



City of Somerville  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**19 NOVEMBER 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>Absent</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); Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Steve Cary (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Kit Luster (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:52pm and adjourned at 9:11pm.

**CPA-HP ADVISORY REVIEW –  
50 Bow Street**

*Members Price and Coughlin recused themselves from this item.*

Staff explained that this building is located in a Local Historic District. There has been some chimney work done previously on the property. The applicant is now seeking to do some brick repointing on one of the façades of the building, and for that they are seeking CPA grant funds. The Commission can discuss any potential pitfalls or treatment options for consideration.

The Commission discussed making sure that the color, consistency, and texture of the mortar are compatible with the original building. An analysis of the original mortar should be conducted. The lime ratio should also be considered. There should be hand removal of mortar joints, and the mortar joints should remain the same, along with tooling of the joint. The grout spacing should be maintained. The use of sealants and waterproofing on the exterior brick is usually disallowed.

Staff stated that they would pass this information along to the applicant.

*Members Price and Coughlin rejoined the Commission.*

**CPA-HP ADVISORY REVIEW -  
275 Broadway (Elizabeth Peabody House)**

The applicant explained that the request is for CPA funds to replace vinyl siding on the exterior of the building with more appropriate clapboarding that is closer to the original color that the building used to be. One piece of the

vinyl siding was removed, and the nail pattern determined that the building originally had clapboards instead of shingles. A proposal has been received from Decorative Arts Conservation Services to determine the composition of any oil-based coating that the shingles had, or if there is any original pigments present, either on the existing shingles or underneath them. This will help determine what color to use for the clapboards.

The Commission discussed that the applicant should back prime the wood but were otherwise enthusiastic about the project.

### **CPA-HP ADVISORY REVIEW - 12 Pleasant Avenue**

The applicant explained that the Somerville Community Land Trust works on building and maintaining affordable housing in Somerville. This is a community-based nonprofit, focused primarily on affordable homeownership through the Community Land Trust model. 12 Pleasant Avenue is a six-unit residential building. Somerville CLT purchased the building in January, working closely with the Affordable Housing Trust, and has the intention to renovate and convert it into a permanent affordability program. Some features of the building need renovation. The trim work and the carpentry on the exterior are cracking and needs refurbishing. The brick work of the foundation is tilted at a bit too sharp of an angle to be comfortable with and needs some bracing and reinforcement. The existing slate roof is in okay condition but needs some improvements. All repairs are to be made in-kind. In terms of the existing windows, the goal is to replace them to more of an original style, such as a 2-over-2 wood window with an aluminum exterior. Sash replacement only is proposed.

Staff noted that this building is located in a Local Historic District.

The Commission discussed that the window replacements will have a significant impact on the appearance of the building. These should be true divided light and other aspects that meet historic guidelines. The applicant team noted that the proposal is for simulated divided light windows. The windows will have a pewter spacer to give the dimension and appearance of a true divided light. It was noted that insulated windows cannot be done in the true divided light style.

### **CPA-HP ADVISORY REVIEW - 1330 Broadway (Somerville Veterans Cemetery)**

The applicant team explained that the Somerville Veterans Memorial Cemetery was established in 1947 and serves as a dedicated resting place to honor Somerville veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation. Over time, many of the cemetery's markers, plaques, monuments, memorials, and other features have shown signs of deterioration due to age and environmental factors. In addition to the cemetery, a revision and amendment to the application has been submitted to include several monuments and memorials across the City which also require attention. A Historical Preservation Conservator has been hired to properly restore and preserve these objects while seeking CPA funds. A survey study will give a comprehensive condition assessment to thoroughly evaluate the current condition of the cemetery markers, plaques, and monuments, along with identifying specific preservation needs and providing a clear roadmap for the restoration work that is needed. The assessment will also help determine the approach that aligns with the highest preservation standards, safeguarding these objects for future generations.

