



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

TOM GALLIGANI, JR
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Eric Parkes, Chair
Robin Kelly, Vice-Chair
Ryan Falvey

Dick Bauer
Denis (DJ) Chagnon (Alt.)

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

6:45 p.m. on Thursday, October 06, 2022

Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) will hold a public meeting and public hearings on **Thursday, October 06, 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 107 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 6:50 p.m. by Chair Parkes

Members present: Eric Parkes (Chair), Robin Kelly (Vice-Chair), Ryan Falvey, Dick Bauer

Staff present: Wendy Sczechowicz, Sarah White

Others present: Anne Vigorito, Joseph Fodera, Dan Bonardi, Evan Stellman, Yael Getz, Schoen, Carmine Guarracino, Jason Santana



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Administrative Business

Vice Chair Kelly announced her professional association with Caldwell Banking, provided a disclosure about her association with Ron Cavallo, and announced she filed a disclosure of a conflict of interest with the Mayor's Office.

Preservation Staff stated that at some point during this meeting, the HPC will need to go into recess to allow another meeting using the same organizer information to conclude their business. Preservation Staff explained how to log back into the meeting after the recess concluded.

I. Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties

1. HPC.ALT 2022.51 – 50 Bow Street

Applicant: Rob Leavell

Owner: Urbanica 50 Condominium Trust

The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by removing and rebuilding two chimneys.

- Preservation Staff stated, having spoken with the Applicant team, they had received confirmation that the HPC can proceed with the application at staff level; the Applicant will be withdrawing their application and returning to address the situation at staff level as the changes involved in-kind replacements. Staff continued that if the HPC motions to continue the hearing, the applicant can continue to work with Staff on the issue prior to the next hearing
- Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to continue the item.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **continue** the item.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

II. Determinations of Historic Significance (STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS) HPC Advisory Review Items

1. HPC.DMO 2022.28 – 234 Willow Avenue – Garage

Applicant: Joseph Fodera

Owner: Joseph & Melaney Fodera

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

- Anne Vigorito, Attorney for the Applicant, introduced herself, Joseph Fodera, and Engineer Dan Bonardi.
- Attorney Anne Vigorito stated that relative to the garage, there had been many alterations, including the garage door, aluminum gutters, and other features. She stated the siding was currently keeping the structure up and that the engineer was present to answer questions, and respectfully requested the HPC find the structure not historically significant.
- Public Comment:
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) - stated he had been a resident of the city for four or five generations, stated he knew the property owner although that does not create bias. He stated he was in support of the demolition and the property

owner should be able to do as they wish. He continued that he saw no reason why the garage should be retained and that he thought the garage had no historic significance.

- Chair Parkes closed the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Vice Chair Kelly stated that while she typically does not like to remove wood-framed outbuildings, the garage was not a good example of a wood framed garage. She stated while the original form and massing are there, it is not a good example, and didn't feel it would be a loss to the city if it were to be demolished.
- Mr. Bauer agreed with Vice Chair Kelly.
- Mr. Falvey also expressed his agreement with Vice Chair Kelly's comments.
- Chair Parkes also agreed and didn't see any level of significance.
- Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to find the property historically significant.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (0-4) **against** finding the property historically significant.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: no; Dick Bauer: no; Ryan Falvey: no; Eric Parkes: no

Findings:

- The garage is not a good example of a wood frame outbuilding.
- The garage has been heavily altered.

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

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

2. HPC.DMO 2022.35 – 635 Somerville Avenue

Applicant: Mai Luo

Owner: 635 Somerville Avenue, LLC

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

- Evan Stellman, the architect for the applicant, reviewed the building at 635 Somerville Avenue
- He stated that over the years it had seen several alterations, and that the applicant team were seeking to demolish the structure to develop a new building.
- Public Comment:
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) - he began to express his displeasure with the Commission in general but was stopped by Chair Parkes reminding him that public comment must be on the subject item.
 - Preservation Staff clarified that members of the public must refrain from unprofessional language.
 - Mr. Cavallo continued that he believed the structure was marginal and that he was fully in support with the demolition of the structure. He continued that he supported the development of the corner and that he thinks the structure was of little value historically.
 - Preservation Staff stated they received another public comment that was provided by email.
 - The HPC confirmed they received two comments, including a comment from City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen. Chair Parkes noted that Councilor Ewen-

Campan was concerned, procedurally, about how the process had been handled in regards of notifying the tenants of the building.

