



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

17 MAY 2022 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation via remote participation.

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>	
Adam J. Wylie	Alt. Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Alan Bingham	Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:51pm and adjourned at 9:20pm.

ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HPC.ALT 2022.22 – 63 Adams Street

The applicant team explained that this property contains a row house with a two-story addition/annex in the rear. The proposal is to add a deck onto the roof of the annex building. This will require removing the existing fire escape and replacing it with a railing and adding a door. The existing dormer and design elements are proposed to remain.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that this is a wonderful property, and he fully supports the proposal. This will have no visual impact on the property and will provide the owner with outdoor space.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed a letter from Mr. Cavallo requesting that the associated plans, photos, or documents be shown during hearings.

There were no concerns expressed regarding the proposed alterations.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the proposed alterations to this property.

RESULT:

APPROVED

DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE (Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HPC.DMO 2022.16 – 147 Highland Avenue

The applicant team explained that this property has been changed dramatically over the years. It is not believed that there is any true historical significance at this time.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that he sees no historic value to this building. There is potential for development that would be significant for the tax base of the City.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that the building retains neither its original form nor massing and has been heavily altered. The building does not contribute to the historic nature of the streetscape and does not contain cultural historic significance for the City. There were no concerns expressed regarding the proposal.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (0-5) to find the property Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

- Structure lacks historic integrity
- No longer conveys the original architectural style
- Not significant to the streetscape
- Not associated with any historic event or personages significant to the City of Somerville

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE (Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process) HPC.DMO 2022.17 – 229 Tremont Street

The applicant team explained that this property is a triple decker and there have been significant alterations to it over the years. However, as mentioned in the Staff Memo, a candy maker and chocolate dipper did reside at this property in the past. The property is not believed to be Historically Significant.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that he believes the streetscape in this area deserves improvement. This structure has no intrinsic architectural value. This property is an opportunity to improve the streetscape and expand the tax base. He fully supports the demolition of this structure.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that the building has had considerable modifications to its envelope but does retain its original form, massing, and fenestration. This is one of nine triple decker structures on Tremont and Webster Streets. It is the middle of five triple deckers that remain intact. As a group, these retain their original form and massing and speak to this area's role in working class housing development. The front door to the building is not original.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bingham, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

- Building has a primary role in the streetscape among other similar triple deckers reflecting the cultural history of that architectural style of the City
- Building retains its original form and massing

RESULT:	HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT
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DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED (Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)
HPC.DMO 2022.20 – 245 Elm Street

The applicant team explained that the proposal reviewed how to maintain the structure, its façade, and its presence on the streetscape. The team also explored how to keep the building operational during construction. This building is part of a four story, mixed use, lab and retail building proposed for the site. The building is an important cultural landmark in Davis Square. The new construction will cantilever over the existing building and includes removing the interior of the second floor and roof for new lab space. There will be a clerestory above the brick façade to bring light into the lab space. This will be slightly setback from the parapet. The third and fourth floors will be setback 10' from the façade. The upper floor windows and storefront have been heavily altered. The lower left façade will remain in place with no changes. The vacant storefront next to it will be replaced with a storefront system that matches the rest of the façade. The upper façade will be constructed using existing materials. Each piece of masonry will be numbered, stored during construction and then reinstalled. New double hung wood windows to match the original windows will be installed on the upper floors. The building will look mostly as it does today, with more historically appropriate upper story windows and a storefront that better matches the existing building. The building will amplify the social, cultural, and architectural character of the Square.

The Commission asked about the Sligo Pub. The applicant team explained that offers and accommodations have been made to bring back the business, but the owners may or may not be interested. One challenge includes the Small Business Overlay District that these parcels are subject to. This is to drive smaller retail spaces into the area. The small store spaces require shared amenities, bathrooms, and corridor access. This necessarily breaks up the space and creates small businesses.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that his comments relate to all the properties in question. It is remarkable that the developers want to maintain the façade of this building, while keeping small businesses, and adding lab space. This is a tremendous value to Davis Square and the tax base. This is a highly thought through structure by an excellent team. He suggested that the Commission relax its standards a bit.

