



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

2 JUNE 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), Kelly O’Laughlin (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Kit Luster (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Alvaro Esparza (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:54pm and adjourned at 8:52pm.

ADVISORY REVIEW
17 Monmouth Street

The Commission explained that this is a National Historic Register property; it is not in a Local Historic District (LHD). A National Register status does not afford any actual protection; it is more of an acknowledgement.

The applicant explained that the Somerville Housing Authority has owned this property since 1974. The property has had no inhabitants since 2019. At that time, it was a group home. Unfortunately, the group home could not continue in their lease as the property is not ADA accessible. The house was built in 1896 and is listed as a Colonial Revival. The applicant is proposing to split the lot effectively down the middle but intends to keep the house. The lot split will allow the applicant to then, per zoning, complete a by-right project. The applicant team stated that one of the important elements of a Colonial Revival is symmetry, and the front addition basically destroyed that. On the back, things such as fire escapes were added, and some of the nicer details have had layers of replacement items added to them over time. Some of the nicer exterior elements are in the worst case, condition-wise. The eyebrow windows are a great element of the property, but the room they were in has approximately 4.5’-5’ of ceiling height. There have been some animals living in places and what is left of the glass in the windows has some leaking. The existing hip roof is in terrible shape and some of the joists are disintegrating.

The applicant team also explained that the proposal is to keep the existing building footprint, remove some of the rear additions, and create a new rear addition which will house parking on the ground level for the three units proposed within the building. On the right-hand side, a rear cottage is proposed, and a three-family is proposed near the front, with one parking space provided for each unit. The green space on the property will also be improved. The first floor will house a two-bedroom unit, the second floor will house a three-bedroom unit, and the top floor is proposed to be another three-bedroom unit. The cottage is intended to be a three-bedroom unit. The triple-decker will have two bedrooms in each unit. The applicant is proposing to change this roof style to a mansard, which is not part of the Colonial Revival architectural style. This style is typically a gabled, hipped, or even a gambrel-style roof, but in order to get adequate living space and not have a series of dormers, this is believed to be the cleanest approach. It also fits some of the other styles that exist on the street, such as Italianate and Greek Revival. The cottage is proposed to be a cross gable roof, and the three family is proposed to have a mansard roof. This will improve the property and create different levels of home ownership opportunity.

The Commission noted that the curved bay window seems to be cut into in order to make the triple-decker size work and to get access to the rear of the property. This item seems to be in decent shape and would be wonderful to preserve. The applicant team noted that they cannot create a nonconformity with the lot split. The building style allowed on the right-hand, three-family triple-decker side, has certain requirements related to its minimum width, and minimum side yard setbacks. There is interest in preserving the window, but the applicant team does not want to create a situation where an additional Special Permit is needed. Staff stated that creating a nonconformity by preserving the bay would require a Hardship Variance for the setback issue. The Commission noted that it could make a recommendation that includes any number of items.

The Commission also noted that the Secretary of the Interior's standards for historic properties would likely argue for keeping a significant feature such as the window, but it would also likely argue for keeping the roofline as it is. If the building is to be infilled, the current proposal actually seems to do a fairly nice job of fitting into the character. The Commission mentioned the applicant's attention to trying to preserve most of the existing building, though also pondered the impacts on the rhythm of the streetscape. The Commission mentioned an interest in keeping the building footprint as it is, with the exception of the addition on the left, and to try to keep it as prominently displayed as possible in relation to the new building.

The Commission summarized its recommendations to be that, if the lot split were to move ahead, there was strong support for allowances or variations to allow the preservation of the prominent bay window, as one of the more historic features of the property. Regarding the front street setback, ideally this should respect the setback of the adjacent property as a fallback, or at least the property on the right.

PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES HP26-000019 – 56 Meacham Road

The applicant team explained that since applying for the Certificate of Appropriateness, the rear deck has been made no longer visible from the street at all. A new 6-foot-high cedar fence has been built at the end of the driveway, completely screening the rear deck from the public way. The Commission explained that landscaping and fences are not considered as blocking the view. This is still considered visible from the public way as the fence is considered a temporary condition.

