

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

January 5, 2023 – Meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar (835 8796 7239) - 6:00 P.M.

Members present (online): Susannah Tobin, *Vice Chair*; Liz Lyster, Chandra Harrington, Jo Solet, Yuting Zhang, *Members*; Paula Paris and Gavin Kleespies, *Alternate Members*

Members absent: Bruce Irving, *Chair*; Joseph Ferrara, *Member*; Kyle Sheffield, *Alternate Member*

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

Public present (online): See attached list.

This meeting was held online with remote participation consistent with the provisions set forth in the Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations signed by Governor Baker on July 16, 2022. The public was able to participate online via the Zoom webinar platform.

With a quorum present, Vice Chair Tobin called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. She explained the online meeting instructions and public hearing procedures, then introduced commissioners and staff. She dispensed with the Consent Agenda and designated the alternate members to vote on all matters.

Public Hearing: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 4871 (continued): 95 Irving St., by Fox and Prince 86 LLC; IML 45, LLC. Demolish the garage and rear additions. Construct a new detached garage and rear addition. Renovate and restore exterior. Alter paving, alter exterior lighting.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the property. He noted that the hearing was a continuance from November 3, 2022. [Mr. Kleespies arrived.]

Brian Fell of Robert A.M. Stern Architects (RAMSA) reported that his client had met with the abutters and discussed the proposal. The pool was no longer included in the application. He shared a revised site plan.

Troy Sober of Gregory Lombardi Design said the tree that had been previously been proposed for removal due to the pool placement would be maintained. He described the proposed path lighting at the steps down to the yard. The existing bluestone front walkway would be replaced in the same general location with another natural material.

Ms. Paris asked if the project would need zoning relief. James Rafferty of Adams & Rafferty indicated it would need a special permit from the Board of Zoning Appeal. He noted that the owner had discussed the proposed addition to the house with the abutters.

Ms. Tobin asked if the attendees had any questions of fact.

Marilee Meyer of 10 Dana Street asked what material would be used for the front walkway. Mr. Sober said it would be a natural material—either bluestone or granite.

Ms. Tobin opened the public comment period.

Ms. Meyer expressed her appreciation that the applicant had removed the pool from the scope of work and would retain the tree.

Ms. Tobin closed the public comment period.

Ms. Harrington said she was glad to see that the discussions between the new owner and the

neighbors had resulted in positive reactions to the project.

Dr. Solet agreed. It was wise to take a little extra time for discussion. The proposal was terrific. Ms. Tobin concurred.

Mr. Kleespies noted that there was a stone block with date or address on it and asked if it would be retained. Mr. Sober confirmed they planned to retain that stone with the numbers on it.

Ms. Paris expressed appreciation for the constructive conversation between neighbors.

Ms. Zhang said she would recuse herself from the vote because she had not been present at the November hearing, but she had reviewed the plans and thought it was an appropriate project.

Mr. Kleespies moved to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the application as presented in the revised drawings. Dr. Solet seconded. The motion passed in a rollcall vote 6-0. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris)

Case 4897: 114 Brattle St., by Rosalind Gorin and Mathew Bud. Replace the wood fence, gates and side porch railings with synthetic material to match the existing.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and showed slides of the property. He showed an aerial photograph and noted the location of the existing fence around the perimeter of the property. He described the condition and design of the existing spindle fence with square posts and a concave neck molding and pyramidal cap. He pointed out the small urns located on either side of the front gate. He noted that the Commission had approved at least two applications in the Old Cambridge Historic District for synthetic materials to replicate wood fences. PVC was not a new material and had proven to be long-lasting.

Zaid Mongell of Sea-Dar Construction presented the application on behalf of the owner. He said the existing fence would be replicated in PVC including details such as the urns and gate. The existing solid panels of the 6-foot high fence at the back of the property were made of PVC though the posts were wood. The proposal included the stair railings on the side of the house facing Willard Street.

