



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

21 NOVEMBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

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>Absent</i>	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Colin Curzi	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:48pm and adjourned at 8:03pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties
HP23-000054 – 141 Central Street

Due to an issue with the audio, this case was tabled to later in the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000043 – 11 Auburn Avenue

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to demolish this building to create more housing. The building does not have any architectural uniformity with other houses on the street. It has also been heavily modified since its erection in the front, including closing the porch on the right and rear. There have been additions and decks added.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavollo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that he finds this property to be very generic and of little value, historically or architecturally, to the City. He remains concerned regarding the fiscal state of the City given the expenses it is facing. He supports demolition of the structure.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission agreed that this building has gone through many alterations and so it does not necessarily hold the integrity or massing of the original building. In terms of historical association, it was noted that John Hammett, who invented the blackboard eraser, appeared to have resided at this property at some time. However, this may not rise to the level of a historic figure enough to warrant protection of the building. The massing of this building, due to alterations, feels much different than the other houses along the street. The Commission stated that this

building is part of a group of five houses that were identical when they were constructed. However, there have been many modifications over the years.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (0-6) to find the property Historically Significant.

The Commission reviewed the following findings:

- The property was not found to be architecturally significant, as it has been too heavily modified and therefore, does not contribute significantly to the streetscape or rhythm of the street.
- The property is not closely associated with any persons of great historic significance.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to adopt the findings as proposed.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARING: Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties
HP23-000054 – 141 Central Street**

The Commission retook this item at this time.

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to replace eight existing windows on the front and rear elevation, with windows that are the same make, model, and color of windows that were previously approved by the Commission and similar to those replaced in neighboring units. The proposed windows are Pella Architect Traditional, 2 over 2, double hung sash windows. These will have applied grids and dark spacers between the glass, with a finish that will not present a warp or mirror. The reflection will not be tinted, and the existing screens will be replaced with accompanying Pella half height screens and the storm windows will be removed.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony. No one indicated they wished to speak. Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission noted that there was a precedent for accepting this window in other nearby units, but it was unclear if those were to replace existing replacement windows or windows that were too far gone to replace. The applicant team explained that the house is settled, and the existing windows cannot be fully closed. There are significant gaps in the top of most of the windows. They cannot be locked, a number of the panes have cracked, and there is some rotting of the wood. The Commission noted that, generally before allowing for replacement of wood windows, it likes for a qualified professional who does window restoration to review the windows. The Commission stated that it should encourage responsible replica windows. The neighbors in this area seem to have already replaced similar windows. However, those windows had not achieved historic significance. This now becomes a question of consistency across the façades. It appears the majority of the windows along the façade have already been swapped out. There was emphasis regarding the environmental impact of restoration, but agreement that the unique circumstances of the house requires consideration.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the change of windows as outlined in the replacement conditions in the report.

RESULT:

APPROVED

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000029 – 181 Pearl Street**

The applicant team stated that there does not appear to be any historic significance to the building, and it does not seem to add much to the neighborhood. The proposal is to demolish the building and build a mixed-use structure with ground floor commercial space and residential above.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavollo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that he finds the building to be insignificant and unattractive. He is pro-development and voiced concerns regarding the fiscal solvency of the City, including approximately \$140M-\$160M worth of unanticipated expenses which will have a significant impact on the tax rate. He fully supports development of this site.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that the building does not hold any historical or architectural significance or associations. This is a nondescript building with no noteworthy history per se. This building has been edited over the years and has lost much of its historic charm. A mixed-use building on this site would be beneficial for the community.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (0-6) to find the property at 181 Pearl Street Historically Significant.

The Commission reviewed the following findings:

- The property lacks its original character and is not associated with the streetscape.
- The property is not associated with any persons of great historic significance or an architectural style.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to adopt the findings as proposed.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Preferably Preserved
(Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000024 – 97 Highland Avenue**

The applicant team explained that the Commission previously found the property of 101 Highland Avenue to be Preferably Preserved. The Commission found the 97 Highland Avenue to be Historically Significant and thus this is the next step in the process. The owner seeks to demolish the structures at both of the properties at 97 and 101 Highland Avenue, in order to build a new modern YMCA, to better serve the community. This project aims to better serve the community with modern fixtures and layouts, providing accessibility, childcare, sports, wellness programs, and affordable housing. The project is supported by a large loan from the Summerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund and a state loan. The 97 Highland Avenue building currently operates as a daycare with a capacity for 39 children. The building is fully at capacity and the intention is to accommodate more children.

The applicant team explained the alterations to the building over time including replacement of the siding, the windows and the doors, enclosure of the sunburst window in the right elevation, the lost eve detailing on the right elevation, the enclosure of the front and rear porches, the shed dormer additions on the front and right elevations, the rear porch addition, and the addition of the enclosed side porch on the right elevation. There is nothing remarkable about the architecture of this structure and it is not associated with important historical events or persons.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Angela Terzides (representing her parents who reside at 95 Highland Avenue) – stated that there is a concern with the building being demolished and replaced with a large commercial structure. They are concerned with this changing the look and dynamics of the neighborhood and are therefore opposed.

Ron Cavollo (70 Victoria Street) – the demolition of this property is for the greater good of the City. The scale of the property will change, but the City desperately needs a facility of this type. The City is substandard in terms of its current YMCA facility and the location of this property to the school is critical. He supports the proposal.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed whether to preserve this rezoned midrise building. It was suggested not to preserve the building, but with conditions such as photographic documentation, salvage of materials, and installation of historic or interpretive signage. The Commission considered the importance of the overall project, while highlighting the potential disruption on the neighboring properties.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to find the property Not Preferably Preserved, with four conditions listed in the Staff report.

RESULT:

NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000044 – 45 Broadway**

Applicant requested a withdrawal; building is not 75 years of age in 2023.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to accept the applicant's request for a withdrawal.

RESULT:

WITHDRAWN

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The Commission discussed that the CPC is in the process of reviewing applications for this funding round. The Commission discussed the allocation of funds from a property transfer surcharge for open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing initiatives. It was noted that the state contributes a smaller amount to this fund and that the affordable housing category receives the largest share, around 50% of the total. The Chair invited those interested to join the next meeting in December for further discussions.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 3 October 2023 meeting minutes as presented.

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.