

Approved 12/3/09

Minutes of the Cambridge Historical Commission

November 5, 2009 - 831 Massachusetts Avenue - 6:00 P.M.

Members present: Chair King; Vice Chair Irving; Dr. Solet; Messrs. Crocker, Ferrara, and Shirley

Staff present: Mr. Sullivan, Ms. Burks

Public present: See attached list.

With a quorum present, Chair King called the meeting to order at 6:08 P.M. and introduced the commissioners and staff. He designated alternate member Ferrara to vote on all matters. He described the consent agenda procedures and reviewed the agenda, asking if there were any cases for which any member of the public, commission, or staff did not want to have a full hearing.

Mr. Crocker moved to approve the following cases per the consent agenda procedures.

Case 2430: 95 Mt. Auburn St., by 95 Mt. Auburn Realty Trust o/b/o Verizon Wireless. Alter signs on awnings.

Case 2437: 99 Brattle St. and 3 Phillips Pl., by Lesley University. Install signs for parking and accessibility; install light fixtures.

Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Public Hearings: Alterations to Designated Properties

Case 2404 (continued): 0 Garden St., by Christ Church Cambridge. Install sign. *Request to withdraw without prejudice received.*

Mr. King reported that there had been a written request to withdraw the application, without prejudice in order that the church could review the zoning situation and meet with city departments.

[Mr. Irving arrived].

Dr. Solet moved to grant the request to withdraw the application without prejudice. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. Mr. Shirley said he was not present at the earlier hearing and would not vote.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the sign was not presently in place. The Commission should make it clear that the sign should not be reinstalled until approval is granted. Mr. King said that if the Commission voted to approve the motion it would indicate an understanding that the sign should not be reinstalled until approval is granted.

The motion passed 4-0 with all voting. Mr. Irving did not vote as he had arrived late.

Case 2429: 23 Berkeley St., by Kenneth & Catharine Taylor and Anthony & Virginia Woodcock. Erect wire fence with privet hedges; install gate and fence panel.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and summarized the application.

Ken Taylor, an owner, explained that the property consisted of two condominiums with separate yards. The wire fence, contained within a privet hedge, would be installed only on the right side of the house to allow his dogs to be outside. The privet hedges would provide privacy screening on the left side, but not full enclosure. He explained that his wife had a neuromuscular condition and was unable to walk the dogs on a leash. He described the wood gate and fence panel that would extend to the party line fence and the matching panel by the garage at the back of the yard.

Mr. King asked if the new fence panel would match the existing, and Mr. Taylor replied affirmatively.

No members of the public asked to speak, and Mr. King closed the public comment period.

Dr. Solet said she considered the alterations to be appropriate, but the request would also qualify for a certificate of hardship. Mr. Sullivan said there was nothing inappropriate about the proposal, and recommended the Commission approve a certificate of appropriateness.

Dr. Solet so moved. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion. Mr. King designated Mr. Ferrara, an alternate, to vote on all matters. The motion passed 6-0.

Case 2431: 2-4 Longfellow Pk., by Corp. of the Pres. Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Repair church damaged by fire including new roof, sloped walkway and ramp, egress door, expand areas, enlarge door, add door, expand window wells.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the building that had burned several months previously. The brick walls and some of the windows were still intact, but the rest of the building was destroyed by fire or removed afterward. Chapter 40C of the General Laws allowed for reconstruction as of right if the previous conditions were matched. Some alterations to the building were proposed and were before the Commission for consideration. He summarized the application including a proposal for air conditioning condensers along the Brattle Street side at the basement level.

James Rafferty, attorney for the church, said the requested changes were necessary to meet new codes for accessibility and energy. The cooling system was as old as the building and was nearing the end of its life before the fire. The church had met with the neighbors to discuss the proposed condenser locations. He said there were some details that had not yet been decided, such as the materials for the window trim. He asked how closely the Commission would require the materials to match the existing.