- Chair Parkes noted the narrow parameters of review the HPC has and noted that the issue of notifying residents is something the owner would need to do.
- Mr. Bauer stated that although as an individual and member of the city, he is distressed that the residents had been given no notice.
- Chair Parkes asked the Applicant if they were aware of the issue.
- Evan Stellman replied they met with Councilor Ewen-Campen, and the owner had also met with the tenants.
- Chair Parkes asked if the applicant would like to continue the item in order to reach out to applicants. Architect Evan Stellman declined.
- Chair Parkes noted that the other letter the Commission received was in support of the demolition.
- Chair Parkes closed the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Vice Chair Kelly stated that it was unclear where the original entrance was, that the building wasn't a good example of a historic triple-decker in the city, and the streetscape would not be negatively impacted by its removal.
- Mr. Falvey agreed with Vice Chair Kelly. He continued that he would not support historic significance based on the architecture and the changes that have been made.
- Mr. Bauer stated that the basic form is intact, and the main changes seemed to be to cover up original materials. He continued there appeared to be enough remaining to be of historic significance.
- Chair Parkes stated he saw this as a particularly good example of a triple-decker, and although he understands Mr. Bauer's point, he saw the structure as not significant as it is an outlier rather than within a grouping.
- Vice Chair Kelly motioned to find the property historically significant.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted (1-3), with Vice Chair Kelly, Mr. Falvey, and Chair Parkes dissenting, **against** finding the property historically significant.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: no; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: no; Eric Parkes: no

Findings:

- The building doesn't contribute to the streetscape and rhythm.
- It is not a good representation of the style of building; has been modified too much, particularly the roofline and entrance, which have compromised the historic integrity.

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

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

3. HPC.DMO 2022.35 – 76 Curtis Street

Applicant: Anthony Seretakis

Owner: Same as Applicant

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



- Yael Getz Schoen, architect for the Applicant, and the owner were present, but the owner was having trouble unmuting himself.
- Preservation Staff interrupted the meeting and asked for a 10-minute recess so the Planning Board could return and close their meeting, as the two are using the same meeting platform. She explained to attendees how to return to the meeting.
- Mr. Bauer moved to recess for 10 minutes.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Mr. Bauer, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **approve** the proposed recess.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

MEETING IN RECESS 7:25-7:35PM

- Chair Parkes reopened the meeting.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **resume** the meeting.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

- The applicant resumed discussing their proposal. The owner owns 76 and 80 Curtis Street and had a vision for the property that involved retaining the building at 80 Curtis Street but demolishing 76 Curtis Street.
- Public Comment:
 - Frank and Thomas Cucinotta (70-72 Curtis Street) - stated he and his parents lived next door. They expressed their opposition to tearing down a structure that matched the street for something modern.
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) - noted that he understood the desire for preservation, but he believed a new structure would be better for the street.
- Chair Parkes closed the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Mr. Bauer noted the main structure appeared important in terms of the people of Somerville it was associated with and on its own. While it had been covered with vinyl siding, the massing was there, the architectural detail was there, and you could understand what it would have looked like.
- Vice Chair Kelly agreed and that it read clearly as a late 19th century structure and fit very well with the neighborhood's overall scale
- Additionally, Vice Chair Kelly noted that the building's association with Lorenzo Dow was very important,
- Mr. Falvey & Chair Parkes expressed their agreement with Vice Chair Kelly and Mr. Bauer's comments.
- In relation to the garage, Vice Chair Kelly stated the garage was a good example of a small wood-framed garage and retained older doors (if not original). Additionally, she noted the symmetrical design of the structure that retained its details and components.
- The Commission reviewed that different votes are required for each structure.
- Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to find the primary structure historically significant.



HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **approve** the proposal to find the primary structure historically significant.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Findings:

- The structure is significant for its association with Lorenzo Dow.
- The building retains its original massing.
- The structure contributes to the streetscape.

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

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

- Vice-Chair Kelly made a motion to find the garage historically significant

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **approve** the proposal to find the garage historically significant.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Eric Parkes: no

Findings:

- The garage is intact and is a good example of a wood-framed garage from the time.
- It retains its original or near original wood doors.

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

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

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

1. 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, Attorney for the applicant, introduced Carmine Guarracino, and Jason Santana who are both part of the applicant team.
- Attorney Anne Vigorito summarized the history of the case.
- Attorney Anne Vigorito explained that they had asked Mr. Guarracino, the contractor, to come out to the site, who made findings that prior to the demolition beginning, the building was not in good structural condition.
- Mr. Guarracino, the contractor, explained to the Commission that upon going into the home, he had been skeptical about the integrity of the house; and that his company specialized in historic buildings,



