

Minutes of July 7 2009

Harvard Historic Commission

Members present: D. Coots, J. Martin, R. Minar, R. Saalfield, R. Sprague, J. Wollaston

Members absent: C. Cutler, J. Feist, L. Horowitz

Meeting called to order at 7:42 p.m.

Minutes are accepted unanimously at 7:43 p.m.

- a unanimous vote opened a public hearing at 7:45 p on the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the 25 Oak Hill Rd property of Jennifer and Christopher Condon. J. Condon acknowledged that a new drawing had not been made of the porch elevation which would show the vertical supports of the porch railing in line with the door frame and columns of the porch below. The bldg will reflect this change. Discussion ensued about the precise height of the new second floor porch railing with the petitioner asking for advice on how she might determine the proper height. J. Wollaston suggested that the top of the porch railing align with the bottom of the nearby second floor window sill. The owner expressed appreciation for the suggestion but unwillingness to agree to the change without further consideration. Wollaston agreed to help the owners make the final decision about this detail. The public hearing was closed by unanimous vote and R. Minar moved to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness subject to J. Wollaston's on site review of the balustrade detail. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.
- R. Saalfield reported on the results of her efforts to check the references of the two candidates under consideration as consultants to the burial ground restoration process, Andrea Gilmore (BCA Consultants) and Jennifer Campbell-Horne (of JCH Consulting). Bruce Dolimount, member of the Cemetery Commission, was in attendance and updated the HHC on the efforts of his Commission to begin the process of restoration. The CC 'wants to work jointly with you folks', he said, though he repeated that his commission retains the ultimate decision-authority vis a vis the disposition of the Shaker Burial Ground. Saalfield reported that both of the consultant candidates rec'd very strong references and pointed out the distinct differences in their training, experience and background: Gilmore is trained as a historical conservator and takes an art historian's view of preservation whereas Campbell-Horne is trained as a construction manager. Gilmore's estimate of the cost to us of her services is upwards of 19k (14+k related to the iron markers alone) in contrast to Campbell-Horne's estimate of approximately 5k to write an RFP, chose contractors, supervise their work and make site visits. Gilmore advocates for the removal of paint layers on the markers by

chemical solvent (with the possible final addition of some grit blasting. She believes that there is so much material now on the markers that the amount of time and/or pressure needed to mechanically remove the paint would be excessive and potentially damaging. C-H believes that chemicals, especially those that are water-based, will cause more harm than cure and strongly advocates for grit blasting. B. Dolimount prefers this method, also, though he repeatedly referenced the removal process as 'powder coating' even after Saalfield emphasized that the present discovery process was to determine the means of removing the paint, not (yet) the means of re-painting or sealing the markers from damage. Commission members, when polled, preferred the choice of JC-H to Gilmore with the assumption that her methodology would be more effective and risk free and also more cost effective. J. Martin was in favor of Gilmore's perhaps more thorough, and certainly more academic, process. Saalfield spoke to the probably greater practicality of using JC-H's services but noted her own regret for missing out on a process that might be more fascinating from an art historical perspective. Saalfield wondered if, given the rare and precious nature of the burial site, the HHC and CC wouldn't be derelict in their combined duties to take the more expedient, but less well informed, approach to preserving the markers and, in fact, the burial ground as a whole. A final decision regarding choice of conservator was left until the August meeting when it is hoped both the Chair (J. Feist) and additional missing members (Cutler, Horowitz) would be present.

- A motion was made at 8:15 p to open the public hearing on the Verizon Corp application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Verizon proposes hiding the temporary generator at their property on Littleton Rd with a fence that mirrors the fence already in place along the road. Verizon's representative, Jacques Fauteux, AIA, indicated Verizon has had substantial difficulty fixing the generator inside the bldg. R. Minar references Verizon's recent hearing in front of the Planning Board regarding the temporary nature of the generator. Fauteux admitted that no specific time line for the generator's removal. (An audience member said that the generator had been on the site for 11 months.) Wollaston asked how often the generator is used and how noisy it is. Fauteux said that the generator is simply back up for those occasions when power is lost in town. Other than the monthly test (lasting as long as a few hours) to the generator to assure proper working order the machinery would only be used in case of emergency. The principal goal of the fence is cosmetic. J. Martin pointed out that part of the fence has been broken for over a year. Fauteux said the damaged rails could be fixed. Martin also understood that bollards are on the site to protect the bldg from damage from trucks backing up. Martin also feels there is limited though functional space at the back of the bldg to accommodate the generator. Coots asked why the 'funneling quality' fo the gate existed, mentioning that such a fence and gate would not likely be seen on a residence or on a bldg attempting to fit into a residential neighborhood. Martin also pointed out that the generator will not

be completely hidden by the fence as certain mechanical aspects of the generator will project about the fence. Wollaston is asking that both sides of the fence match in style and height on both sides. Audience member Darlene Hazel, who owns property across the street from the bldg, says this 'saga' has been going on for 11 months and that she has spoken to personnel from Verizon repeatedly. She asked BOS member Leo Blair, also in attendance, to intervene on this issue. Hazel is skeptical about the use of the word temporary. Neighbors would like to see the generator removed completely but if that is not possible a well-designed fence would be an acceptable solution to abutters. Hazel read e-mails from neighbors in support of a 'shield' being designed around the generator. Pat Hatch, whose antique store is across the street from Verizon, is concerned with the generator, wants a fence but cautions that traffic and parking in that stretch of Littleton Rd is dangerous. Commissioners discussed the legality of asking Verizon to appear before us again if they remove the generator and thus be required to remove the fence. Leo Blair said all switching stations are required to have back-up generators. The generator inside the bldg has failed; the back up generator is there indefinitely as far as he understands, having spoken to Verizon at least 50 times in the last 9 months. Martin suggested we consider this a situation of 'hardship', defined as a situation in which a particular property owner needs an exception made to historic district regulations. He believes that once the 'hardship is removed, the fence that flows from said hardship should also be removed.' Coots is concerned that the aesthetics of both the first and second (proposed) fence fall short. A motion was made at 8:50 p to close the public hearing, seconded and unanimously accepted. Martin moved that we grant a Certificate of Hardship to the applicant based on the assumption that the existing fence will be repaired and that lattice will be added to the new (and existing) sections of fence, per detailed review and approval of Doug Coots. It was further moved that the new fence be removed at such time as the generator is removed. Motions were unanimously approved at 8:54 p.

- (The commission members returned to the interrupted discussion of the burial ground renovation.) A final decision on the choice of a consultant for the Shaker burial ground was delayed until the August meeting.
- D. Coots displayed the two options under consideration for a new application form; the shorter one was designed by R. Minar, the longer by D. Coots whose goal was in large part to give the applicant substantive information about the way the HHC works and thinks and thus help the applicant bring to his meetings with the commissioners complete information. Minar's logic in creating a shorter form was that he is not alone in disliking completing forms and his goal was to make the process for our applicants as straightforward and simple as possible. R. Sprague prefers the short form for simplicity's sake; J. Martin prefers a short form for practical reasons but wonders if a very short form will leave out too much important information. Could we

attach a sample form to show applicants the amount of detail we want, he asked. Wollaston suggested that we provide a space for the applicant to check that he or she has read the Design Guidelines. The consensus was that the shorter form, presented by R, Minar, with sample forms appended was the preferred route.

The meeting was adjourned at 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Saalfield