Erik Mollo-Christensen of Tsoi/Kobus & Associates Architects presented a rendering of the church and described a new accessible sloped walkway, ramp, and door at the main entrance. He described the proposed basement well with the air conditioning condensers along Brattle Street side. They would be below grade with grates and plantings. A second well would be located on the Hawthorn Street side for fire department access. He described the elevator override, facing Hawthorn Street, covered with materials to match the roof. He described the proposed dormers, which would also be covered with roofing material. He described the proposed changes to doors for egress.

Mr. Ferrara asked for further details about the accessible walkway. Mr. Mollo-Christensen explained that the slope of the walkway was less than 1:20 and would not require a handrail.

Dr. Solet asked how many condensers would be installed and what their maximum decibel level would be. Mr. Mollo-Christensen said there would be 14 units in the well on the Brattle Street side with another 6 on the roof. The installation would have to comply with the noise ordinance levels of 50db at night. The old system ran on domestic water and was no longer allowed by code. The primary usage time would be on Sundays and it was unlikely they'd all be running at the same time.

Dr. Solet asked if the new windows would be operable. Mr. Mollo-Christensen answered that the windows that had previously been operable would be again.

Mr. King asked if the lawn was changing grade. Mr. Mollo-Christensen answered that the lawn would slope up about 12".

Mr. Shirley asked for and Mr. Mollo-Christensen provided clarification on what was visible from Hawthorn Street. Mr. Mollo-Christensen added that the dormers were for intake and exhaust air and that the existing two satellite dishes would be replaced with one smaller one.

Mr. Irving asked if the proponents had considered a geothermal heating and cooling system which could eliminate the condensers. Mr. Mollo-Christensen said there would be a ground source heat pump.

Dr. Solet also pointed out the solar potential of the large roof area.

Richard Hedberg, the project manager, said that many small HVAC units were chosen instead of a few big ones because the larger spaces in the church were used infrequently during the week.

Catharine Taylor of 23 Berkeley Street asked if a hydraulic elevator had been considered to eliminate the penthouse. Mr. Mollo-Christensen explained that code required a head house for the safety of a repair person.

Ken Taylor of 23 Berkeley Street suggested that the egress doors be painted a color that would blend with the masonry wall. He noted that 14 condensers could raise the temperature at the sidewalk and be noisy.

Sam Appleton of 10 Hawthorn Street said he did not want six condensers facing his family's house because of the noise. His father was a psychiatrist and worked out of the house. The church had not provided a report about whether more than 50% of the building had been destroyed or about the noise of the six condensers.

Boardman Lloyd of 14 Chauncy Street said he was representing the Harrises, abutters of the church. Their concern was the HVAC proposal. Mrs. Harris had an office at the back of her house and was worried about the noise of the condensers. He encouraged further study of a geothermal system.

Mr. King clarified that the License Commission was responsible for enforcing the noise ordinance and that the Historical Commission was limited to reviewing what was visible from the public way and what was appropriate to the historic character of the district.

Mr. Mollo-Christensen said the fan motors were mounted on isolators and were the quietest they could find. A sound dampening structure could force sound to go up, not out. One or two units might fit on the Hawthorn Street side.

Mr. Rafferty said the flat roof area was considered for the condensers, but concerns from the neighbors caused the team to propose putting them in the well below grade on the Brattle Street side instead.

Ms. Taylor suggested that if geothermal could eliminate the well along Brattle Street, then the accessible walkway could be located along Brattle Street so that a ramp was not needed on the front elevation of the church.

Spencer Nam of 1 Leighton Street said his mother lived in Porter Square and was a member of the church. She had no car and got to church by bus. He said they would appreciate allowing the chapel to be rebuilt in its current location.

Mr. Sullivan reported that he had met with the design team several times. He suggested separating the two sides of the accessible path and adding more landscaping so there would be no need for a retaining wall between the paths. The exterior restoration should use as much existing material as remains. The window details, such as the dimension and profile of the muntins would be important. Consideration of the mechanicals should balance the impacts to the general public and the abutters.

