



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

7 MAY 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>Absent</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Present</i>	<i>Left at 7:29pm</i>

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:45pm and adjourned at 8:14pm.

**PUBLIC HEARING: Determinations of Preferably Preserved
(Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP24-000001 – 382 Broadway**

It was noted that Member Price was recused from this item.

The applicant team reviewed the proposed site plan. The proposal is to build in front of the property, up to the 10' front yard setback. The proposal will also build above and behind the property. The driveway will be located to the left side and there will be ten parking spaces to the rear. The demolition plans include the previous removal of the front façade, rear façade, and right-side elevation, totaling 86% of the existing surface area. The proposal is to construct a 2 ½ story structure, mostly clad with cementitious siding, along with PVC board and batten elements at the bays and cross gables. Decks will cantilever over the rear of the site. The intention is to maintain as much of the existing building as possible.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Ron Cavallo (70 Victoria Street) – expressed concern regarding Broadway. He believes the proposed structure is attractive and would be a benefit to the City. Broadway is problematic due to vacant storefronts, and he is concerned that this project will have extended delays leading to an unfinished building.

Teresa Dovidio (170 Sycamore Street) – stated that the minimum front yard setback on this property is less than 10'. The applicant team explained that the proposal includes a porch that goes into the front yard setback. Ms. Dovidio asked why the property cannot be setback to keep the line of the street. The proposal will destroy the street line. Staff suggested that questions be emailed into the Planning Department. Ms. Dovidio stated that she would like to see the applicant fined as the building was left to fall into disrepair in order to continue with the project.

Sean Cryts (162 Sycamore Street) – stated that the developer was disingenuous in stating that this building was a safety issue. This is a Historic Preservation meeting. The drawings should show the existing houses to the right and left and the small setbacks. If the existing structure had been kept for Staff to review, it would not have needed to be built upon. The structure was torn down without permission and the proposal has been disingenuous.

Daniel Cronin (96 Broadway) – asked if there will be consequences for the developer having skirted the regulations by tearing down the building.

Aaron Weber (32 Summit Avenue) – stated that no one has heard from the people who will be living in this building and will become part of the community. There is a housing crisis due to underproduced and badly needed housing. Housing delayed is housing denied. This decision should be made quickly.

Lisi Wall (390 Broadway) – stated that the developer has set up this project so that the building needed to be torn down in order to get what he wanted. The project will break up the street line of Broadway. There is nothing substantial in this proposal.

Gretchen Wehrle-Scott (9 Browning Road) – stated that the minimum setback is not a maximum setback, and the building should not be set as far forward. Neighbors on all sides have been disrupted. The parking lot looks generous on the drawing but is not as much in person. There are large trees on the property that will be dug up for this parking lot. The proposed building looks reasonable, but it is unclear why it needs to break the line of Broadway. The developer has been sleezy in going about this process.

David Einis – the townspeople and Commission have berated his son and his architect. He applied for a permit and waited two years for the product. There was no intention to get away with anything to circumvent any laws. The proposal has conformed with all the setback requirements to create an award-winning design. This will be the nicest looking building on the street. The Commission should show compassion to his son who has lost money as this project has sat idle.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission stated that the front yard setback is beyond the scope of this meeting. The circumstance was brought along with this project. The applicant team stated that the proposal was made to conform with all the zoning bylaws. The intention is to finish the project at this time.

The Commission stated that the original streetscape had a conformity that the Commission would have felt strongly about if the original building had not been demolished. This would have led to a Preferably Preserved determination. It is unclear why these plans did not come before the Commission prior to 86% of the building being demolished, leading to this process. Only a handful of properties come before this Commission each year. There are other opportunities in the city for properties to be built without destroying the cultural historic fabric of the city, which belongs to the people of the city. The need for housing in the city cannot be used as a carte blanche for knocking down this type of house.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to find the property at 382 Broadway Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the following findings:

- The original structure had historic integrity
- The original structure was a good reflection of its style
- The original structure was important in the streetscape

RESULT:	PREFERABLY PRESERVED
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Member Coughlin exited the meeting at 7:29pm.

OTHER BUSINESS: Potential Local Historic District Discussion

The Commission discussed strategies to advance potential Local Historic Districts (LHD) already discussed and the LHD in Union Square. Staff stated that the Union Square LHD should be submitted to the State for comment by the end of the fiscal year. The Glenwood LHD process cannot begin until FY25. The Commission expressed concern regarding staffing and funding for this project. The Commission agreed to work with Staff to find ways for the city to provide funding and staffing for this project.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC is going through an outreach process with the public.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 2 April 2024 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 historic@somervillema.gov.