



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

1 APRIL 2025 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>Absent</i>	
Ryan Falvey	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dick Bauer	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Kit Luster (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:50pm and adjourned at 9:01pm.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HP24-000055 – 170 Central Street

The applicant has withdrawn the proposal scheduled for the 1 April 2025 Hearing and re-submitted an updated proposal where all replacements will be in-kind.

RESULT:

WITHDRAWN

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HP25-000001 – 148 Morrison Avenue
(continued from 18 March 2025)

The applicant team explained that this property is the end unit of a five unit set of row houses which face Morrison Ave. The proposal is to remove the various additions on the rear portion of the property, keeping intact the end cap of the row houses and adding a rear addition with a freestanding backyard cottage, with a small courtyard between the two elements. The project has been before the Zoning and Planning Boards. This is a non-conforming building type for the zoning district. Architecturally, the intention is to enhance and make legible the historic mansard roof row house by introducing an architectural scene, similar to a recess or reveal, between the existing and the new components of the property. The existing mansard roof is currently clad with an asphalt shingle which is dated and in need of repair. The cladding on the building itself is some kind of shake, and the base of the building is masonry walls which are currently painted. The intention is to replace the shingles on the roof and on the mansard façade portion with asphalt or slate shingles. This will allow the second story elements to carry back across the Clifton Street elevation and turning onto the front face of the existing row house. The project will repaint and replace rotted trim around some of the existing windows. The windows will be replaced with a 2-over-2 product with fully divided lights. The project will also replace an existing fence with a vertical cedar picket with a cap rail, following more of a traditional style. A stone veneer base will partially include a landscape wall and the base of the backyard cottage building. Regarding the downspouts and gutters, these will follow a more traditional

profile for the existing elements, and a slightly more contemporary look for the new components. There will be some gardening, trees, and landscaping proposed on the side of the lot to make it a gateway into the rail trail.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Cassie Arnaud (142 Morrison Avenue) – stated that everyone in these row houses is supportive of some improvements to this property while being aware of the importance of maintaining the historic character of all sides of these houses. She was fairly surprised to see the extent of the proposed rear addition, as well as the backyard cottage. These will be significant changes to the rear experience which the owners in this area have been told is considered public facing, and subject to the same discretion that the Commission has shown for all of the other units.

Miriam Bromfield (144 Morrison Avenue) – stated that the renderings make it look as though surrounding houses are not present. She asked how it will be remedied that half of her fence seems to be proposed to be removed and replaced.

John Golson (146 Morrison Avenue) – agreed that the renderings do not show the other properties or the full rear of the area. He expressed concern regarding the proposed heat pumps to be located on the roof. He asked if these could be placed on the ground level elsewhere as the heat pumps in the proposed location will be directly outside of his rear bedroom window.

Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The applicant team explained that the rendering did not include the detail of other properties in order to focus on the one in question. The fence is only proposed to be changed on the property in question. There is a zoning ordinance that will not allow any mechanical equipment within any of the frontages or setbacks of the property, leading to the proposal to place the heat pumps on the roof. The sight line to the neighbor's property from the proposed location can be further studied.

The Commission stated that the proposal feels more in character with the existing row houses than what is currently on the property. It was noted that the neighbor's concerns were reasonable and there seems to have been a lack of information shared with them. Placing the mini splits on the roof may be too visible from abutters and the public way. There was a suggestion to place the equipment on the slot portion of the roof or consider other options to minimize visibility. There was discussion regarding the stone veneer base and there was a suggestion to consider a brick material for the mansard portion.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness with the recommended conditions as outlined in the Staff Memo, and with the additional conditions that the condensers be placed on the flat roof portion of the seam, noting that if this is unfeasible the applicant should come back with a reapplication for that portion of the project, and to change from stone to brick at the knee wall.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP24-000125 – 8 Bolton Street**

The applicant has conceded Historic Significance, will return for a Preferably Preserved determination on 15 April 2025.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)**

HP24-000122 – 128 Central Street

(continued from 18 March 2025)