Mr. Shirley said the brickwork, including saw cutting for new egress doors, would require careful detailing and execution. He expressed concern about the large size of the mechanical well along Brattle Street. It was a very important location with the Longfellow Historic Site across the street. The mechanicals should not detract from the experience of this very special place. He said it would be good to have renderings that would give a sense of the effect of that area.

Dr. Solet spoke about the problems with the complaint-driven enforcement system of the noise ordinance. She encouraged the church to explore a geo-thermal system. She suggested separating the application and asking the church to return with more detail about certain aspects of the project.

Mr. Shirley moved to approve the framing of the dormers and elevator override and installing the new exterior doors on the following conditions:

1. Details of the trim and finish of the dormers and elevator override are subject to further review by the Historical Commission at a future hearing.
2. Selection of paint colors are delegated to the CHC staff.
3. Masonry repairs and alterations are subject to the review and approval of the CHC staff.
4. The balance of the work proposed in the application, including accessibility improvements, HVAC, replacement of missing windows, trim details and materials are all subject to the further discussion, review and approval of the Commission at a hearing to be scheduled when the applicant is ready and informs the staff in time for full advertisement of the continued public hearing.

Mr. Rafferty, on his client's behalf, agreed to waive the 45 day response time on the remainder of the application.

Dr. Solet seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Public Hearing: Demolition Review

Case D-1180: Acorn Park Drive, Building 15., by Acorn Park I, LLC. Demolish office building (1953-1967).

Mr. King recused himself because his former law firm was employed by the applicant. He left the table.

Mr. Irving assumed the chair.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides and described the Building 15, former headquarters of the Arthur D. Little Company (ADL), which developed Acorn Park as an early suburban office park after moving from its original building on Memorial Drive. He showed an aerial view of the ADL campus and the former buildings now demolished. In 2004, the Commission had allowed demolition of several other ADL buildings, but highlighted future demolition of Building 15 as a matter of concern. Only Building 15 remained from that era. The southern half of the property had been returned to wetlands and several new buildings constructed on the northern half. He described the history of ADL, a scientific consulting firm.

Robert Schlager of The Bullfinch Companies described the phased construction of Building 15 from the 1950s to 1980. He explained that the building had flooded several times, the site being located in a flood plain. Re-using the existing building, or preserving the façade and building behind it, was studied but deemed impractical because of the need for different floor heights and floor plates and the difficulty of meeting new seismic codes. He referenced two engineering reports that he had commissioned and submitted to the Commission. He said he would like to create an exhibit about the history of ADL using the salvaged cornerstone of Building 15.

Larry Grossman of ADD Inc. architects described the power plant Buildings 40, 42, and 46, which were also proposed for demolition. He displayed the Master Plan approved by the Planning Board in 2004. He described the new Building 200/300 for Forrester Inc. He explained that the site of Building 15 would be a parking area for an interim period, then eventually would be the site of Buildings 500 and 600. The new buildings would have a ground floor 6' above grade with flood storage, whereas Building 15's ground floor was built at grade on a slab. The floor heights were also increased by 5'-8" He described the difficulty of connecting the old with new construction. There was no tenant yet for Building 500/600 and they did not want to stabilize the building for an unknown tenant. The corner of Building 15 no longer faced an important part of the campus, since the southern part of the campus had been returned to wetlands. He suggested the location opposite the Building 15 entrance at the nexus of the bike/pedestrian path. He described the possible history panels, a shade structure, and benches.

Mr. Schlager said the existing building was leased for another 3-6 months and he had been unable to find a new tenant because of the outdated construction and flooding concerns.

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

Mr. Irving closed the public comment period. He asked the Commission to first consider the building's significance and then if significant, whether it was preferably preserved as compared to the proposed replacement, which was a parking lot for the interim period.