- He continued explaining that he had been concerned about the state of the foundations, which were in disrepair to the point that they could go at any moment. In his professional opinion, the structure needed to be demolished.
- Mr. Bauer asked about the demolition that was already started. He noted that Attorney Vigorito said that no demolition took place after the stop-work order, but that Staff had stated that was not true.
- Attorney Vigorito explained that when the stop-work order occurred, they immediately stopped and applied to the HPC. Sometime after that, they received a violation letter from a building inspector, who was unaware the Applicant was at that time before the HPC.
- Preservation Staff stated that the information from ISD was that the Applicant received a stop-work order, and after that, abutters provided evidence of the roof and portions of the sides of the building coming down.
- Mr. Bauer asked why any demolition work was done before coming to the HPC.
- Mr. Santana with North American Development, the construction supervisor, stated it was a big remodeling job with a full set of architects and engineers, and the application showed everything that was to be done to the house, including a full set of plans that didn't include total demolition. He stated they received approval and began work. He noted that it was a partial demolition with appropriate inspections.
- Chair Parkes and Preservation Staff noted that the Demolition Review Ordinance was altered several years ago to states that demolition greater than 50% of the structure requires demolition review.
- Chair Parkes noted that the building permit stated the applicant was partially keeping the original foundation and walls, but the issue appeared to be that ISD approved a set of drawings that appeared to have less than 50% demolition, when it may have been more than 50% demolition.
- Mr. Santana confirmed a review was done and that their architect and engineer confirmed with the City that the demolition and alterations followed the building permit and submitted plans.
- Vice Chair Kelly asked if ISD determined that more than 50% of the structure was demolished, and that more of the property was demolished than was indicated on the plans.
- Preservation Staff replied that they don't know how ISD determined the level of demolition. Staff noted that it would be helpful if there is a requirement that all demolition is indicated on a plan set, and that most contractors and architects who are familiar with Somerville will do so.
- Mr. Santana clarified for the HPC that his company had not done anything that was not allowed by the City, and stated he has a CZC from the City and clear documentation showing that he followed the requirements for applications, permits, and inspections.
- Chair Parkes confirmed with the Applicant the demolition indicated on the plan set and confirmed that they were followed.
- Vice Chair Kelly stated her frustration that the situation appeared to have started because of the failure of ISD, and that that delayed the project for the applicant and also had taken additional time before the HPC.
- Chair Parkes noted that the applicant followed the drawings as approved by ISD and agreed with Vice Chair Kelly that ISD should have addressed the matter.
- Public Comment:
 - Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) - stated that based on the testimony, the applicant is being unnecessarily penalized. He was concerned the building had been exposed to the weather and the structure had suffered dramatically and was concerned the building is beyond repair, and the error was on the part of ISD.

- Chair Parkes closed the public comment portion of the hearing.
- Preservation Staff noted that the building had been secured against the elements.
- Vice Chair Kelly stated that given the level of demolition that had already occurred that though they would like, interior photographs and detailed drawing, those may not be possible; however, some information about the group of workforce housing that existed on Woodbine noted in signage would be preferable.
- Preservation Staff confirmed that the Commission could determine the building “Not Preferably Preserved with Conditions”.
- Chair Parkes stated he would have liked to have some sort of protection for this type of workforce housing but, given the situation, he did not feel comfortable instating an 18-month delay.
- Mr. Bauer said that the HPC should look at the case as if it had come to them before any demolition. He agreed that while ISD made the mistake in allowing the building permit, it doesn’t relieve the Applicant of their obligation.
- Vice Chair Kelly agreed that ignorance of the law is not an excuse, but the City sets a difficult standard if they demonstrate their determinations and reviews can’t be trusted.
- Preservation Staff noted that if the HPC establishes a delay, the property would go to an MOA. Staff reviewed the difference between the MOA process versus “Not Preferably Preserved with Conditions”.
- Mr. Falvey said he thought it would be appropriate to move on, and he was inclined to say the structure was not preferably preserved with conditions.
- Chair Parkes confirmed the conditions discussed are appropriate, and that he didn’t think the Commission would be setting a good example for other applicants.
- Vice Chair Kelly made a motion to find the property not preferably preserved with the following conditions:
 1. *photographic documentation of the building*
 2. *architectural renderings of the building*
 3. *identification of materials for salvage of material*
 4. *a plan for installation of historic or interpretive signage at or near the site in coordination with HPC Staff.*

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted (3-1), with Mr. Bauer dissenting, to **approve** that the property be not preferable preserved with the conditions listed above.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: no; Eric Parkes: yes

Findings:

- This is a good example of a mid-19th Century workers cottage, which needs to be documented.
- This structure is part of a cluster of these types of cottages on a street, which is very uncommon in the city.
- The project was erroneously advanced by ISD.
- The building had been substantially demolished.

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

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Eric Parkes: yes



IV. Other Business

- **Minutes 07/19**

Preservation Staff stated that the PPZ administrative assistant was going back through the meeting minutes to address the concerns of the Commission, and they would be brought back to the Commission at a later date.

- **CPC Representative**

Preservation Staff explained that a HPC representative is required for the CPC, and that they were looking for a representative to complete the end of this year's CPC round. Staff reviewed the responsibilities of the HPC representative to the CPC.

Mr. Bauer stated he was willing to serve if he could get staff assistance with the reviews that are required. Preservation Staff confirmed that Mr. Bauer can serve as soon as possible, but in the event that Mr. Bauer can't serve, asked for another volunteer. Chair Parkes agreed to act as the HPC representative to the CPC if Mr. Bauer cannot.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Mr. Falvey, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **approve** Mr. Bauer's participation in the CPC and Chair Parkes' participation in the CPC should Mr. Bauer be unable to participate.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

V. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn and roll call vote.

HPC Action: Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Mr. Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to **approve** the proposal to adjourn the meeting.

Roll call vote: Robin Kelly: yes; Ryan Falvey: yes; Dick Bauer: yes; Eric Parkes: yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:31pm.

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.