



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

19 MARCH 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>Absent</i>	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:49pm and adjourned at 9:53pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties
HP23-000051 – 57 Columbus Avenue
(continued from 20 February 2024)

Vice Chair Kelly recused herself from this case.

The applicant team explained that the proposal includes a mudroom addition, windows, a front door, a two-story bay window on the back of the property, and replacements of siding, the front stoop, gutters, one chimney, and a dormer to accommodate a bathroom on the third floor. The proposed mudroom has vertical wood siding with 2" battens to differentiate it from the existing house. There was originally a mudroom in the proposed location, but this was on a poor foundation and collapsing. The proposal includes replacement of all windows, except three windows which are original and will be restored. The proposed window replacements are Marvin 2 over 2 with simulated divided lights and spacers. There may be framing for a stain glass window in the home and, if so, a salvaged window will be sought. The front door is proposed to be custom to match an original door while meeting current energy codes. There are two options for the proposed two-story bay window. The existing siding is asbestos shingles but there appears to be wood clapboards underneath. The proposal is to replace both layers of siding with fiber cement clapboard siding. The existing front stoop is badly deteriorated and proposed to be replaced with brick steps, granite treads, and a brick/granite landing. The gutters are proposed to be replaced with a Duragutter product. The north chimney to the rear is proposed to be removed as there is no use for it on the property.

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

The Commission reviewed the proposed mudroom siding. It was noted that this area should blend in with the rest of the structure. The Commission discussed the proposed replacement windows and agreed that the three original windows should be restored. There was discussion regarding Option B for the proposed bay window to keep the Victorian style of the home. The Commission discussed the proposed front stoop and agreed that more information was needed. It was determined that item 5 would be left for Staff review. The Commission agreed with the proposed gutter choice. Regarding the proposed removal of the north chimney, the Commission suggested removal of the chimney within the building in order to keep the exterior chimney structure intact, if

possible. The Commission suggested that the applicant team review the proposed dormer to ensure that the roofing matches the eve detail.

The Commission discussed additional conditions for this application including that there be an amendment to condition #3 to state that the Commission wanted to review the final design for the front steps, railings, landings, and columns and the railing above the mudroom; an amendment to condition #6 to strike the word “wood”; to remove condition #8; and that the applicant should come back to the Commission to further discuss the chimney, portico, and back railing.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0), to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness with Staff’s proposed conditions, and the other conditions as detailed. Also, to deny without prejudice the back railing, portico, and rear chimney.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties

HP23-000083 – 30 Bow Street

(continued from 20 February 2024)

Vice Chair Kelly retook her seat. Member Coughlin recused himself from this case.

The applicant team explained that this building is currently used as an architectural office. The proposal is to create a first-floor retail space for a wine bottle shop. This necessitates an accessible entrance, which is proposed at the rear façade. An accessible path of permeable pavers is proposed leading to this entrance. The deck in the backyard will need to be rebuilt and raised approximately 7”. A smaller deck and a wheelchair lift are also proposed. An existing set of double doors is proposed to become a single door to meet the accessible entrance requirements.

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

The Commission discussed the proposed materials for the accessible path.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0), to approve the request as amended, with the option for permeable or non-permeable pavers.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance

(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)

HP24-000001 – 382 Broadway

Member Coughlin retook his seat.

The applicant team gave a background history of the property. They explained that the originally proposed design included additions in the front and back, while still keeping 50% of the original structure intact. It also proposed the removal of almost the entirety of the façade. During construction, the 50% threshold was breached due to intentional decisions made due to safety concerns. The proposed units will be 600-900 s.f. each, including two affordable units, and not microunits as suggested by some.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Daniel Cronin (Winter Hill) – stated that this building was previously derelict for a number of months. He previously asked if it could be preserved as it was an asset to the neighborhood, but it has since been completely demolished.

Sean Cryts (162 Sycamore Street) – stated that holes were put in the roof of the house and windows were removed. There is nothing left of the original house. The intention seemed to be that the developer could not restore the house instead of allowing the Commission to determine if the building was Historically Significant.

Christine Evans – stated that, early on in the process, windows were removed, and the chimney was taken out. She believed the intent was to allow the house to rot and fall down without asking permission. She is surprised that the developer is now requesting for the house to be demolished, as this appears to be the same result. She is wary of what else will be done in the construction of this house.

Kate St Laurent – stated that this is a perfect example of what has been seen around the City, with developers finding ways around this process. There is a process, and developers should not be immune to this.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that this is startling and disappointing. He would like to see what is being proposed, as the end product is important. As the building is essentially gone, there needs to be an expedient, make-sense solution. The City needs more rental units and an expanded tax base. There is concern regarding the developer being able to fund this project.

