



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Eric Parkes, Chair
Robin Kelly, Vice-Chair
Ryan Falvey
Denis (DJ) Chagnon (Alt.)

Adam J. Wylie (Alt.), Secretary
Dick Bauer
Alan Bingham

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

6:45 p.m. on Tuesday, June 21, 2022

The **Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)** will hold a public meeting and public hearings on **Tuesday, June 21, 2022** at 6:45pm on the following applications, in accordance with the Historic Districts Act, Chapter 40C of the Massachusetts General Laws, as amended, and/or the City of Somerville Code of Ordinances, Pt. II, Chap. 7, Sections 7-16 – 7-28.

Pursuant to Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, this meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation. A recording of these proceedings can be accessed at any time using the registration link at the top of this agenda.

Meeting called to order at 6:53 p.m. by Chair Parkes
Members present: Eric Parkes (Chair), Alan Bingham, Ryan Falvey, DJ Chagnon

Staff present: Wendy Sczechowicz, Sarah White

Others present: Anne Vigorito, Jeff O'Neill, Claire Decoux O'Neill, Augusta Fisenyte, Erik Kortz, Michelle Griffin, Devin Griffin,

I. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

1. 16 Woodbine Street

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to **accept** the Memorandum of Agreement.



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Roll call vote: Alan Bingham: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

II. Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties

1. HPC.ALT 2022.19 – 50a Spring Street

Applicant: Jeff O'Neill & Claire Decoux O'Neill

Owner: Same as applicant

The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by altering existing window openings, the addition of a Juliet balcony, the extension of a first-floor porch, and the addition of a second-floor porch with pergola on the left elevation

- The owner explained the changes made to the proposal since the last meeting.
- Public comment:
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria St) - questioned if the HPC is going to share the plans with the public and had an issue with the 2 minutes that he has to comment and believes these are a violation of OML (open meeting law). Staff explained where to find the plans online and that the 2 minutes are in conformance with OML.
 - Meredith Porter (104 Josephine Ave) - asked to confirm the location of the plans online. Staff explained the website again.
- Closed public comment
- Mr. Bingham thinks that the Juliet balcony adds to the house and performs as an extension of the line between the two housing units on the property.
- Mr. Chagnon and Mr. Falvey agreed.
- Mr. Parkes does not feel that the Juliet balcony is appropriate for a Gable end, as it is really a set of French doors with a balustrade across it.
- Mr. Parkes and Augusta Fisentye of the architectural team discussed the floor depth of the balcony; it is meant to be flush and there will be no return into the side wall.
- The HPC would rather see the balcony be more of a standard depth (12") of a Juliet so that they can get a more substantial return; the purpose is not to add ornateness but to add substance and depth. The architect will design a floor extension to cover the gap near the return.

Motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed changes for the first and second floor porches, the window and door openings, and striking condition 8 from the condition set.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to **approve** the proposed alteration.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: no

Motion to approve the proposed changes with the design as-proposed with the changes made to the Juliet balcony: Juliet balcony will be increased to a depth of 12 inches and will have a 1-foot offset between the outer face of the wall of the house and the inner edge of the guard/foot rail of the Juliet balcony, and the materials will be consistent with the rest of the house.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (3-1) to **approve** the proposed alteration.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: no



2. HPC.ALT 2022.31 – 139 Central Street

Applicant: Erik Kortz

Owner: Devin Griffin

The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing existing windows.

- Erik Kortz explained that the proposal is to replace 9 windows as similar as possible to the existing wood windows. The proposed windows are Marvin Ultimate aluminum clad wood windows, but they can do all wood windows if the Commission prefers.
- Public comment:
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria St) – stated that the HPC needs to come up with a window that they feel is historically accurate. He feels that restoration is an impossible task and it's extremely expensive.
- Closed public comment
- Michelle & Devin Griffin, homeowners, noted that they had a lead inspection service do a full survey of the house and the windows are of the greatest concern. They have a newborn, and they were advised not to open the windows under any circumstances. They tried to choose windows that are the most appropriate to the history of the house.
- Considering that this is a row house, Mr. Bingham asked Staff any other units in this building have replaced their windows. Staff confirmed that there were two cases of replacement of replacement windows in the building.
- Mr. Parkes feels that if applicants want to replace original wood windows, they should present a proposal from a window restoration company, because there are companies out there that will strip and de-lead them. Otherwise, everyone in the building should agree on the replacement windows, if and when they need to be replaced, so that all the windows in the façade are consistent.
- Mr. Bingham stated that the applicant should use all wood windows and they should be Low-E glass to reduce reflection.
- The Commission discussed the challenges between de-leading original windows versus replacing them.
- Mr. Falvey feels that replacing the windows is appropriate. Uniformity across the entire property would be nice, if it can be accomplished. He also stated that with the state of the current labor market, finding companies to work on restoration is difficult and a concern.
- Mr. Parkes agreed that he would like a consistent look, but this row house already has a hodgepodge of replacement windows.
- Mr. Bingham noted that replacing windows in such disrepair usually entails additional woodworking on the sills and around the frame.
- Michelle & Devin Griffin understand that there will be additional carpentry required on the interior and exterior and have discussed that with their contractor. They are open to using Pella windows to be more consistent with their neighbors, if the Commission would like, but the lead time on those windows is very long which would make replacing the windows this year nearly impossible. They chose the Marvin windows because they are very good quality and the lead time was much shorter, which would allow installation to be possible in the Fall.
- Staff confirmed that the neighbors used Pella Architect Series windows.