Mr. Schlager said parking was just one proposal. The land, or some portion of it, could also be planted with grass.

Dr. Solet moved to find the building significant, as defined in the ordinance, for its broad associations with the industrial history of Cambridge, as a rare example of its type in Cambridge, and as an example of the work of Cabot, Cabot, & Forbes. Mr. Shirley seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. Irving noted that the setting was not the typical urban environment, but more of a park on the edge of the city. The absence of a building on this site would not be like a missing tooth in a dense urban streetscape.

Mr. Schlager offered to commit to no parking along Acorn Park Drive in the long term and to preserving all the oak trees along Acorn Park Drive except where they interfered with utilities. Those that could not be saved would be replaced with new trees.

Mr. Shirley said he was always disappointed to see an industrial structure relegated to the landfill, as it represented a lot of embodied energy. There were likely solutions that would allow it to be leased. He said the architecture was not at the same level of significance as the historical associations with ADL. The building was located well outside the urban fabric of the city. He would not consider it preferably preserved, but would like the details of the interpretive exhibit to come before the Commission for review and be constructed at the same time as Building 500/600.

Mr. Ferrara agreed, adding that the interpretive exhibit should be built with the same level of permanence as the new office buildings. Dr. Solet suggested that an interior location for the exhibit also be considered.

Mr. Shirley moved to find the building not preferably preserved in the context of the master plan and in light of the property owner's offer for an interpretive exhibit, preservation of the cornerstone and the oaks along

Acorn Park Drive and on the condition that Building 15 be documented to the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Mr. Ferrara seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Mr. King resumed the chair and reconvened the meeting at 8:50 P.M.

Public Meeting: Landmark Designation Proceedings

1991 Massachusetts Avenue (St. James Church). Consider petition of registered property owners requesting landmark designation of St. James Church property.

Mr. King noted that the agenda had mislabeled this matter as a public hearing but it was not. It was a public meeting but not hearing. The Commission had received a valid petition from Cambridge registered voters requesting that the Commission commence a new landmark study for the St. James Church property, including all the buildings and the Knights Garden. He noted for the record that there were a large number of interested members of the public present. The staff would review the history of the Commission's study of the site and the Commission would consider whether to accept the petition and schedule a public hearing.

Mr. Sullivan showed slides, described the different buildings and additions and their dates of construction. In 1987, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) had taken a preservation restriction as a condition of a grant for restoration work. Grants were also given to the church by MHC and the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) in 1998. The CHC had written a landmark designation study report but in 2005 entered into a memorandum of understanding with the church. He read excerpts of the memo and the preservation guidelines contained in it. The Parish House was acknowledged to be less significant than the church and renovations or demolition were noted as possible considerations in the future. The Knight's Garden, of 1915 design, was identified as a significant space. He explained that ca. 2008 the church had entered into an agreement with Oaktree Development to develop an L-shaped 4-story building with below grade parking on the church property and adjoining carwash property, which Oaktree had purchased. On October 16, 2009, a petition was received requesting that the Historical Commission again consider initiating a landmark designation study for the church property. The Commission's practice was to place consideration of a petition on the agenda of the next available meeting, decide whether to accept the petition, in which case a fully advertised public hearing would be scheduled for the meeting following. If the CHC considered the proposal to be a threat to significant features identified in the memo of understanding, it could decide to accept the petition and initiate a landmark study. During the study, the CHC could receive and consider an application for alterations to the property. A detailed development proposal had been circulated to the CHC. He had told the church that it probably would not be the CHC's intent to prevent any development of the site, but that it might have concerns similar to his own about blocking views of the church or other significant adjacent buildings or about making the church building subsidiary to the new construction in massing or siting. He noted that the MHC had not yet had its discussion on the project.

Mr. King described the demolition review process that currently applied to the Parish House. The CHC also had a procedure to consider landmark study at a hearing five months into a six month demolition delay period. If the CHC did not commence a landmark study now, it could do so later if it were to impose a demolition delay.

