

HARVARD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

13 AYER ROAD • HARVARD, MASSACHUSETTS 01451



The Harvard Historical Commission is chartered "...to preserve and protect the historic assets of Harvard, its buildings, structures, places, sites, and surrounding settings of historical or architectural significance."

Those wishing to record any or all of the meeting must alert the chair prior to the start of the meeting and the chair will make an announcement, in accordance with The Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Following are the **minutes** of the regular meeting and public hearing of the Harvard Historical Commission, held via Zoom, on **SEPTEMBER 15, 2022 at 7 pm.**

Submitted by Richard Cabelus, Secretary.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

George Triantaris (Chair)
Pam Marston (Vice Chair)
Richard Cabelus (Secretary)
Emanuel Lindo
Steve Nigzus
Matthew McRae
Seth Trotz

MEMBERS IN ABSENTIA:

None

AUDIENCE: Deborah Skauen-Hinchliffe

TOPICS:

CALL TO ORDER:

7:00 pm

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and took attendance of the Commissioners.

ONGOING APPLICATION:

NONE

NEW APPLICATIONS:

1. 8 Ayer Road – Dechert – new chimney cap

At 7:03 the Chair inquired if anyone was on zoom to present this application to the Commission. John Metcalf responded he was present. The Chair indicated the objective of this hearing tonight was to determine whether the Application was substantial or insubstantial. The Chair indicated that in his opinion this Application seemed to be very straightforward. He asked the Applicant to briefly present to the Commissioners what the proposed work was to be. Mr. Metcalf indicated that he would be restoring the fireplace which requires a cap on the chimney. They are copy the cap on the right side of the building, a copper one on the center, and it will oxidize and eventually match the other cap in look. The Chair indicated that he understood the work to be done and that it seemed insubstantial to him. The Chair asked if Commissioners has a different point of view. None of the Commissioners indicated that they did. The Chair then asked if someone could make a motion that this would be an insubstantial change. Steve

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made a motion the Application was insubstantial. Matt seconded. The Commission voted unanimously the change was insubstantial. The Chair then indicated that this would be moved to the next meeting and no public hearing would be required. The Chair asked Mr. Metcalf, if he had any questions. He said he did not. The matter was then continued until the next meeting for further deliberation by the Commission at 7:06.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Harvard Historical Commission – Report concerning proposed addition of Bromfield House to Harvard Common Historic District.

The Chair then turned to the Public Hearing at 7:06. The Chair indicated that this is different than the usually process. In this case the HHC is simply holding this hearing to inform the public of the Report that was filed in support of adding Bromfield House to the Harvard Common Historic District. The Chair indicated that no vote would be taken by the HHC. This public hearing was for public input only and to inform the public about the Report and entertain any questions or comments. This is required by Town bylaw and by the Commonwealth. The matter would then be brought to Town meeting on October 1, 2022 for the Town to ultimately decide the issue.

Steve made a motion to open public hearing and presentation. Matt seconded. The Commissioners approved unanimously. The Chair then began to talk about the Report that has been filed. The Report was for the position that the Bromfield House to be added to the Harvard Common Historic District. The Chair then went into the history which was behind the HHC bringing this report and Warrant Article forward. When it became likely the Bromfield House would no longer be used for educational services a group of concerned citizens began to act and filed a citizen's petition which in October 2021 sought to direct the Select Board to sell the house as a residence and direct the house to be included in the Historic District. This passed with 2/3 vote at Town Meeting. In November 2021 town election a referendum to sell the house as a private residence also passed. The Select Board voted to sell the property as a private residence but has not acted on that decision to date. The Chair then went on to describe the objectives of the Historic Commission. The Chair then indicated the Commission undertook an evaluation as to whether to include the Bromfield House in the Harvard Common Historic District. The Chair then went over the acceptable criteria that it applied when undertaking this analysis. This criterion is identical to that which the Commonwealth employs and is consistent with the Town's bylaws. The Chair then pointed to three primary reasons that is outlined in the Report. The first reason is the historical significance of the property. The Chair then went over the history of the house and Margaret Bromfield's contributions to education, women's rights and emancipation of slaves. The Bromfield House has been central to education in Harvard since the 1870s. The second reason the report articulates for Bromfield House inclusion is the house's architectural significance. The Bromfield House is classic example of a colonial revival architecture at the time of its construction and fits historically with the surrounding landscape. The third reason is the House's location it serves at the gateway into Harvard town center from a southerly direction. The Chair indicated the Report did an exhaustive of these three factors and that the Report was endorsed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Mass Historical supports inclusion of the House in the Harvard Common Historic District. The Chair indicated these issues is scheduled for vote at Town Meeting on October 1, 2022.

The Chair then briefly addressed a few frequently asks questions he was receiving. The first was this process in necessary by law for the House to be included in the direct. The previous Town votes alone were not sufficient to include the House in the District. The second question is why is Bromfield House not listed as national historic landmark. The Chair indicated the House would qualify, by that would be honoree only and afford the House no real protection. The third question was what are the consequences of the Bromfield House being in the District. The

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Chair indicated that any part of the structure visible from a public way would need HHC approval, and the structure itself would be protected and not be demolished without approval. It ensures any owners of the House would need to work with the HHC to ensure any changes are appropriate. The Chair also indicated adjacent homes were not included in the District because this district was delineated years ago and any attempt to change the District is cumbersome and the HHC thought a narrowly tailored approach to just dealing with Bromfield House would be most appropriate. The Chair also indicated that this was the same reasoning that went into the HHC's analysis as to why the "School Buildings Excluded" language on the Harvard Common Historic District Map were not addressed. Further, the HHC is acting not based upon how the Town currently uses Bromfield House and based upon the votes at Town Meeting and election which showed the residents of the Town supported this objective.

At this point the HHC voted unanimously to open public commentary. The Chair asked if anyone wished to speak in favor, or opposed; no member of the public spoke. The Chair then read a list of names that emailed with support. The Chair then read off a list of names that emailed him their support for the proposition of including Bromfield House in the District.

Steve made a Motion to close the public hearing. It passed unanimously.

At this point the Chair addressed HHC Member Seth Trotz about the status of the warrant article and how the Select Boards support or lack thereof could affect the warrant article and a possible deferment of a vote on the issue.

The Chair then thanked everyone and encouraged them to show up at Town Meeting. Pam indicated that this issue is the last article at Town Meeting, Article 7.

The Commission then voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:19 pm

PUBLIC COMMENTARY:

None.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 7:19 pm.