Ms. Lyster asked if the PVC material could be painted. Mr. Mongell replied in the affirmative. The fence would be painted to match the existing color. Ms. Lyster asked if paint lasted longer on PVC than wood. Mr. Mongell said it depended on the color and application. Dark colors did not last as long.

Dr. Solet asked if the material was reflective. Some PVC fences were shiny. Mr. Mongell answered that the proposed fence would look the same as wood when painted. Dr. Solet asked if PVC was more prone to mildew than wood. Mr. Sullivan answered that it was not.

Mr. Kleespies asked about the anticipated lifespan of the product. Mr. Mongell said the warranties are from 30-50 years but in his opinion the material would last longer than that. The paint would weather but the PVC would not bubble or degrade.

Ms. Paris asked about the age of the existing wood fence. Mr. Mongell said it was probably about 30 years old and had been renovated in 2012.

Ms. Tobin asked for questions of fact from the public.

Ms. Meyer asked if different types of wood had different lifespans for fence construction. Mr. Mongell said the quality of wood available today is not very good because it is plantation grown. Some tropical hardwoods were denser, but they were difficult to get and not renewable.

Ms. Tobin opened the public comment period.

Ms. Meyer said she hoped it was correct that it would not be a shiny vinyl product.

Mr. Sullivan showed a few slides of solid PVC fences that the Commission had approved, including 174 Brattle Street, 28 Fayerweather Street, and 8 Follen Street. Fences of this type are constructed in a similar way to wood with milled parts and joinery. He recommended approving the application for a certificate of appropriateness based on the close replication of the design.

Ms. Lyster asked if the PVC material could be mixed with an off-white tint so that as the paint weathered the base material wouldn't appear as stark white. She asked if the material contained recycled content. Mr. Mongell said the proposed product did not contain recycled material. He said he would look into the tinting question.

Dr. Solet asked if the material was of the same weight as wood. Mr. Mongell said it was about the same weight as red oak. Dr. Solet said she was sorry there wasn't something that would be a better environmental option. Mr. Mongell agreed that none of the choices, wood or synthetic, were optimal for the environment but this at least was a long-lasting product.

Ms. Harrington moved to approve a certificate of appropriateness for the application as presented. Ms. Paris seconded. The motion passed in a rollcall vote 7-0. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris)

Public Hearings: Landmark Designation Proceedings

Case L-142: 194-196 and 194R Prospect St. Estate of Linda Papaforti; Cecily Miller & Kenneth Field; Alaa Murabit; Peter & Suzanne Martin, property owners. Consider the preliminary landmark study report and make recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Sullivan shared his screen and described the Greek Revival double house at 194-196 Prospect Street and the more recent additional unit at the back of 194 Prospect. The original house had been documented by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in 1970. It was designated as a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. He pointed out the rear ell and bay window, which had been added during the residence of Maria and Louis Baldwin. An enclosed porch had been added in a later period.

Eric Hill, the CHC Survey Director, described the property's significance for its associations with the builder Alvaro Blodgett and the Baldwins. He provided biographical information about Maria and Louis Baldwin. Maria Baldwin was the first African American school master in New England and only the second woman in Cambridge to hold such a position. Her brother Louis Baldwin was active in local politics and had a real estate business with James Dorsey before relocating to the west coast.

Mr. Sullivan summarized the proposed Standards and Design Guidelines in the report.

Ms. Tobin asked if there were questions of fact.

Ms. Harrington asked if Louis Baldwin's buildings were extant. Mr. Hill answered that there were several still standing. The Greenacre apartment at 124 Oxford Street was the most impressive.

Dr. Solet said she had spotted some typos. She asked if preservation grant funds could be used. Mr. Sullivan answered that an income-eligible homeowner or an affordable housing agency could receive

preservation grant funds. He said a grant had been discussed a number of years ago with the now-deceased owner, but it had never been finalized.