Dr. Solet referred to one of the letters that had been received by the CHC that cited a deed restriction on the church property. Was that restriction relevant? Mr. Sullivan said that the CHC did not have standing to make that determination.

Mr. Irving moved to schedule a public hearing for the December 3 meeting to consider the petition and to decide whether to initiate a landmark designation study for the church property. Dr. Solet seconded the motion.

Mr. King asked for reactions from the church representatives and the public, without hearing the substance of the proposals.

Richard Clarey, of 15 Brookford Street and the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, said he was surprised to learn of the easement and memo of understanding. He said it seemed that the owner was trying to gain a head of steam by going to other boards before the CHC and MHC. Gwen Noyes, of Oaktree Development, said that the CHC staff was consulted very early in the process.

Holly Antolini, Rector of Saint James, observed that the benefit of the project was that it would carry on the church life and allow for the church to concentrate on maintaining the church building proper. She said the design was large but quiet, would maximize the retention of the garden space, and would show off the architecture of the church proper.

Jessica Pratt, of 11 Beech Street, expressed her concern about the scale of the 4-story building, garage ramp access on Beech Street, and blocking of views of significant buildings. She said she understood the fiscal needs of the church but asked the church to modify the design so that it was not so large.

Costanza Eggers of 47 Porter Road spoke about the Knights Garden. Would demolition review consider the impact on the garden? She said there was federal money available for preserving open space.

John Armstrong of 36 Orchard Street spoke against waiting to initiate a landmark study until after a demolition delay.

Mr. King closed the public comment period. He asked for a vote on Mr. Irving's motion to schedule a public hearing on the matter for December 3. The motion passed 6-0.

Minutes

Mr. King deferred consideration of the minutes until the December meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Sullivan reported that the public library had opened that weekend. A building permit had been signed for 9 Sibley Court and the appeal period had elapsed. The Board of Zoning Appeal would hear the matter of 45 Foster Street on December 3. The World War II oral history publication was out and was a huge success.

Dr. Solet moved to adjourn, Mr. Ferrara seconded, and the motion passed unanimously at 9:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Burks
Preservation Planner

**Members of the Public
Who Signed Attendance Sheet 11/5/09**

Tim Sullivan	Barlo Signs, 158 Greeley St, Hudson 03051
Sam Appleton	11 Hawthorn St
Joanne Stillmaker	183 Sherman St
Boardman Lloyd	14 Chauncy St #6
Richard Hedberg	2 Lauren Lane, Newtown Square, PA 19073
Erik Mollo-Christensen	1 Brattle Sq
Gordon Low	30 Howells Rd, Belmont 02478
Gregory Luongo	1 Brattle Sq
Christoph Lusenin	31C Shaler Ln
Emily Lusenin	31C Shaler Ln
Kate Gehlke	44 Easton St #2, Allston 02134
Emily Parker	23 Shaler Lane – C
Robert Parker	23 Shaler Lane – C
Levering White	113 Brattle St
Lydia Gralla	19 Beech St
Jan Corash	84 Orchard St
Judy Clark	81 Orchard St
Leonora Hall Williams	9 Orchard St
Gwen Noyes	175 Richdale Ave
Leslie Borden	12 Saginaw Ave
Holly Antonlini	1991 Massachusetts Ave
Sarah Farrington	18 Frost St
John Armstrong	36 Orchard St
Dick Clarey	15 Brookford St
Michael Brandon	27 Seven Pines Ave
Gretchen Friesinger	18 Orchard St
Alan Aukeman	90 Inman St #2
Mark Yoder	21 Haskell St, Allston 02134
Karen Merideth	110 Central St #3, Somerville, 02143
Charles Wibiralski	21 Holbrook St, Boston 02130
Costanza Eggers	47 Porter Rd

Town is Cambridge unless otherwise indicated.