



City of Somerville
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

06 JUNE 2023 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Eric Parkes	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Robin Kelly	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Ryan Falvey	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dick Bauer	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Wendy Sczechowicz (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:46pm and adjourned at 8:14pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: Determination of Historic Significance (Step 1)
HPC.DMO 2023.10 – 25 Warwick Street

The applicants provided a brief introduction of who they are and why they want to renovate their home, noting that they hope to expand their home for more usable space.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Paul Morgan (54 Warwick St) – spoke in support of the project and stated that the applicants are well respected members of the community.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria St) – spoke in support of the proposal.

Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed how the house contributes to the overall streetscape, how it retains most of its existing form and massing, how the applicants are proposing a very thoughtful plan, and that his home is historically significant. They also noted that this section of the city has several of these types of workers cottages and is a very old neighborhood.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to determine the property Historically Significant.

HPC Findings:

- Retains massing for an early worker house
- Contributes to streetscape
- Contributes to the socioeconomics of the time in the area

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

PUBLIC HEARING: Determination of Historic Significance (Step 1)
HPC.DMO 2023.11 – 246 Broadway

The applicant team provided a brief summary of the project proposal and why they think that the building is not historically significant, noting that the home has undergone a series of additions and modifications over the years.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Amy Stein (no address given) - stated that it is a historic house, so they should retain the historic character. She felt that the description given by the applicant team was not accurate at all.

Attorney Anne Vigorito (424 Broadway) – noted that she represents the owners of the abutting property and stated that the neighborhood has concerns; they believe that this building is historical and blends in with other existing homes on that section of Broadway. They have concerns that the historic character of the building will not be preserved.

Jeanne Miller (6 Montgomery Ave) – stated that this home is typical for the neighborhood and argued that it is historically significant. She stated that the original footprint is still there, and the design is within the historical streetscape of the area. She also stated that some historical people have resided in the home, such as a Civil War Private and a Somerville Clerk. She noted that the building should not be demolished.

Timothy O'Brien (6 Montgomery Ave) – stated that the building retains its structural integrity, and they should maintain the historic significance of this structure. It is a beautiful property that should be renovated but not demolished.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria St) – agreed that the property should be preserved. It is a nice structure architecturally and it looks vintage, practically unchanged. The building should be maintained and preserved.

Chair Parkes closed public testimony and noted that the Commission cannot take into consideration what could be built, only the merits of the existing building.

The Commission and Staff discussed the Staff Memo and the alterations made to the property. The Commission agreed that the building is historically significant, that it contributes significantly to the streetscape, it retains its original form and massing, and that it is the nicest of this architectural style in the area.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to determine the property Historically Significant.

HPC Findings:

- Good example of its remaining integrity
- Contributes to the streetscape; the most in-tact among the similar architectural style

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

PUBLIC HEARING: Determination of Preferably Preserved (Step 2)
HPC.DMO 2023.05 – 23 Glenwood Rd

The applicant team provided a brief presentation to the Board, noting that they agree that the building is significant, but the property should not be preferably preserved.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Finnian Moore Gerety (no address given) - lives across the street from this property and noted that these houses are part of a set of 15 matching Victorian-era mansards homes. He urged the Commission to consider the neighboring houses and reminded them that the neighbors came together to sign a letter that stated that saving this house is necessary and possible. The adjacent properties are undergoing renovations and historically preserving their properties. Preserving this house is in line with the public interest. He noted that the applicant also owns the adjacent lot that is empty. There is opportunity for preservation and development.

Cassie Mann (29 Glenwood Rd) - stated that it is possible to preserve these homes, as she is currently doing so herself. There could be a solution that is reached that preserves this home. It is one of the center pieces of this block and it would be a huge detriment to the neighborhood and the city to lose one of these 15 mansards.

Pearl Emmons (30 Glenwood Rd) – noted that the details in the letter that the neighbors submitted really says so much about why this property should be preserved. This cluster of mansards is very unique and one of the first subdivisions in Somerville. If we allow one to be removed, what is going to happen in the future with the other houses on the street? She does support adding more units to the property. She wondered if there was any red tape that was keeping the development of the plot next door and this house from creating more units but retaining its character.

Dr. Sara Lennox (38 Ames St) - appreciated the architecture, the historic significance, and elegance of these homes, which were built for workers, in this neighborhood. The streetscape shows in the impact of various eras of history. She fears that if demolition is allowed, more will follow. There is a second lot next to this one which could be used for affordable housing.

Amy Stein (no address given) - agreed with the other public comments. She feels like the new developments in Somerville is all the same and has no character that contributes to the city. The neighbors are not against gut-renovating the homes on the street to make them work for their family, but they are against removing the historical character of the homes and the streetscape. What they are planning on to do is to building is something that would not face the sidewalk and Glenwood is a very close neighborhood, so this plan would destroy the community-feeling of the street.

Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed the unique group of mansards in this neighborhood, the possibility of creating a Local Historic District for this neighborhood, how the building is mostly intact, how it contributes to the streetscape, and how the neighbors have a lot of pride for the neighborhood.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to determine the property Preferably Preserved.

HPC Findings:

- It is a good intact mansard cottage; a fairly early structure in the city
- Contributes to streetscape with surrounding properties
- Significant association with a historic person; the builder of the neighborhood (Mr. Partridge)

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

OTHER BUSINESS: Commission Elections

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Chair Parkes abstaining, to elect Eric Parkes as Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission for another term.

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Vice Chair Kelly abstaining, to elect Robin Kelly as Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission for another term.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0), to hold off on voting for a Secretary of the Historic Preservation Commission until the new members are approved.

OTHER BUSINESS: 2023 Calendar

Staff noted that there will be a second meeting in June and one in July.

The Commission and Staff discussed either keeping the schedule at two meetings per month or going back to one meeting per month, the applicant's perspective on the topic, Staff's preference, and quorum issues. They also discussed the timeline for new members, how two meetings per month result in shorter meetings, some administrative and logistical aspects of the yearly calendar and meeting schedule, and how the Commission is amenable to keeping the two meetings per month but will revisit the idea after another 6 months.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the 2023 meeting calendar as it appears on the city website.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 7 March 2023 meeting minutes.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0-1), with Member Falvey abstaining, to approve the 21 March 2023 meeting minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

Chair Parkes is now the HPC representative on the CPC; he provided a summary of the CPC allocations to the Commission.

The Commission and Staff discussed items not on the agenda and asked for certain items to be added to a future meeting agenda.

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.