Alex Giller (Medford resident and property owner in Davis Square) – stated that this area of Davis Square is an institution, and he does not understand how a glass façade lab facility would fit in with the masonry designs of this block.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission stated that they like the efforts toward preserving the current façade and that the modifications are being done in a way to distinguish the new from the historic, while updating the storefront to be more in harmony. The property has an amazing historic façade. The building should be Preferably Preserved, while the plans look comprehensive. Other storefronts nearby also have historic value.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bingham, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find 245 Elm Street Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bingham, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

- Architecture of the building is a good reflection of a commercial two-story brick storefront
- Structure is a good reflection of the commercial streetscape that once existed around Davis Square
- The Burren is importantly associated with the culture of Davis Square

RESULT:

PREFERABLY PRESERVED

DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED (Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process) HPC.DMO 2022.21 – 233 Elm Street

The applicant team explained that this property once likely had approximately eight businesses within it. The heights and styles of the buildings have changed over the years. The proposed changes will hopefully bring vitality back to the area. Interpretive and historic signage can be used in an effective way. The applicant suggested a determination of Not Preferably Preserved with conditions.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony. Seeing no comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission asked if all the buildings in this block used to resemble those with parapets. Staff stated this is possible, but no images were found to confirm this.

The Commission stated that the task is to view the big picture of this area, and one-story commercial buildings may not be the highest and best use in Davis Square. The buildings have characteristic and moderately high style storefronts. The brick work, parapets, and trim are all mostly intact. Some of the window glass may have historic character, but likely not all of it. If this block existed elsewhere, it is unrealistic that these items would be expressed in a new building. These buildings are not icons in Davis Square. The new building has an effort to maintain small retail, which would maintain the historical use of these storefronts. The function of this life of storefronts will likely be similar in the new building. The buildings could be memorialized in some way as part of the conditions.

The Commission discussed several proposed conditions with Staff, including that images of the storefronts be memorialized in some way with accompanying text; that the applicant work with Staff to determine the images, text, design, and placement of these items; and for this information to reflect the dynamic history of the building as it occurred.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the conditions as described.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bingham, the Commission voted (4-1), with Member Bauer voting against, to find 233 Elm Street Not Preferably Preserved, with the previously adopted conditions.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to adopt the following findings:

- There is historical architectural interest along with parapets and brickwork for the anchor façades, but the façades of the storefronts in-between do not reflect a historic nature and are inconsistent with the streetscape

RESULT:**NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED**

Staff noted that one of the findings articulated for 245 Elm Street needs to be removed, as *The Burren* was referenced, but is not more than 50 years old. The Commission should reopen the case and remove that associated finding.

The Commission reopened HPC.DMO 2022.20 – 245 Elm Street.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to redact the reference to *The Burren* as a cultural institution.

DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED (Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)
HPC.DMO 2022.22 – 243 Elm Street

The applicant team explained that one business was listed within this building. The façade does not seem to maintain any of its historic attributes. This likely warrants a determination of Not Preferably Preserved.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony. Seeing no comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission stated that this building has been heavily modified from its original appearance. The overall massing may still be the same, but it is difficult to tell. Given that the buildings next door will be memorialized, it is unclear if this building would also require the same conditions.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bingham, the Commission voted unanimously (0-5) to find 243 Elm Street Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

- Building no longer demonstrates its original architecture and lack integrity

RESULT:**NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED**

OTHER BUSINESS: Commission Elections

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to elect Eric Parkes as Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Following a motion by Member Bingham, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to elect Robin Kelly as Vice Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission.

The Commission agreed that Staff would continue to fill the role of Secretary for the time being, while searching for a Recording Secretary.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 28 March 2022 meeting minutes, as amended.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The Commission discussed that there will be a CPC meeting tomorrow evening.

Interested persons may provide spoken remarks to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) at the virtual public hearing or via e-mail to historic@somervillema.gov . All written comments must be prior to the date of the HPC meeting/hearing.