



City of Somerville  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**19 DECEMBER 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>Absent</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Absent</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:50pm and adjourned at 7:27pm.

**PUBLIC HEARING: Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties**  
**HP23-000060 – 56 Bow Street**

The applicant team explained that there is an HVAC unit on the property that requires a condenser. The condenser cannot be more than 50' away from the unit, leading it to be located in the front or side yard, which is visible from a public right of way. The condenser is less than 3' long, just over 2' tall, and 1' deep. It is much smaller than a traditional condenser unit and the proposal is to hide it behind shrubs or the front porch. This will not change the outward appearance of the house or the general arrangement of the building's features or architectural details.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that he supports this proposal and noted that there seem to be fewer applications every week. This is indicative of the toxic environment the City has created. He stated that he believes this Commission should be taken before the State Ethics Board. He stated that he is unhappy with this Commission and the general climate the City has created, which is anti-development, anti-home ownership, and anti-landlord.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

Staff stated that the Commission does not regulate taxes or utility bills. Also, each year there are fewer applications during the holiday season.

The Commission discussed placement of the condenser, agreeing that the driveway side tucked behind the porch was the most discreet option. There was discussion regarding the possibility of painting the cover to match the trim or the brick foundation. There was discussion regarding the feasibility of screening the unit, but the conclusion was that that was not practical, given the proximity to the property line. The applicant team noted that the unit could be mounted directly to the house, eliminating the need for clearance. Staff explained that there is a proposed condition that the applicant team work with Staff on appropriate screening, if the application is approved. The Commission agreed to modify the condition that the applicant team work with Staff on appropriate screening, if feasible.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0), to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness with the recommended conditions in the Staff Memo, with the modification to condition #4, that “the applicant shall screen the condenser unit to the extent feasible, with final approval of the method of material screening by Preservation Staff.”

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS</b>
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Vice Chair Kelly addressed a comment made by Mr. Cavallo, clarifying that her role as the realtor representative on the Commission does not represent the interests of the real estate community, but rather all residents of Somerville. She also corrected misinformation about taxes in the city, emphasizing that Somerville has the third lowest tax rate among six contiguous communities.

### **OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update**

Chair Parkes stated that applications for CPA funding were reviewed at the last CPC meeting. There was a potential request for funds to address damage to the cupola at City Hall from a lightning strike. However, the application is not yet formalized, and the scope of the work is still being determined. The Commission expressed its concern regarding the neglect of the City Hall building, suggesting that it signals a larger issue about the City's maintenance of its infrastructure.

*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](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov).*