



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

3 MARCH 2026 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>	

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:49pm and adjourned at 8:43pm.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HP25-000076 – 76 Highland Ave

Chair Parkes recused himself from this case and Vice Chair Kelly sat as Acting Chair.

The Commission noted that the applicant had a contractor review the windows since the last meeting.

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

The Commission asked for clarification on the scope of the project. The agenda mentions a Certificate of Appropriateness being sought to replace a total of 29 windows. The report lists that the contractor was able to evaluate 36 out of the 40 windows. The contractor provided a list of windows with what they considered to be damage to some windows. The applicant explained that they initially requested to replace 29 of the windows but was told by the contractor that only replacing some of the windows would not look appropriate. The gutters are leaking into the walls. They are now suggesting replacement of as many windows as possible. The Commission noted that the contractor's report states that they were able to assess 36 of the 40 original windows and found that, in their opinion, approximately one-third of them (12) suffered significant enough damage to be poor candidates for restoration. This implies that 24 windows would be candidates for restoration. Then there is a list of 21 windows that are listed as problems. The agenda lists 29 windows to replace. The scope of the project is unclear. It appears a majority of the windows are repairable, which would be appropriate for the guidelines. The applicant team stated that the exterior windows are rotted beyond repair.

The Commission stated that the contractor provided an evaluation and report, though did not indicate any examples of their past work, such as which techniques they used, or their understanding of the Secretary of the Interior standards. It appears that a majority of the windows are repairable and it is possible that even more of them may also be repairable. There has not been enough information presented to show that 29 of the windows should be thrown away and replaced. Other Commissioners noted that the contractor did provide links to their webpage, including an example project, which references the standards, implying at least a familiarity with them. A majority of windows appear to be repairable. The windows which are too far gone should likely be replaced in-kind. If the gutters are repaired and a full restoration of the windows is completed by a licensed contractor, the work should last for quite some time.

The Commission also noted that a third of the hired contractor's business is window repair. It is good to hear that approximately 70% of the windows, or 28, can be salvaged. The other 12, though not great candidates, can be replaced in-kind.

The applicant noted that there are also issues with the siding that need to be taken care of. Staff stated that the applicant team submitted a separate application for siding work and the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) has requested plans and they have not yet been submitted. The applicant stated that all the work on the house is connected.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the amended application; to repair the wood windows that are repairable, and replace in-kind the windows that are not, as outlined in the window report and subject to Staff review, along with replacement of the storm windows, subject to Staff review, with material specifications for the in-kind window replacements to be submitted and approved by Staff.

RESULT:

APPROVED

Chair Parkes retook his seat.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS - DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP25-000114 – 141-143 Walnut Street**

The applicant team explained that the front building at 141 Walnut Street is a Queen Anne Victorian home that the intention is to restore. The back building is a carriage house which is proposed to be demolished. To the left and right of this lot, there is a similar urban fill subdivision that has occurred over the years, where the front buildings are more historical, and the back buildings are more of a later vintage. This is an 11,500 s.f. lot that includes the main house and the service carriage house. The applicant team noted that the historical relationship between the main house and the outbuilding has been disrupted by the development pattern. The request is to find the carriage house Not Historically Significant or Preferably Preserved. The team stated that the structure has significant deterioration beyond reasonable repair. It has a deteriorating facade, board openings, and a compromised envelope. The egress for the structure is right up to the lot line and there are structural constraints to the lot, as it is built on a slab. An alternative analysis found that, due to structural codes and site constraints, it would be unfeasible to repair the structure relative to the options at hand. Preserving the shell and envelope would require full reconstruction because the existing structure does not pass today's codes for energy, insulation, structural loads, seismic, etc. New construction would allow for a more modern design that could take into account life safety issues and energy efficiency. The applicant team explained that the front building has started to be restored, using the Secretary of the Interior Standards as a reference. The rear carriage house does not contribute to the streetscape of the historic character in the front of the lot. Demolition of the rear building is consistent with SomerVision. By preserving the primary structure, it will allow for responsible development in the rear. New construction would respect the neighborhood, including the scale and design character.

