



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

15 JULY 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>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>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Lexie Payne (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Sarah White (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Steve Cary (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Alvaro Esparza (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:49pm and adjourned at 7:53pm.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
HP25-000002 – 33 Cedar Street

Member Price recused herself from this item.

The Commission discussed 33 Cedar Street and 35 Cedar Street simultaneously.

The applicant team explained that both properties (33 and 35 Cedar Street) were deemed Historically Significant and Preferably Preserved by the Commission. The first MOA meeting with Staff occurred in February and the group continued to meet a total of four times over the next five months. In terms of the most architecturally significant and interesting items within the structures, it was determined that the existing wide pine floorboards, and a 19th century marble fireplace mantle should be preserved. The wide board pine will be reused in the landings and hallways of both structures, totaling approximately 450 s.f. of reused materials. The rest of those materials will be preserved. The mantle will be reused decoratively in one of the bathrooms at 33 Cedar Street. The applicant team replicated the 2 over 2 single hung windows which match some of the period designs and elements seen in the nearby street and around the neighborhood. Wood trim and molding were also selected to add depth and character to the façade. The applicant team worked with Staff on the window placement for the façades, to make sure they were cohesive from the different vantage points on all elevations. The intention is to add some dentil trim to the fascia in light of the visual aesthetics of 37 Cedar Street. The applicant team decided on Benjamin Moore Somerville Red and Hamilton Blue as the primary colors, with Dunmore Cream and Puritan Gray as the complementary trim colors. Professional photos will be taken both internally and externally and existing condition CAD plans will be created for each structure to be kept in the archives.

The Commission asked how the scale and the massing of the new buildings compares to the existing buildings and streetscape. The applicant team stated that the proposed buildings are taller than the existing ones. The Commission noted that using different roof lines for these buildings helps to weave the overall streetscape together.

The Commission noted that Item A for the 33 Cedar Street MOA should read that approximately 450 s.f. of wood flooring will be removed, with 150 s.f. of it being reused at 33 Cedar Street. Staff stated that the adjustment will be made.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the MOA for 33 Cedar Street, as amended.

RESULT:

APPROVED

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
HP25-000002 – 35 Cedar Street**

Member Price recused herself from this item.

The Commission noted that the MOA for 35 Cedar Street should also be updated to include information about the salvaged flooring.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the MOA for 35 Cedar Street, with the updated information regarding the salvaged flooring and its placement in the building.

RESULT:

APPROVED

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP25-000051 – 80 Irving Street**

The applicant team explained that the intention is to demolish the existing two family house in order to build a new residential structure with more units. The building's footprint has greatly changed over time to the present day. They noted that the Staff Memo calls out a number of alterations, including an added uncovered porch, an added shed which was later removed, an enclosed porch, an added front portico, a single story rear addition with a porch on top which obscures the original massing on that side, skylights on the roof, and a sunburst above the front door. All of the windows have been replaced with vinyl and aluminum windows. The building is aluminum sided, and the foundation has been parged. The applicant team stated that while some original building exists, the rear addition and the front portico, as well as other alterations, have changed the form and massing of the structure. Per the Staff Memo, nothing historically important occurred at this structure; nobody historically significant lived there; this is not a significant building style and is one of many 2.5 story front gabled houses in Somerville; it is not associated with a reputed architect or builder; and it is not in the public interest to keep this structure.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Eli Nellis (Walnut Street) – asked what signifies a building as not being in the public interest in terms of being demolished.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission explained that the Demolition Delay Ordinance focuses on the merits of the existing structure. Staff agreed that there are specific criteria the Commission uses when determining public interest and significance.

The Commission stated that the structure still largely resembles the original structure with a side ell. This building sits in a series of similar structures and removing it would be a loss to the grouping. The 4-5 similar houses nearby were built at the same time, and the group is largely still intact. Removing these structures one at a time would change the entire streetscape. The structure has its original brackets peeking from the eaves.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 80 Irving Street Historically Significant.

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

- The structure has an important role in the streetscape as part of a grouping of 4-5 similar nearby structures.
- The structure retains much of its original massing and detailing.
- The structure represents a wide swath of early workers in the City.
- The structure's style in the grouping of nearby structures is notable as part of the City's working class and streetcar history.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP25-000013 – 294 Lowell Street**

The applicant team explained that the 5-bay garage at the property was already found Not Historically Significant in March. This discussion is regarding the house itself, which is currently a two-family on a large lot. There is a 1979-ish modern apartment building across the street with a large parking lot at 301 Lowell Street, and a four family structure at 302 Lowell Street. The applicant is seeking to demolish the existing residential structure in order to create badly needed housing near Magoun Square, and the Green Line extension. The applicant team noted that 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 type. It sits on an almost completely paved lot. The structure has seen a number of alterations which have changed its form and massing, including large dormers creating almost a third floor, a rear addition, a left side addition, metal posts on the front, a second-floor porch over the front stoop, and a second-story window changed to a door to access the second-story porch. The windows were closed on the right and rear sides; vinyl siding and trim were installed, and windows have been replaced. The brick foundation has been thickly parched with concrete, and concrete front steps were added. The team stated that the structure is not associated with historical persons or events, nor with any broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or State. This is a poor and heavily altered version of a very common building type in the City. The property is very close to the Magoun Square T Station, and more density at such a location is a good thing. Calling the structure an Italianate Revival is a stretch, as it does not have the same massing as the other three properties on the street. During the Historic Significance hearing, multiple Commissioners stated that, while they were voting for Significance, they were not convinced the structure should be Preferably Preserved due to it no longer being part of a commanding rhythm of the street. The Preferably Preserved Staff Memo states that no new information about the structure has been uncovered.

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

The Commission discussed that there is significance to the structure, but there have been interruptions to the rhythms of the streetscape, and the building itself has been altered a fair amount and is not a particularly great example of an Italianate Revival, to declare it Preferably Preserved. The structure does not contain sufficient amounts of its original character. The non-homogeneity of the street is one of its defining characteristics.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (0-5) to find the property at 294 Lowell Street Preferably Preserved.

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

- The structure no longer contributes to the streetscape.
- The structure was not associated with any broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the City or State.
- The structure does not retain enough of its integrity to be determined Preferably Preserved.

RESULT:

NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Vice Chair Kelly abstaining, to approve the 20 May 2025 and 17 June 2025 meeting minutes.

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

It was noted that the CPC thought it had the full amount of funding available to it from the vote where it was agreed to double the tax from 1.5% to 3%, but this was incorrect. The CPC may receive access to the rest of the funding in the future. Also, those who receive funding for historic preservation projects per the Community Preservation Act, generally have conditions attached that they must give a preservation easement for the project, which requires an easement holder. There are not necessarily resources for this though. The CPC agreed to allocate funding to review the process.

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.