- Mr. Parkes stated that 2 of the 5 units in the building already have Pella Architect Series replacement windows.
- Mr. Bingham thinks that, based on the condition of the windows, that this is a case where replacement is necessary rather than restoration. Consistency in the appearance of the façade and having the applicants use Pella instead of Marvin windows makes sense.
- Mr. Falvey and Mr. Chagnon agreed.
- Michelle & Devin Griffin are amenable to using the Pella Architect Series windows.
- The Commission and Staff discussed the design guidelines regarding the finish of the windows.
- The HPC would like to add a condition that states that the glass must be a non-reflective (Low-E), shall be the same color as the windows at 143 and 145 Central Street, shall have applied grids and dark spacer between the glass, and a matte baked finish.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to **approve** the proposed alteration.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

(1:10:43)

III. Determinations of Historic Significance (STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)

1. HPC.DMO 2022.18 – 233 Tremont Street

Applicant: John F. Reilly

Owner: John F. Reilly and Liese Reilly, Trustees of the Reilly Trust

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

- Anne Vigorito representing the applicant. Same owner as 229
- Similar to the adjacent home. Discussed the changes made to the exterior.
- Ron Cavallo – befuddled by the “rhythm and consistency” comment in the staff report. Triple deckers are the worst of Somerville architecture. Whole row is ugly and represents the worst of planning from the beginning. Opportunity to bring down an ugly building and allow more efficient, better buildings on the strip. Triple deckers re slam-outs.
- Commission discussion.
- This is next to a building the commission determined HS last month. Chair parks stated at this point, they are reviewing the HS of the structure. Macro issues of public financing do not factor into the review.
- DJ Chagnon mentioned that looking forward to the future is not something that is done at the HS stage, but at the PP stage.
- Bingham – contains all of its massing and form. Change to the front porch in 50s and 60s. forms part of a streetscape of the typical architectural styles of Somerville. Significant because it contributes to the streetscape and is the mirror image of the one next door. Sees architectural significance only.
- Falvey – points made by HPC are spot-on and agrees with the thinking.

- Chair Parkes – while they might be “slam-outs”, they served a purpose historically and they should not be disregarded because they are not fancy. We’ll find out next time if they should be PP.
- Chagnon – interesting that 229 and 233 mirror each other but were built 7 years apart.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to declare the structure **historically significant**.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Findings:

- Retains original form and massing and the overall integrity of the structure
- Consistent with the streetscape of the triple deckers in that section of Tremont Street

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

2. HPC.DMO 2022.23 – 12 Woodbine Street

Applicant: North America Development LLC, Bruna Rossetti

Owner: 12 Woodbine, LLC

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

- Anne Vigorito representing the developer. Woodbine is a private way. Property started to be demolished – received a CZC in the fall and part of the project required some demo. She wasn’t involved at that point, and advises all applicants that HPC is the first stop.
- Public comment:
- Ron Cavallo – wants to say he has no vested interest in any of the projects he comments on. Makes comments because he thinks the hpc has been too strict in the past and has hindered development. Provides as much comment as he can. House has no value of an kind. This is a redevelopment site. Building has no value. Let the building go.
- Antonio Furguele 16 Center St– 12 woodbine may be humble but his part of the history of worker housing in Somerville. Speaks to how humble Somerville was at that time. It is emblematic of that past. As we lose so much on woodbine street, it is a loss of the history of the workers of Somerville and their housing. It might not represent something high flung, but it is part of our history. The demolition on this property was done before any permission was givine – two rounds of such. It was the neighborhood that alerted the city to the demolition. Flagrant disregard for the history here.
- Meredith porter. 104 josephine ave. essentially this building has been demo-ed. Can you explain
- Jason Santana – does not appreciate that they have done something they are not supposed to do. Has had various inspections.
- Ms. White explained how Staff learned of the demolition going on at the property in two phases.
- Chair parkes explained about the scarcity of these types of houses now in Somerville. There are only a few areas of the city that have any sort of worker structures like this left.