Staff stated that a conditions assessment is one of the primary actions being sought at this time. The applicant team received CPC feedback that an initial scope prepared by an original consultant did not appear to address concerns about historic preservation. Thus, a second consultant was sought. Based on the condition assessment,

the Veterans Office will be seeking funds to carry out a first phase of construction on the monuments as recommended under the assessment. This is a project for which the historical significance to Somerville needs to be determined by the Commission, as this site does not have any other acknowledgement of its historical significance.

The Commission recommended having a topographic site survey of the site done early in the process to create a numbering key that can be placed into the digital record. The Commission asked which wars the veterans interred there are from. The applicant team stated that the cemetery was established in 1947, and the wars included were from World War II to the Gulf War. The Commission stated that the cemetery appears to be historically significant in the history of the City.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the Veterans Cemetery Historically Significant for CPA funding.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the other City memorials, listed in the Proposal for Preservation Study provided by Daedalus, Historically Significant for CPA funding.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT</b>
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**ADVISORY REVIEW:  
148 Morrison Ave**

Staff noted that this property is located in a Local Historic District. This is a row house, located in a series of row houses. It is the end row house on the corner of Clifton and Morrison. The proposal is to remove an existing rear addition, build a new rear addition, and to build a backyard cottage. The Commission has purview over what goes on an LHD in terms of styling, materials, scale, and massing.

The applicant team explained that the owners are excited to clean up the existing entrance into the rail trail along Clifton. The building is a wonderful piece of architecture as a row house, which is unique to the streetscape. The proposal is to demolish unsightly areas on the back of the building, remove a lot of the paving, and create a rear addition, a small courtyard, and a backyard cottage. The intention is to honor the existing row house by trying to balance it with new components. The proposal is to create a seam, so that if, in the future the new work had to be removed, it could be done without damaging the historic building, while further distinguishing the new and historic sections of the building. Regarding the materials, a cedar shingle is proposed on the addition and the backyard cottage. The asphalt shingles on the mansard section are proposed to be removed and replaced with slate.

The Commission stated that the proposal is a nice solution to the patchwork additions that were created. There was interest in option 2, which allows for a darker roof material, helping the new pieces to recede a bit more and allowing the original structure to be the true focal point. Different materials on the first floor of the addition and the cottage helps those retain their diminutive nature to the original structure. There was mention of why option 2 shows fieldstone all the way up, as opposed to echoing the materials on the addition with fieldstone only part way up. There was also discussion regarding different types of fencing for the property.

Some Commissioners expressed concern regarding having a second story on the addition. This seems to detract from it being a row house. There was a suggestion made to remove the second story, and let the area read like a proper ell off the back of a row house building. There was a recommendation to put a more traditional fence around the older part of the building. The more modern materiality helps the building not read as a row house turning the corner. The Commission discussed the massing from option 2, with a lowered cornice line, and the materials of option 1. There was also a suggestion to push the ell section further away from the main building.

**PUBLIC HEARING:**  
**Alterations to Local Historic District (LHD) Properties**  
**HP24-0000107 – 47 Columbus Ave**

*Vice Chair Kelly recused herself from this item.*

The applicant team explained that the existing wood gutter needs to be replaced sooner than later. It is in bad shape and is beginning to compromise the lower part of the building. The proposal is to remove the existing wood gutter and existing rotted fascia board and install a new AZEK trim board. The exterior of the proposed fiberglass gutter will match the wood gutter and the molding. They stated that this has been approved for other historical homes.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony. Seeing none, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that it has reviewed fiberglass gutters on past projects in similar situations, and previously concluded that this seemed to be an appropriate replacement when the wood gutter was unsalvageable. These can be appropriate in matching the profiles of some wooden gutters, but it would be important to know the profile of the existing gutters to confirm this. The applicant team stated that they believe only one profile is available for the fiberglass gutters. The other option seems to be an aluminum gutter. The Commission stated that it will be important for the painted finish to look the same as the existing gutter. The additional workability of the fiberglass carpentry will allow for the trim to more easily be tied in.