Chair Parkes opened public testimony.

Susan Eckman (142 Walnut Street) – asked how many units are being proposed on this property and what the intention is for the demolished carriage house. She would like to see the structure restored to its original beauty but is also concerned with it becoming an additional unit and contributing to crowding in the area.

Cam Berjoan (9 McGregor Avenue) – stated that he would like to understand the plans for access and mitigating the impact to McGregor Avenue for existing residents, as well as emergency vehicles that may need to pass through.

Veronica Godoy-Carter (151 Walnut Street) – stated that McGregor Avenue is very narrow. She asked what the plans would be for the building, if demolished.

Seeing no additional comments, Chair Parkes closed public testimony.

The Commission explained that this is an existing Local Historic District (LHD). Unlike normal demolition delays, the historic district distinction follows the property, not the structure. Regardless of what happens to the structure, that portion of the property remains in an LHD. The Commission does not have purview over potential number of units or what may be built on the site. Unlike a normal demolition delay, the Commission would have some purview over certain aspects of the design.

The applicant team explained that, once this is approved, a lot split subdivision would be applied for. The intent would be to study what types of residential structures would be allowed on a by-right basis. This property is in a transit area, and parking is an issue. The front building will have parking spaces, and the goal is to design parking spaces to accommodate the rear structure as well. In terms of density for the front building, the applicant team stated that this was a by-right project that allowed four units. The building is over 5,000 s.f. and much of the interior woodwork will be maintained. The width of McGregor Avenue is an issue that the applicant team will be conscious of.

Staff stated that subdivision of an LHD property would also require approval from the Commission. As this is an LHD property, every single alteration to the property would need to come before the Commission for approval. The applicant team stated that they have a Building Permit for the interior work. There was an exterior permit, but it expired. They will resubmit an application for another exterior permit. If that gets re-approved, it will constitute all of the detail on the exterior. In speaking with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD), it appears that repairs can be undertaken, but no alterations can be made at this point, until the permit is re-approved. Staff stated that any exterior work to the property, including either building, requires approval from the Commission, this includes repairs. The applicant team acknowledged this.

The Commission stated that the agenda posting for this item would lead to a vote regarding Historical Significance, but the property is already an LHD. Staff stated that this was an incorrect application, and therefore it was advertised incorrectly as well. This is already an LHD and should come back as an LHD alteration application. Even if the Commission was to approve the demolition of the rear structure, it would need to make a ruling on what would go up in its place. The entire lot is the LHD, not the site. The applicant team stated that the 143 Walnut Street address is for the rear structure. The Commission explained that the actual listing in the City's list of LHDs is 141-143 Walnut Street. This is considered a single building LHD.

Staff explained that, with any LHD property, the applicant should apply for an LHD alteration through the Citizenserve portal. This applicant team did apply for an LHD alteration application correctly through the portal. The agenda ad is for demolishing an accessory structure that is older than 75 years. The Commission discussed approval of the proposed demolition. The applicant could then later come back to request to subdivide or further alter the LHD. The Commission stated that the agenda lists this as a request for Historic Significance. This is not a step that exists for an LHD and so it is unclear that any determinations can be made at this time. Staff explained that the legal ad incorrectly references a determination of significance.

Staff apologized and stated that this would need to be advertised correctly and the applicant team would need to come back to the Commission at a later date. The applicant team will also need to come back with multiple items being proposed for alteration on the property. The applicant team explained that they only want to move forward with the demolition of the rear building at this time. They do not have architectural plans for what will replace it at this time.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to continue this matter to 7 April 2026, with a revised legal ad.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC continues to work through applications. The schedule may be changed in order to deliberate over the summer and get things before the City Council.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0), to approve the 3 February 2026 meeting minutes, as presented.

The Commission discussed some of the recent administrative errors that have occurred. This evening's error left the applicant and Commission with considerable confusion. There was discussion regarding ensuring that errors do not continue to occur.

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. A recording of these proceedings can be found online here: [Agendas, Minutes, & More](#).