



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

17 JUNE 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>Absent</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); Lexie Payne (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Sarah White (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:54pm and adjourned at 8:24pm.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP25-000013 – 294 Lowell Street**

The applicant team explained that the five-bay garage at this property was found *not* Historically Significant in March. The house is currently a two-family on a very large lot, especially once the five-bay garage is demolished. Across the street from this property at 301 Lowell Street, there is a very large apartment building with 32 units and a large parking lot. The applicant is seeking to demolish the existing structure at 294 Lowell Street to create much needed housing near Magoun Square and the Green Line Station. As stated in the Staff Memo, the structure is a very common building type in the city and not a particularly good version of that. The applicant team noted that it sits on an almost completely paved lot and the structure has seen a lot of alterations which have changed its form and massing. In particular, large dormers have been installed to create an almost third floor on the property. There has also been a rear addition, and a small left side addition added. There are metal posts on the front and second floor porch and changes to the second-floor windows to make it a door. The porch windows have been closed on the right and the rear sides. The structure has vinyl siding and trim, and the windows have been replaced. The structure is not associated with any historical persons or events and is not associated with any broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the city or the Commonwealth. The property is close to the Magoun Square T Station, and more density at this location is needed. The applicant team noted that calling the structure an Italianate Revival at this point is a bit of a stretch, as it does not have the same massing and form as the other examples.

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

The Commission agreed that the structure has been heavily altered but has similarities in terms of being a front gable facing house with nearby buildings. This seems to fit into a pattern of the streetscape. Constructing something modern on this property would disrupt the streetscape.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to find the property at 294 Lowell Street Historically Significant.

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

- As part of the context of the buildings it sits in, the structure retains enough of its original massing to contribute a sense of the historic streetscape and association with a typical building type of the city which speaks to the architectural history of the city as a whole.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

OTHER BUSINESS: Discussion of S1428 and HD4331

Staff explained that the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) has proposed to amend MGL Chapter 40C Section 8D. This is the chapter of Massachusetts General Law that allows for the establishment of historical commissions. One major change includes a demolition delay proviso within local historic districts (LHDs) for buildings that are considered significant and lays out a review process. The other major change is that, if an LHD commission felt the need to hire a consultant to give them expert advice, they can require an applicant to pay reasonable fees for that consultant. Staff believe that having a demolition delay period which can be invoked and that can expire within an LHD completely derogates from the purpose of a LHD. Based on this change, there would be no need to determine whether or not a building within an LHD was Historically Significant because buildings that are put in LHDs would be considered Historically Significant by their very nature. Under this proposal, if a demolition period were invoked within an LHD, once it expired the applicant could demolish the building. This would take away the ability of a Historic District Commission to negotiate with an applicant and to find other options for a building they might want to demolish. There was a Committee hearing on this proposal on 10 June 2025, but no one knew about it. The Commission has 14 days to submit written comment to the Committee.

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to authorize Chair Parkes to send a letter to the Committee on behalf of the Commission representing its views.

OTHER BUSINESS: Minutes: 5/6/25

Following a motion by Member Bauer, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted (3-0-1) with Member Chagnon abstaining, to approve the 6 May 2025 meeting minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The Commission discussed that the CPC changed the funding percentage for affordable housing from 50% to 55% and open space and historic preservation decreased by 2% and 3% each. There is still a large undesignated percentage that could be used for any category. If a non-government building project receives historic preservation funding, the CPC has generally required a condition of a preservation easement on the project. However, it appears that the city does not have the resources for this monitoring. There was a suggestion to hire a consultant to consider these details.

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.