



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

16 JANUARY 2024 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>Present</i>	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Colin Curzi	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Absent</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:49pm and adjourned at 8:16pm.

CPA ADVISORY REVIEW (CPA-HP FUNDING PROJECTS)
93 Highland Avenue

Melissa Woods, Director of Capital Projects, explained that a storm in the fall dislodged one of the four clock faces of the clock tower due to existing deterioration in the clock tower and the strong winds associated with the storm. It was determined that a crane would need to be mobilized to access the area, leading to project scope being expanded to include the full restoration of the clock tower, and reroofing of both the flat rubber membrane roof and the slate roof of City Hall. The City will apply for Certificates of Appropriateness on February 6th for additional project items.

There was a discussion regarding the reuse of existing slate tiles and the addition of insulation in the rubber roof. The Commission requested more detailed information about the materials being used, such as the use of copper panels and the replacement of wood trims. It was noted that detail could be provided by the architect firm.

The Commission expressed that it would like to make sure any of the molding profiles are retained, and the general appearance is consistent with the original. The materials used should also be durable.

Staff noted that the Commission's thoughts would be sent along to the CPA Manager.

PUBLIC HEARING: Determination of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000064 – 326 Lowell Street

Staff explained that some work was previously started on this property. Then ISD issued a stop work order. Some siding and a front porch have been removed. However, the Commission's role is to assess the building as though the entire thing still stands.

The applicant team explained that the plans have changed to a three-unit building. It was originally thought that the property was from 1910, but it now appears the structure was built around 1851.

The Commission outlined the process and Staff explained that the demolition delay is 18 months.

The applicant team reviewed the existing conditions of the property. It is believed that the best use of the property is to provide additional housing.

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

The Commission discussed that the building contains its original form and massing. It seems clear that the structure is Historically Significant. The applicant team explained that the original plan was not to demolish the building, but new zoning changes allow for triple-deckers, leading to the current proposal. The Commission explained that other sources of due diligence than city records can be used to determine the age of the structure. This building's significance has to do with its mid-nineteenth century essence. The applicant team stated that most of the structure's material is not original and does not maintain the original look. The Commission explained that the structure maintains the original form and massing, including the original roof line hitch, and the returns of the roof line which speak to a Greek Revival style that was popular in the mid-nineteenth century. If certain items were changed, the structure could be easily restored to what it used to look like. The social history of the property is also quite complete and tells a story.

There was discussion regarding the unpermitted demolition that took place and potential asbestos removal.

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 Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

HPC Findings:

- There is a relative rarity of a structure from 1850's.
- The structure retains its original form and massing.
- There is an extensive list of blue-collar historical occupants which is well-documented.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determination of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-022084 – 9 Olive Avenue**

The applicant team explained that the proposal is not to demolish the building but strip the exterior trim and siding. The structure does contain some asbestos siding. The proposal also includes a small, 450 s.f., addition to the rear of the building. This will be retained as a single-family structure.

Staff explained that ISD has determined that 50% or more of the structure is proposed to be demolished, which is why the case is before the Commission.

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

The Commission stated that the structure appears to retain a lot of its original form, massing, and structural integrity. There is an opportunity to restore the property. There is a significance to the fact that there seems to be a twin structure next door.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) 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:

HPC Findings:

- The structure retains its original form and massing.
- The structure contributes to the streetscape as a twin structure to one next door.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The Commission discussed that the CPC had applications which fit the categories of funding available. However, the off-cycle City Hall situation has led to some last-minute decisions. The Commission discussed other applications before the CPC.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to approve the 21 November 2023 meeting minutes.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to approve the 5 December 2023 meeting minutes.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to approve the 19 December 2023 meeting minutes.

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.