Teresa Dovidio (380 Broadway) – stated that she watched as the water and power were cut off from the halfway house up the street during this construction. There was no Dig Safe pattern on the site. Curbing has been removed allowing water onto her property which is cracking the foundation wall. She feels that her property value has decreased based on what has been done on the property in question.

Lissie Wahl – stated that it seems to be a bad joke to knock down all the walls and then state that there is a safety concern, so the rest of the original building needs to be removed. The construction of this site is protruding too much. Some semblances of the original historic character of this property should be put back in. The developer should be asked to replace the traits that characterized the area and be punished in some way.

Gretchen Wehrle-Scott – stated that she has watched this property deteriorate over time, with windows removed and holes cut in the roof. She is concerned that what was proposed and marketed for at least a year was a building that does not look like what is currently being built. The property was left in disrepair and to rot in order to get a demolition permit, it seemed. This does not seem to be in the spirit of what the City is trying to do.

Helen Schwickrath (Winter Hill) – stated that the only thing original to the property at this point is the foundation and a few pieces of wood. She originally heard the proposal for this property was ten microunits but is now being told there is a different proposal. She asked what the plan is, aside from destroying a historic property.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The applicant team explained that they tried in the first iteration of the plan to only place an addition in the rear. ISD told them that the building had to comply with dimensional regulations, pushing it forward on the site. The applicant team was told that the structure is currently a nonconforming building type for the UR District. The proposal sought to create an allowed building type in the UR District, so the new building type must conform with dimensional regulations. The only thing that could have been done without pushing the building forward was to renovate the structure and keep it as a two-family building. There was a hole in the roof, as a chimney was removed because it did not jive with the proposed floor plan. The hole was not covered as it was not seen as an issue.

The Commission explained that the applicant team had a responsibility to preserve at least 50% of the structure. By leaving the building exposed to the elements, the applicant increased the chances that more of the building would be destroyed. The applicant team explained that the building had been gutted at that point so rainwater would not further deteriorate the building any further.

Staff explained that, if at any point the demolition was going to exceed the 50% threshold, the applicant should have come to Staff to discuss it. When these issues arise, ISD flags them and flags Staff for a review. There are other avenues available to the applicant to discuss these items with Staff as well.

The Commission stated that the applicant should have stopped work when it was clear more of the structure was going to be removed than originally intended. The applicant had a responsibility to the neighbors and the City. Now there is only a shell of a structure to work with.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0), to find the house at 382 Broadway Historically Significant for the reasons discussed.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted (5-0), to adopt the findings as outlined.

HPC Findings:

- The original structure retained a great deal of its architectural integrity, form, massing, and detailing.
- It was a good reflection of its style and time period, due to its relevance and relation to the streetscape.
- A past resident was also historically notable in the broader development and social history of the City.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP24-000002 – 8 Montrose Court**

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to demolish the structure to add a two-family home on the property. The property has settled due to work done along the Green line extension.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – stated that this building has no architectural merit, and it would only be a benefit to the City to lose it and replace it with something better. This building could be replaced by an energy efficient building, which would be a benefit to the owner and City.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that this property does not appear to be part of a pattern with other nearby historic worker cottages. The current materials on the main structure are not original. There was discussion that the property does contribute to the streetscape based on its original scale and massing.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted (2-3), with Member Coughlin, Member Chagnon, and Chair Parkes voting against, to find the structure at 8 Montrose Court Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted (3-0-2), with Member Falvey and Vice Chair Kelly abstaining, to adopt the findings as outlined.

HPC Findings:

- The property does not have an association with any major events, architects, or builders of the time.
- Given the fact that many of the architectural details are not original, it does not have architectural significance, or the level of significance in its setting was not enough to consider it as Historically Significant.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Historic Significance
(Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000071 – 9 Olive Avenue**

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0), to continue 9 Olive Avenue to the next meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Preferably Preserve
(Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP23-000064 – 326 Lowell Street
(continued from 20 February 2024)**

The applicant team explained the proposal, including to raise the house and rebuild it with a historical look.

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

The Commission explained that the interior of the building will mostly need to be reframed. The structure has been gutted and stripped of its detailing, though the massing remains. Some elements of the structure that are Historically Significant include the five bay façade and side gables. The Commission discussed how these items could be preserved while allowing the applicant team to continue forward.

Staff noted that nothing further from ISD has been received to date.

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

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted (5-0), to adopt the findings as outlined.

HPC Findings:

- The structure's age, and its unusual orientation to the street.
- The original massing is retained, along with a unique five bay façade and center entrance.

RESULT:	PREFERABLY PRESERVED
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OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0), to approve the 6 February 2024 and 20 February 2024 meeting minutes of, as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The Commission discussed the CPC update. The CPC is trying to determine how to carry out more community outreach to obtain a more diverse set of people who are seeking CPC funding.

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 historic@somervillema.gov.