



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

16 DECEMBER 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Eric Parkes	Chair	Present	
Robin Kelly	Vice Chair	Present	
Ryan Falvey	Member	Present	
Dick Bauer	Member	Absent	
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	Present	Exited 7:42pm
Denise Price	Member	Present	
Dan Coughlin	Member	Absent	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:52pm and adjourned at 8:15pm.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES

HP25-000093 – 396-398 Broadway

(continued from 2 December 2025)

The applicant team explained that he and his neighbors in the building are living in the historic home because of its designation. They are all committed to its preservation. The preservation of the home has been neglected through deferred maintenance for some years. There is a plan in place to fix up the exterior, interior, roof, etc. The roof has been replaced and repaired. The next item to tackle are the wooden gutters which have not been maintained over the years and are now rotten in parts. The request is to approve a request to replace them with aluminum gutters, matching in color and profile the existing gutters.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Rachel Freudenburg (4 Lawson Terrace) – stated that this sounds like a solid plan which will maintain the character of the home while allowing repairs to move forward.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

Chair Parkes explained that the Commission is receptive to alternative materials to wood but would need to see proposed materials to determine if there are suitable replacements to the existing gutters. There was agreement on the Commission.

The applicant team asked about the timeline for this process. Staff suggested that the Commission could approve the gutter profile and issue a conditional Certificate of Appropriateness this evening. If a matching profile cannot be found by the applicant, Staff could bring this back before the Commission.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve a conditional Certificate of Appropriateness contingent on the applicant providing Staff an alternate product that matches the profile and color of the existing gutters. If that is not possible, the applicant team will come back before the Commission for another hearing.

RESULT:

CONDITIONALLY APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES

HP25-000076 – 76 Highland Avenue

(continued from 18 November 2025)

Chair Parkes recused himself from these items. Vice Chair Kelly sat as Acting Chair.

The applicant team asked to share photos of the windows as she believes they are in poor condition, prior to seeking an expert's opinion. She expressed concern about and asked for alternate options regarding the Commission's preferred Duragutter material. The Commission noted that an opinion on the gutters for this property was previously rendered. Any concerns regarding this should be taken up with Staff.

The Commission stated that an opinion is needed from a historic window expert. It was recommended that the applicant continue this hearing to a future meeting date in order to obtain that opinion and submit the information in a timely manner. If the applicant does not want to obtain an opinion, the Commission will vote on the application at hand.

Acting Chair Kelly opened public testimony. Seeing no comments, Acting Chair Kelly closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this hearing until 20 January 2026, with the understanding that a report from a window expert must be received no later than 9 January 2026.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

Member Chagnon exited the meeting at 7:42pm. Chair Parkes retook his seat.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)

HP25-000098 – 28 Vinal Ave

The applicant team explained that 28 Vinal Ave is a 2.5-story, two-family residence with a gabled roof and a small front porch. There is an existing rear addition behind the driveway and a ground-level window. The original siding and trim have been replaced with vinyl. The windows have also been replaced with vinyl. The roof consists of asphalt shingles, with a single-stack brick chimney. Notes from Staff explain that while the building does retain its original location, massing, and scale, significant changes have been made, including the replacement of the original siding, trim, windows, and doors with modern vinyl materials, including the addition mentioned to the rear, and other modifications. These alterations erode the building's historical significance, making it less representative of its 1871 construction era, and somewhat diminish the architectural value.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Julia Schneider – asked if the building's massing and scale will need to be maintained if it is demolished. The massing and scale should keep with the neighborhood.

The Commission noted that this building is not located in a Historic District. This portion of the process only considers if the property is Historically Significant, and not what may occur on the property in the future.

Aaron Weber (32 Summit Ave) – stated that this building may be old, but it is not Historically Significant. It is not attractive to the neighborhood and he, as an abutter, would have no issue with it being demolished.

Rachel Freudenburg (4 Lawson Terrace) – expressed concern regarding the demolition process and potential damage to her nearby home.

Benjamin Weber (26 Vinal Ave) – stated that this home does not seem particularly historically accurate. He noted that this property is on Vinal Ave, not Vinal St, as was previously stated by the applicant team a couple of times.

Jon O – echoed previous comments.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission discussed that the original form and massing of the house still exist but have been added onto over the years. Removal of the rear extension, enclosure of the front porch, and bay window on the left side, could help reveal more of the original form and massing. The rhythm of the streetscape includes various styles. Some Commissioners noted that any structure built over 75 years ago should likely be restored and not demolished. Removing houses that have been changed to vinyl materials over the years may lead to a reduction in character for the City. Other Commissioners noted that there is a risk of casting a net that is so wide that almost anything is considered significant. This house has a gable roof facing the front street and is not particularly part of a pattern or rhythm on that side of the street.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (3-1), with Chair Parkes against, to find the property at 28 Vinal Ave Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted (3-1) with Chair Parkes against, to approve the following findings:

- The house retains much of its original massing.
- The house contributes to the streetscape in terms of its scale and overall form with a front gable roof.

RESULT:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC is in the process of reviewing applications for grants. In terms of items with Historical Significance, there is an application from Buddy's Diner. It appears there will be more money to allocate than originally thought. A consultant is working to update the rules regarding how the historic category funds can be allocated.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0), to approve the meeting minutes of 21 October 2025, 17 May 2022, and 3 September 2024, as amended.

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.