The applicant team explained that the proposal is to demolish the existing rear deck, which is aging and not in good shape, and then to build a new, smaller deck in the same location. The intention is for this to be a composite material for dry storage under the deck. There is a traditional appearance proposed for the design of the railing in order to match the architecture of the house. The proposal is for the deck to be a neutral brown, with white railings, white posts, and black balusters.

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

The Commission stated that the guidelines mention retaining and repairing porches and steps that are original or contain important features. The existing deck is not original and does not appear to be very important.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the proposed alteration.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES HP26-000024 – 158 Central Street

The applicant stated that the intent is to install a 120 s.f. shed directly behind the driveway. This is the best spot for accessibility of bikes, tools, etc. The goal is for the shed to match the style of the house and neighborhood.

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

The Commission stated that the shed is pre-manufactured and will be assembled on site. The Commission noted the cupola on top of the shed and asked about other options, as this seems superfluous. There was discussion regarding the gambrel shape of the proposed shed.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the proposed alteration, with the removal of the cupola.

RESULT:

APPROVED

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – ALTERATIONS TO LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTIES
HP26-000026 – 42 Spring Street**

Vice Chair Kelly recused herself from this item.

The applicant team explained that this is a Greek Revival, built in 1845. There are a number of base building repairs, deferred maintenance, stormwater management, electrical service upgrades, structural upgrades, etc., which is the focus of the work to be done. The team also wants to make some minor modifications to the house. The items proposed include a new addition/new basement entry on the south side, new decorations to a gable dormer towards the back of the site, and a new driveway.

In terms of the new entry canopy, the applicant team explained that this is designed to reflect a dormer on the north side of the house, using a similar bracket. The canopy will have a standing seam metal roof, similar to an existing roof on the house. The second item is a decoration to be added to the gable dormer, which also reflects decorations on the north side of the house. Finally, a new driveway; the existing driveway is asphalt and failing. The new driveway will be jumbo granite cobbles with a new Ashlar pattern paver, the same color as the cobbles. The applicant is willing to make amendments to these proposals if needed.

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

The Commission stated that the proposals seem to be in keeping with the house. There was discussion that the cobbles for the driveway would allow the house to shine a bit more.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the new entry canopy, alterations to the pediment, and proposed replacement driveway, all as shown in Option A.

RESULT:

APPROVED

Vice Chair Kelly retook her seat.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)**

HP26-000015 – 282-284 McGrath Highway

The applicant team explained that there does not appear to be anything truly significant or notable associated with the property. Past uses were by Italian and Portuguese immigrants, which is very typical of the area. There is no significant historical context related to the property. In terms of structural or architectural significance, this is a single-story concrete rectangle. It has a flat roof, concrete masonry, no side windows, and is sandwiched between two residential properties. The last tenant attempted to keep it as a restaurant but abandoned that along the way. The structure is currently in rough shape and vacant. Moreover, the applicant team stated that the City has recently rezoned the area for residential use. The team wishes to demolish the building and build housing, which aligns with the City's current strategy.

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

The Commission noted that there is not much architectural significance to the structure, other than it was a warehouse which was converted into a commercial space. This was supposedly the site of Somerville's first pizzeria. The property reflects development patterns of 20 years of being a Portuguese and Brazilian immigrant social gathering space, which is culturally important. There was discussion regarding including signage and information about the social history. There was agreement that the building would be okay to be demolished, but that signage regarding the history of the property would be important.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Price, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the property at 282-284 McGrath Highway Historically Significant.

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

- While the structure itself does not retain any architectural significance on its own merits, it is importantly associated with the broad cultural, economic, and social history of the City, particularly in its importance to Somerville's history as an immigrant city and its role as a gathering place.

RESULT:	HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT
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OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC received word on which projects will be seeking funding in the next round. There are some large open space requests that will be coming forward. Technically, CPC funding cannot be used for maintenance, but only preservation or restoration. The Commission could discuss clarification on these items in the future.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to approve the 21 April 2026 meeting minutes.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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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](#).