



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

20 AUGUST 2024 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Eric Parkes	Chair	<i>Absent</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>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Present</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:50pm and adjourned at 7:13pm.

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA):
HP24-000073 – 101 Highland Avenue**

The applicant team reviewed some proposed edits to the draft MOA.

The team discussed the scale and preservation of the historic building to be renovated. The applicant team suggested the need for flexibility, suggesting a scale between $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$, and agreed to limit the scale to no smaller than $\frac{1}{2}$.

The Commission expressed concern that not more elements are being preserved. The street facing entablature is the most prominent piece but other items, such as the doorway frame, the pediments over the third story windows, lamp posts, and the bolt plates for the tie rods should be salvaged. The applicant team explained that part of the problem is the scale and style of the new building versus the old building. The Commission noted that these items could be incorporated internally, given the large scale of the building.

The Commission discussed the proposed design options within the MOA. Staff suggested having additional meetings with the applicant team regarding amending the MOA. The MOA will likely include a selection of features that can and will be reused and incorporated, but the exact location of these will probably not be known. The applicant team agreed to work with Staff regarding these concerns.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:
Determinations of Historic Significance (Step 1 in the Demolition Review Process)
HP24-000061 – 33 Cedar Street**

The applicant team explained that they are the current owners of the property. There is an existing single-family house on the lot; the structure is 2.5 stores featuring a gabled hip roof and asbestos shingle siding. The house is currently vacant, and the proposal is to demolish it.

Vice Chair Kelly opened public testimony. Seeing no comments, Vice Chair Kelly closed the public testimony.

The Commission discussed that the front of the building seems to retain a large amount of its form, massing, and detailing, more so than some of the adjacent houses of similar style. The building seems to keep much of its architectural integrity as well. This building is part of a collection of front gabled houses that were all constructed around the same time period, and it contributes to the streetscape, giving a sense of the era in which this street was developed. This is an opportunity to restore a wonderful property.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 33 Cedar Street Historically Significant.

RESULT:	HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT
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PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Determinations of Preferably Preserved (Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)

HP24-000045 – 33 Vinal Avenue

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to demolish the existing structure as it has been in a state of disrepair. The structure is a 2.5 story building with a mansard roof and asbestos shingles. The property is currently vacant, and the intention is to replace it with a new structurally sound building. This is proposed to not only align with SomerVision, but also with the new MBTA objectives. The design is intended to preserve the neighborhood's overall integrity with a structure that is more Victorian in style. No design has yet been provided.

Vice Chair Kelly opened public testimony.

Meredith Porter (104 Josephine Ave) – stated that he would hate to see this house demolished and would like for it to be found Preferably Preserved. The structure contributes to the streetscape, is consistent with other buildings in the area, and reflecting trends of the historic building process in the city. A replacement would detract from that streetscape. The Second Empire style is consistent with houses nearby on Summit Ave and Aldersey St. The structure has many interesting architectural details, such as the mansard roof with twin dormers, the details of the front bay with the gable roof on the second story, and brackets such as the one on the front door hood. He expressed concern that the developer's intention is actually to build two semi-detached houses, which would be a much larger structure than the existing one. This is the only public hearing that many of the neighbors will probably be exposed to, and it does not reflect the true intentions.

Susan Ayers (30 Summit Ave) – stated that she has looked closely at other rehab jobs, and they seem to not reflect any historic significance. If this structure were better preserved, this conversation would not occur, due to its historical significance and how it fits with the neighborhood. This home should be restored to its original glory.

Susan Bottari (38 Vinal Ave) – stated that this house is historically valuable to the neighborhood. The proposed permits show seven units to be built on the lot which would be detrimental to the neighborhood.

Rebecca Emigh (23 Vinal Ave) – stated that she loves the architecture of this neighborhood and believes it would be a shame to tear down this existing building that needs some love and care. The seven proposed units would not be appropriate and out of scale for the neighborhood. It is important to care for and preserve the historic parts of the city.

Sean Staples (17 Wesley Park) – stated that it is unfortunate to see developers come into the city that are profit motivated as it causes the character of the city to suffer. He asked that the Commission find the structure Preferably Preserved.

Staff noted that, if this building is determined to be Preferably Preserved, this would only delay demolition up to 18 months, but it cannot permanently prevent demolition.

Seeing no additional comments, Vice Chair Kelly closed the public testimony.

The Commission discussed that it found the property to be Historically Significant. It is a unique building that maintains the streetscape. A demolition of the building would be detrimental. There is an opportunity to preserve this structure and add onto it in interesting ways. The Commission suggested that the applicant team consider a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Staff.

Following a motion by Member Coughlin, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 33 Vinal Ave Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Coughlin, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the following findings:

- the property retains historic integrity and contributes to the streetscape
- the property retains most of its original form, massing, and interesting details
- the property uniquely marries the Second Empire, and the Stick style

RESULT:

PREFERABLY PRESERVED

OTHER BUSINESS: Somernova

The Commission read the letter drafted by Chair Parkes into the record and discussed it.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to send the letter, as amended, to the Planning Board as a matter of comment.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 16 July 2024 meeting minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

There was no update at this time.

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.