The Commission asked about the material of the downspouts. The applicant team explained that these are proposed to be a painted corrugated metal.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for 47 Columbus Avenue (HP24-0000107), for the replacement of the deteriorated wood gutters with fiber gutters in the appropriate profile, and the replacement of the fascia with PVC trim, subject to the conditions recommended in the Staff Memo, with particular attention to matching the paint to the house color or appropriate trim colors and existing materials.

<b>RESULT:</b>
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<b>APPROVED</b>
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*Vice Chair Kelly rejoined the Commission.*

**PUBLIC HEARING:**  
**Determinations of Preferably Preserved (Step 2 in the Demolition Review Process)**  
**HP24-0000061 – 33 Cedar Street**

The applicant team explained the Commission previously determined both 35 and 33 Cedar Street to be Historically Significant. After further research, Staff has updated and added to the list of occupants for 33 Cedar Street. There were no additions, and nothing further was uncovered on 35 Cedar Street. At the initial hearing, the massing of the structures in relation to the rest of the street was what the Commission felt was most significant about the two properties.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Leah Cirker-Stark (33 Cedar Street) – stated that this is a beautiful home, built in 1900. The backyard is currently being transformed into a pollinator garden. She, her roommates, and family would like to be the caretakers of the house moving forward.

Madison Hulme (33 Cedar Street) – stated that there are existing antique fixtures in the building. To her knowledge, the building was built around 1900 and there is some merit to this being considered a historic building.

Justin Hackenson (33 Cedar Street) – explained that they were not originally told of the potential demolition of the building. There are many Victorian houses nearby and the preservation of this style of home speaks to the City's history.

Rachel Stark (65 Randolph Street, East Arlington) – stated that her daughter, Leah, lives in the house in question. She stated that she is the founder and Chair of Walking in Arlington, which is a community-based, walkable land use group, which organizes historical events. This is the kind of historic house that people move to Somerville to live in.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that, for all the reasons it found the property Historically Significant and there is no information suggesting that there is anything wrong with the existing structure, this should be deemed Preferably Preserved. The massing, detailing, presence in the streetscape, and general charm of the structure speak to it being Preferably Preserved. The original building's form, massing, and fenestration are largely intact. City census records state that 33 Cedar Street was built between 1874-1884.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 33 Cedar Street Preferably Preserved.

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

- The building's original massing is intact.
- The building's integrity is of historic relevance.
- The building has relevance to the streetscape.
- The building's demolition would be detrimental to the City.

**RESULT:**

**PREFERABLY PRESERVED**

#### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

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

#### **HP24-0000076 – 35 Cedar Street**

The applicant team stated that they believe the Commission originally discussed that 33 Cedar had retained more of its original massing than 35 Cedar Street.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony. Seeing none, Chair Parkes closed the public testimony.

The Commission stated that this building has a lot less of its original detail. The materials, such as the siding and the windows look more modern. The original findings by the Commission dealt with the building's relation to the streetscape, and the fact that it retained much of its original form and massing, even though it had lost some of the detailing.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 35 Cedar Street Preferably Preserved.

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

- The building retains its original form and massing.
- The building's relation to the streetscape is important.

<b>RESULT:</b>
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<b>PREFERABLY PRESERVED</b>
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### **OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes**

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted (4-0-1) with Member Chagnon abstaining, to approve the 6 August 2024 meeting minutes.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (4-0-1) with Chair Parkes abstaining, to approve the 20 August 2024 meeting minutes.

The Commission agreed to table discussion on the meeting minutes of 3 September 2024.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 17 September 2024 meeting minutes.

### **OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update**

The Commission discussed that the CPC is reviewing new applicants for funding for next year. Among them were the four that the Commission heard from earlier this evening. There will be a vote to expand the tax for CPA funding to further help applicants.

*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](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov).*