



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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April 7, 2010

Rev. Holly Antolini, Rector
Saint James's Episcopal Church
1991 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140

Re: Case 2445, 1991 Massachusetts Avenue

Dear Rev. Antolini,

On April 1, 2010 the Cambridge Historical Commission continued its hearing on the proposal of Saint James's Episcopal Church to demolish the parish house, minister's study, and classroom wing and construct a new parish house/residential condominium as proposed by Oaktree Development. At this meeting the Commission took testimony and reviewed the proponents' response to the five conditions attached to the conditional approval it granted on January 7, 2010. While the Commission confirmed its prior approval of the general location and size of the proposed new building, it voted to ask for further assurances with regard to the conditions.

In the discussion below the paragraphs in italics are the conditions adopted on January 7; they are followed by the Commission's findings on April 1.

1. *Financial rationale. The compelling public interest in allowing this project to proceed is the financial support that has been promised to maintain St. James's historic church building. Please provide further information outlining a) the current and proposed changes in ownership of the current Church property, and b) the financial arrangements between St. James's Church and Oaktree, including income and expenses projected over time.*

The Commission understands that the property occupied by the historic church sanctuary building and the new garden will remain in the ownership of the church, where it will be protected from foreseeable adverse consequences of the conversion of the project site to condominium ownership.

The Commission understands the financial arrangements between St. James's Church and Oaktree and accepts the safeguards agreed to by the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. However, the Commission finds that the public interest in preserving the historic building would be better served if the church agrees to place a significant portion of the expected income from the development project in an endowment specifically dedicated to the capi-

tal needs and maintenance of the historic church sanctuary building. Please consider this an amendment to the January 7 conditions.

2. Commitment to maintain the historic church building. *Please explain the current projected capital needs of the historic church sanctuary building and submit a commitment by St. James's Church and/or the Episcopal Diocese that the capital needs as well as the needed expenses of regular maintenance of the historic church building will continue to be met, detailing in reasonable detail the sources for funding such commitments.*

The Commission accepts the capital needs projections prepared by the church and its consultants, with the understanding that the actual cost of work on historic buildings often exceeds the most careful estimates. The Commission also recognizes that further fundraising and grant assistance may be necessary. Establishment of a dedicated endowment for the benefit of the historic building will support the church's commitment.

3. Commitment to public access. *Please provide a commitment by St. James's Church and/or the Episcopal Diocese to assure public access to the proposed garden, subject to the reasonable needs of the abutters for decorum and maintenance of order. Please confirm that ownership of the garden will continue to be held by St. James's and/or the Diocese and summarize any special rights proposed for owners or tenants of the other condominium units.*

The Commission understands that ownership of the garden will continue to be held by St. James's, and that the owners or tenants of the condominium units will have no special rights or responsibilities for it. Oral assurances of guaranteed public access notwithstanding, the Commission reiterates that the public interest will be best served by a written commitment from the church assuring continued public access.

4. Landscape plan. *Please provide a landscape master plan for the entire property, including the new garden design, for approval by the Historical Commission at a future public hearing.*

The Commission has not yet received an adequate landscape master plan. An acceptable plan will show not only paved and landscaped areas, but also the varied treatments of those areas and the provision of lighting, signs, pavement, curbs, benches, and the like, not only for the new garden but also for the entire publicly visible perimeter of the church. The Commission accepts that implementation of the plan may occur in stages, but believes that an accepted plan be in place to guide future actions.

5. Exterior appearance. *The Commission understands that the exterior of the new building will continue to evolve as the proponents address the concerns of the preservation agencies, the Planning Board, and the public, and that final approval may not be possible in the immediate future. However, a materials palette can be reviewed at the Commission's next meeting on February 4, 2010.*

The Commission expects that the exterior of the building will continue to evolve as details are finalized and materials are chosen. The materials board presented at the April 1 hearing was generally acceptable, but the samples were small and not arranged in a way that allowed careful consideration. After construction drawings are approved at a future hearing the Commission will require construction of a mock-up panel of the major components for on-site approval.

I understand that it will take several weeks to prepare a response to these conditions. The Commission will be ready to continue its hearing at one of its regular monthly meetings. In the mean-

time, please continue to consult with your neighbors about their concerns, and keep in touch with me about your progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles M. Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Charles M. Sullivan
Executive Director

cc: Senior Warden, St. James's Episcopal Church
Gwen Noyes, Oaktree Development
Paul Holtz, Massachusetts Historical Commission
Les Barber, Cambridge Planning Board
Roger Boothe, Community Development Department