protection of the neighbors. He objected to the 50’ height of the church being relocated to the site of the present churchyard and to the overall density of the project.

Carol Weinhaus of 64 Oxford Street thanked the Commission for the thoughtful review process that had helped to preserve the church. She expressed satisfaction with the lower church moved closer to the street, the mod-

ification of the design of the glass connector, the preservation of the interior space and beams, the new cupola, and the proportions of the new building.

Stan Trecker, Dean of the Art Institute of Boston, mentioned that the facility would be open to the public for open houses and possibly adult art classes.

Katherine LaPierre of 1 Frost Terrace said the Art Institute did not have to reside in the proposed building. The design could be done differently and better. She urged the Commission to give further thought to its priorities of six months ago.

Fred Meyer of 83 Hammond Street said the existing setting of the church on a high foundation was forbidding and made a narrow corridor on Roseland Street. The yard next door was not originally owned by the church or meant as a churchyard but was acquired later for an addition that was not built. He could understand why people would dislike the loss of open space. He offered his opinion as a realtor that the new development would not lower the neighbors' property values, but would instead increase them. He recited from the 1844-45 James Russell Lowell poem, "The Present Crisis," which he had edited and condensed to 12 lines,

T'is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle slaves
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our father's graves.

But we make old truth our falsehood, thinking that hath made us free.
Don't attempt the Future's portal with the Past's old rusted key.

Now it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside
Till the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

New occasions teach new duties. Time makes ancient good uncouth.
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep a-breast of Truth.

Once to ev'ry man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.

Some great cause, God's new Decision, offers each the bloom or blight;
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Ruth Ryals of 115 Upland Road approved of the project. It would be a great addition to the community.

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period.

Mr. Shirley commented on the relationship of the aggressively horizontal new building with the sloping angle of the entry/connector. The façade of the entry/connector was disorganized and the jog of the connector created a small corner where trash would collect between the connector and the church building. Simeon Bruner responded that the connector was designed so that the glass of the new building did not run directly into the church building. A straight horizontal line would be boring. Dr. Solet said she shared Mr. Shirley's concerns about the irregularity of the connector. It would be enough for it to be exciting from the interior, with its sawtooth roof.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the Commission had approved the overall design concept in June, at least in part because of the mitigating circumstances of the proposed restoration. He said his biggest regret was that the church

could not be as high as 5' above grade, as it seemed to be on its original site, but he understood the reasons for it being limited by grading options and accessibility. He recommended approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as submitted, with the condition that the finials be restored and subject to ongoing review of details and construction drawings.

Mr. Shirley said the connector should be boring and not overly aggressive. It should be below the entablature of the church. Mr. Irving said he had a strongly positive response to the design of the connector. The tilt of the connector was present in June drawings as well. Mr. Ferrara agreed, saying that if it were more regular and boring, there would be no visual cue that the connector was the main entrance point. Mr. Sullivan said it was an imaginative design element and not incongruous to either building.

Dr. Solet noted that the model had been much more helpful to understanding the design than the drawings. She said she could support the project, which had come a long way from the original design.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as submitted, with the condition that the finials be restored, and subject to ongoing staff review of details and construction drawings. Ms. Berg seconded the motion, which passed 5-1 with Mr. Shirley in opposition.

Case 2663: 52 Brattle St./1 Story St., by Brattle St. 52 LLC. Construct a 3-story lobby and elevator addition on the west wall of building.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the site.

MacGregor Freeman, principal at BTA Architects, described the proposed addition for an elevator. The building, built in 1958, was not currently accessible because the entrance was 6 steps up from the sidewalk. The addition would contain a lobby at the sidewalk level and an elevator to access the second and third floors. The small delivery area on the west side of the building would still be functional. The addition would be 7'2" wide and three stories tall with windows on the west wall. He displayed the floor plans and elevations. He said it was infeasible to increase the dimensions of the existing elevator shaft inside the building and there was not enough room for a chair lift on the front steps. An awning would be carried across the addition.

Ms. Harrington asked if the old entry would still be operable. Mr. Freeman indicated that it would be, though with separate lobbies. Dr. Solet said the accessible entrance would be the main entrance. She noted the excessive noise of the Café of India restaurant's exhaust fan.

Norton Rimmer spoke about the accessibility improvements. The new elevator would be an extra amenity.

Ms. Berg asked about zoning relief. Mr. Freeman replied that it would need a variance and a special permit.

Mr. Shirley asked about matching the brick. Mr. Freeman said he hadn't started looking yet, but he would do his best. There was a 4" shadow line between the old and new, so the match would not have to be exact.

Mr. Irving asked why the top corner was notched. Mr. Freeman said it was designed to soften the corner.

Mr. Sullivan said he had received a comment from the Cambridge Center of Adult Education in favor of a fence and gate as to reduce objectionable activity in the alley. Mr. Freeman said there could be a gate in the alley.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

Mr. Sullivan recommended a Certificate of Appropriateness on the condition that a gate be installed, and subject to review of details by the staff. Mr. Shirley so moved, Mr. Crocker seconded, and the motion passed 7-0.

Preservation Grants

PG 11-3 (New) 11 Speridakis Terrace, by owner and Just A Start. Strip and reside front façade to match original, \$14,865.

Mr. Sullivan presented photographs of the building and summarized the proposal. The resident owner was income eligible. He recommended granting 2/3 of the requested amount.

Mr. Shirley asked about the door and if the balustrade would be replaced. Mr. Sullivan said that was not in the proposed scope of work.

Dr. Solet moved to approve a grant of \$10,000 with the option of an additional \$5,000 if the owner wished to replace the balustrade shown in the historic photo. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

IPG 09-2 (Reconsideration): 13 Waterhouse Street, by First Church of Christ, Scientist. 50% of additional cost of masonry repairs, \$2,047.

Mr. Sullivan said he was bringing the application back to the Commission for reconsideration. He said although the requested amount was very small the owners had very limited fundraising capabilities.

Ms. Harrington said the Commission had been careful at the last meeting to award several grants with very limited funds.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the grant as requested. Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 5-2 with Ms. Berg and Ms. Harrington in opposition.

New Business: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2667: 1360 Massachusetts Ave., by Harvard University Real Estate, o/b/o Au Bon Pain, tenant. Replace blade sign with new internally illuminated blade sign.

Ms. Burks showed slides and summarized the application. The sign needed Commission approval because it would be internally illuminated.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve the application, as submitted, subject to ten day notice procedures. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

Minutes

There being no corrections offered by the Commission members to the December 15, 2010 minutes, Dr. Solet moved to approve them as submitted. Ms. Tobin seconded the motion, which passed 5-0 with Messrs. Irving and Shirley, Dr. Solet, and Mss. Berg and Harrington voting. Ms. Tobin and Mr. Crocker abstained because they had not been present.

Mrs. Harrington moved to adjourn, and Dr. Solet seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 2/3/11**

Nina Mashurovz	86 Linden St, Boston 02134
Allison Crump	58 Pleasant St
Thomas McDermott	19 Boardman Ave, Melrose 02176
Sandy Doran	29 Everett St
Dennis Carlone	222 Third St
Simeon Bruner	130 Prospect St
Marylou Batt	29 Everett St
Carol Weinhaus	64 Oxford St, #14
Peter Lang	1 Frost Terrace
Skip Burck	7 Davis Sq, Somerville 02144
Henry Moss	130 Prospect St
Stephanie Power	130 Prospect St
Ruth Ryals	115 Upland Rd
Fred Meyer	83 Hammond St
Richard Cohen	637 Washington St, Brookline 02446

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.