Ms. Paris asked if the guidelines said anything about the chain link fence. Mr. Sullivan said the fence could remain, but if replaced it would be important to match the style of fence existing at 194. Mr. Hill said the guideline #6 covered site features including fences. Specific language about matching fencing on the other side could be added. Ms. Paris said she would encourage the repair or replacement of the deteriorated fence.

Ms. Tobin asked for questions from the public.

Marie Saccoccio of 55 Otis Street asked if the sale of the Baldwin house was forced due to the bankruptcy case of Louis Baldwin's real estate business. Mr. Hill said that was likely, but the exact nature of the matter had not been discovered.

Joseph Franzese, attorney representing the estate of Linda Papaforti, asked if the estate could apply for grant funding to make some improvements to the house if it could not be sold as is. Mr. Sullivan said that if the current owner(s) could be determined eligible he would support the application for a grant. Mr. Franzese thanked Mr. Hill for making him aware of the landmark proposal. The Papaforti family were Greek, and Linda's uncle had immigrated to Cambridge.

Dr. Solet asked for clarification about recapture of grant funds upon sale of a property. Mr. Sullivan said a grant contract would have a clause about return of a portion of the grant depending on how soon the property is sold.

Mr. Sullivan summarized letters received from owners at 194 and 194R Prospect Street. There was concern that the guideline about mechanical equipment might be too restrictive given the limited open space on the lot for siting such equipment. A heat pump or solar panels were given as possible future energy conservation upgrades. Mr. Sullivan said the report could be amended to accommodate installation of that equipment in a sensitive manner.

Dr. Solet offered her corrections on page 11 and 18.

Ms. Paris said it was a great report and summary. She asked that the derogatory language quoted about Louis Baldwin be removed.

Dr. Solet moved to approve the preliminary report with the stated amendments and to forward the final report to the City Council with a positive recommendation for designation. Mr. Kleespies seconded. The motion passed in a rollcall vote 7-0. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris)

Minutes

Dr. Solet said she had read the minutes of October 5 and December 1 and had no corrections. She moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Paris seconded, and the motion passed in a rollcall vote 7-0. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris)

Director's Report

Dr. Solet asked about a fence policy. Mr. Sullivan said the Commission had a statement of best practices for synthetic materials but could schedule a hearing to formally adopt a policy.

Mr. Sullivan welcomed Ms. Zhang back from her travel out of the country. Ms. Zhang asked about the twice monthly meeting schedule for 2023. Mr. Sullivan said the second meeting would only be used when needed.

Mr. Kleespies asked if a landmark study for the Valentine House and fence at 37 Brookline Street was warranted. Mr. Sullivan said he had been meeting with advocates for reuse of the house as an arts center or housing for artists. He described the relocation of the three-decker from Blanche Street by MIT and sale to Peter Valentine. The Commission had a hearing on Valentine's request to landmark the fence about ten years ago but declined to start the study. Landmark designation was not the best tool for protecting outsider art like the fence.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn. Ms. Lyster seconded, and the motion passed 7-0 in a roll call vote. (Harrington, Lyster, Solet, Zhang, Tobin, Kleespies, Paris) The meeting adjourned precisely at 7:51 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

Members of the Public
Present on the Zoom Webinar online, January 5, 2023

James Rafferty	Adams & Rafferty, 907 Mass Ave
Troy Sober	Gregory Lombardi Design
Zaid Mongell	For 114 Brattle St
Rachel Kanter	95 Irving St
Joseph Franzese	For the Estate of Linda Papaforti
Brian Fell	RAMSA
Leah Abrams	RAMSA
Sue Stafford	12 Francis Ave
Jessica Griffith	187 Lexington St, Waltham
Wendy Mariner	10 Francis Ave
Marie Saccoccio	55 Otis St
Sebastian Torrente	12 Arlington St
Marilee Meyer	10 Dana St, 404
John Hawkinson	Cambridgeday.com
Danielle Bagwin	1 Park Ave
Eric Hill	187 Lexington St. Waltham

Note: Town is Cambridge, unless otherwise indicated.