



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

6 MAY 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>Absent</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Dan Coughlin	Member	<i>Absent</i>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:45pm and adjourned at 8:30pm.

ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HP24-000004 – 80 Hinckley Street

The applicant team explained that the request is to remove an existing mudroom which is inconvenient, deteriorating, and was added onto the house at some point. The applicant team would like to replace this with an awning over a door. Also, the applicant team would like to replace the existing vinyl windows with Marvin Elevate windows. These are wood windows with a fiberglass clad exterior, 2 over 2 sash layout, and simulated divided lights. The Commission suggested a black spacer bar for the proposed windows.

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

In response to a question from the Commission, the applicant team explained that the exterior front porch windows are not proposed to be replaced at this time.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the proposal with conditions including the type of window as discussed, and the recommended conditions in the Staff Memo, with the exception of the fourth condition.

RESULT:

APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP25-000008 – 6 Wheatland Street

The applicant team explained that the site currently has a two-family house on it. The applicant team is seeking to demolish it, and build a new structure with more units, to address the City's desperate need for housing. The property was placed in the MR3 zoning district as part of the recent rezoning of the City, which calls for larger buildings with more units. The existing structure is a simple 2.5 story house, covered in vinyl siding with

replacement windows. According to the Staff Memo, it was converted from one to two units at some point and has a slew of 20th century alterations. Wheatland Street has a mix of building types, and 6 Wheatland has little charm and is fairly dreary looking.

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

The Commission discussed that the existing building is intact form-wise, but its context has been heavily altered. It is interesting that this house was one of the first three houses built on the street and that it was built well before 1874, but there is not much significance left to the structure. Some Commissioners noted that the original fenestration and shape are still intact enough to consider this building significant.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (2-2), with Member Falvey and Chair Parkes against, to find the property at 6 Wheatland Street Historically Significant.

Staff stated that a tied vote means that the building was deemed to be *not* Historically Significant. The Commission asked that this determination be reviewed by the City Solicitor. There was a suggestion for the Commission to adopt two sets of Findings based on the vote deeming the building to be Historically Significant and not Historically Significant. Staff stated that, as the building was determined to not be Historically Significant, the case is complete.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (3-1), with Member Falvey against, to adopt the following Findings:

- The structure lacks enough of its original exterior elements that it no longer contributes to a continuity in the streetscape.
- The structure is not associated with any important historic person or event.
- The structure is an intact building older than 1872.
- The structure is one of the original three houses on the street.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP24-000119 – 60 Franklin Street**

The applicant team explained that there was an important historical person who lived in this building, Alice Waterhouse. The building was found significant because it had been owned and lived in by Alice Waterhouse, who was a prominent spiritualist in the late 1800s-early 1900s. That history, coupled with the history of female ownership in the neighborhood, leads to a compelling history for the structure. The proposal for this site would be a by-right project, similar to a small scale multifamily housing project. The structure is currently vacant and has some significant issues. The reconstruction and remediation needed in order to rehabilitate this house would be cost prohibitive. This is not a building of which preservation would be a financial or cultural benefit to the City. However, knowing about Alice Waterhouse is a benefit to the city, and the applicant would be happy to install a plaque or put together a report as a more appropriate response. The applicant team called the National Spiritual Alliance in Western MA and spoke with the only surviving member associated with the Alliance. This would be the most logical organization to take on a project of rehabilitating this building, but this was not a project of interest to the Alliance at this time.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Aaron Bennett (Columbus Avenue) – stated that the building is in rough shape and has no distinctive qualities. He spoke in favor of a plaque commemorating Alice Waterhouse.

Aaron Weber (32 Summit Avenue) – stated that there is a difference between items that are old and antique. This building appears to be old but not significant. The connection to the spiritualist movement is interesting, but he would support this lot being turned into additional housing.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission explained that its Findings previously mentioned the building being a reflection of early mid-19th century worker housing. There was originally a whole cluster of them in this area. The Commission noted that Alice Waterhouse was a physician, and part of the spiritual movement for 70 years. A plaque or other documented interpretive signage would be important.

There was discussion regarding the proposed plaque and its wording, including some photos or architectural renderings.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to find the structure at 60 Franklin Street *not* Preferably Preserved, subject to conditions #1 and #4 of the Staff Memo.

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

- Alice Waterhouse was a prominent figure as a female physician, and within the spiritual movement in the area. She lived in the home for about 48 years.
- The structure has had substantial modifications to it over the years and is in a deteriorated condition.

RESULT:

NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 1 April 2025 meeting minutes, as amended.

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Bauer, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 15 April 2025 meeting minutes, as presented.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC took up an off-cycle request for funding for the Kennedy Schoolyard Redesign Project. This item was previously approved but has been put off due to increasing costs. The CPC also heard updates on various other projects that are underway. There will be a greater amount of funding available for the next 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.