The applicant team explained that this property is a single-family house in the Neighborhood Resident (NR) zoning district on a fairly large lot. The applicant would like to demolish the house, split the lot into two, and build a three unit structure on each lot, for a total of six units where there is currently just one unit. This would increase density in the city which meets the purposes of both the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) and the SomerVision 2040 Plan. They reviewed the criteria for determination of significance in the Demolition Review Ordinance, Section E. First, there is no association with an important person or event. Secondly, there is no association with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or State. Thirdly, the structure is not historically or architecturally significant in terms of period, style, method of building, construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder. The applicant team noted that as stated in the Staff Memo, the structure is not unique in any way. It is similar in style to other homes in the neighborhood and citywide. Alterations have been made to this building, and one can see a change in the footprint. The building type is very common and having only one unit on a lot of this size is not the highest and best use of the site for the city's purposes and creating more density would be a good thing.

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

The Commission agreed that this street is a bit of a mishmash of housing types, but that adds to the charm of the community. There are three properties of stylistic similarity, with this property being mostly historically original. Stripping the city of its historic feel just to add more density, may not be the best solution. This property lends significance to the streetscape and maintains its own architectural merits.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (4-1), with Chair Parkes against, to find the property at 128 Central Street (HP24-000122) Historically Significant.

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

- The building retains the integrity of its location, form, massing, much of its detailing, and original architectural elements.
- The building is a good example of its architectural style.
- The building has early provenance on the street which causes it to fit in with several of the other buildings in its group.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)**

HP24-000120 – 199 Elm Street

(continued from 18 March 2025)

The applicant team explained that the existing building at is a two-story, wood framed, commercial structure with a mansard roof, built around 1920. The building has been altered to include a rear addition and utility structure. The parcel is located two blocks from Davis Square, adjacent to transit, and fronting a pedestrian street on a site that has been identified for enhancement in SomerVision 2040, and is zoned as MR4, along with the surrounding parcels. The proposal is to replace the building with a mixed-use building, with ground floor commercial space, which ties it into the commercial buildings surrounding it on all sides, with apartments above.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Paul Beran (Ward 6) – stated that he is interested in increasing the density of Davis Square. This project would be a wonderful way to increase density while not constructing a huge building in the Square.

Joshua Michel (Ward 2) – stated that he supports the demolition of this standard mansard structure, which is rather common within the city.

Nabia Meghelli (Ward 7) – stated that this project will be a good way to increase housing without increasing the density of the area.

Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

Some of the Commissioners suggested maintaining the historic structure and working around it for the rest of the project. The front of the building retains much of its original detail. Other Commissioners noted that this structure has been altered over the years, leaving mainly its massing and general form. This is not necessarily a good representation of its building type.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (2-3), with Members Chagnon, Falvey, and Chair Parkes against, to find the property at 199 Elm Street (HP24-000120) Historically Significant. Based on the vote count of 2-3, the structure was found *not* Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (3-2), with Members Price and Bauer against, to adopt the following Findings:

- The building is not a good representation of its building type, especially given the modifications that have occurred.
- The building does not, as a whole, reflect the streetscape any longer.
- The building is not part of its immediate surroundings.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP24-000095 – 142 Cross Street**

Member Price recused herself from this item.

It was noted that there was not a representative from the applicant team present at the meeting.

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

The Commission stated that there is little indication that this building was anything noteworthy when it was built, other than having been a storefront. This building has been heavily altered and degraded over time.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (0-4) to find the property at 142 Cross Street (HP24-000095) Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to adopt the following Findings:

- The building no longer has anything significant to it.
- The building does not relate to anything in the streetscape.
- The building does not carry on any pattern or tradition.
- There is no history of any noteworthy residents of the property.

RESULT:	NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT
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OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to approve the meeting minutes of 4 March 2025, as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

Chair Parkes stated that the CPC recently held a hearing to take input from residents and others. There is twice as much money in the CPA to fund projects for the next funding round.

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.