- Bingham asked staff if ISD and Planning were doing anything to prevent this in the future.
- Ms. White explained the role of ISD and staff and that planning staff has no enforcement authority and that, sadly, because ISD and planning are so short-staffed, we cannot keep up with everything and monitor it.
- This building is one of 8 in the immediate vicinity that are still extant. They are all reasonably sized and with similar front porches. Similar sized lots and similar sized buildings. Even if this came before them prior to the demolition starting, he is sure the hpc would have found it significant. They are becoming rarer and rarer in the city.
- Falvey and Chagnon agree with bingham.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to declare the structure **historically significant**.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Findings:

- Scarcity of the building type and consistency of the streetscape – streetscape and building type are both scarce
- Broad social history of the city – associated with worker's housing and the worker population

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

3. **HPC.DMO 2022.24 – 90 School Street**

Applicant: Ralph Malin

Owner: 90 School St Realty Trust

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

- Anne Vigorito representing. Evan Stellman architect.
- Significant alterations to the property. All windows and doors, porches, and steps replaced. Has been in same ownership for many years. Doesn't see any historical significance for who lived there in the past.
- Ron Cavallo – considers the structure as having significance – double wide triple decker. Fits in with the streetscape and seems to be a good building. Looks like a custom building triple decker. Not a lot of them that have double bays. No idea what development proposal is. Would be a loss to lose this building. Building is unusual and condition is such that it has great value as a structure as it is.
- Commission discussion – building is significant (DEANA, NEED TO CATCH THIS COMMENT) .
- Falvey – agrees with bingham

- Chagnon – agrees with alan. And general form and massing of building. Massing is basically unchanged since it went up.
- Parkes – except for siding and windows, there are details largely intact – railings, cornice, etc. not a lot of them like this left in Somerville and not as well kept.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to declare the structure **historically significant**.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Findings:

- Good example of an intact triple decker
- Not a common building type

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to adopt the above findings.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

4. **HPC.DMO 2022.25 – 156 Albion Street**

Applicant: 156 Albion St, LLC

Owner: Same as Applicant

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

- Applicant Niranjan Gawli. Building is currently a rental property. Some of the massing seems intact on the building. Doesn't have plans for the property yet. Thinking of some modern attached building.
- Public Comment:
- No members of the public had comments.
- Commission discussion:
- Parkes – this seems to be one of a pair of buildings. Likely built together by the same developer. Interesting to see the modifications between this and its pair.
- Overall, it's mass is completely intact, both have same dormer on the left built into it.
- Chagnon – has lost a bit of the dental molding that its pair seems to have had.
- Bingham – definitely one of a pair with the corner bay.
- Parkes – on the fence regarding HS. There are a lot of the corner bay houses around.
- Chagnon – if they had been separated by a few lots, they wouldn't seem quite like twins.
- Falvey – appreciates that it has a sister property but doesn't really have the merit that the other properties reviewed tonight have. Doesn't feel that there is as much historic connection established as the others.
- Chagnon – agrees with Falvey. Doesn't see significant association with social, political historic, people or events. The only architectural significance is the relationship with the property next to it. Doesn't think the city would lose anything if it were to go.
- Bingham – there is an eclectic group of houses on the street, but this one is one of a pair; he finds that unique. Massing and form is consistent. Integrity of building is fine. Erring in favor of being significant.
- Motion: bingham – declare 156 albion significant. Second: chagnon

HPC Action: The Commission voted (1-3) to declare the structure **historically significant**.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: no; DJ Chagnon: no; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: no

Findings:

- Does not have significance to the streetscape
- Not a significant representation of that architectural style
- Does not contribute to the broader streetscape

HPC Action: The Commission voted (3-1) to adopt the above findings.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: no; Eric Parkes: yes

IV. Determinations of Preferably Preserved (STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)

1. **HPC.DMO 2022.17 – 229 Tremont Street**

Applicant: John F. Reilly

Owner: John F. Reilly and Liese Reilly, Trustees of the Reilly Trust

The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.

- Atty Anne Vigorito representing the owner/applicant
- Atty Vigorito recommended continuing the case to July
- Motion to continue to the July meeting – chagnon, Falvey second.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to **approve** the request to continue to the July hearing.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

V. Other Business

- Text review – LHD property owner fund
- LHD proposal – Emerson Street
- Minutes 5/17
- CPC update
 - Bingham – should try to make provisions for handicapped access/disability. CPA funding can be very helpful for people with disabilities. Would like to see this provision included.
 - Would like to see window restoration added to the examples.

VI. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn and roll call vote.

HPC Action: The Commission voted (4-0) to **adjourn** the meeting.

Roll call vote: Ryan Falvey: yes; DJ Chagnon: yes; Alan Bingham: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Please see cases at <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/historic-preservation/hpc-cases> . As cases may be continued to a later date, please check the agenda (posted 48 hours in advance of the meeting) on the City website or email historic@somervillema.gov to inquire if specific cases will be heard. Continued cases will not be re-advertised. Interested persons may provide spoken remarks to the Historic Preservation Commission at the virtual public hearing or via e-mail to historic@somervillema.gov . All written comments must be received by NOON, one week prior to the date of the HPC meeting.