



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

16 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>Present</i>	<i>At 7:07pm</i>
Denis (DJ) Chagnon	Alt. Member	<i>Present</i>	
Denise Price	Member	<i>Absent</i>	

City staff present: Madison Anthony (Planning Division), Lexie Payne (Planning Division)

The meeting was called to order at 6:49pm and adjourned at 7:54pm.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE
(STEP 1 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP26-000021 – 5 Wilton Street**

The applicant team explained that this is a single-family house at 5 Wilton Street. The house is a small, 2.5-story, typical Somerville house. There is no ornamentation or detail. The Staff Memo states that there have been numerous changes made to the house over the years, such as aluminum windows and doors, asbestos shingles, a rear addition, and a dormer. Alterations have occurred to the structure which obscure some of its original details. The applicant team stated that other than having a gable roof, which is also dormered, there is nothing of note. The lot is large and the existing house is jammed against the side lot line. A single-family house is not the highest and best use of the property. The Staff Memo also states that there are no associations with any historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the city or the state. There is no evidence that the building is otherwise historically or architecturally significant, such that there would be a public interest in preserving or rehabilitating it. The applicant team stated that demolition and replacement with a structure better placed on and better sized for the lot would be more in the public interest, especially for the neighbor on the left, as centering a new structure would provide more light, air, and open space between the houses. They also noted that this type of house is not unique or interesting to the area.

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

The Commission noted that the structure shown on the Sanborn map looks different in footprint and placement on the lot compared to the current structure. The current structure, compared to the 1900 Sanborn map, is larger and differently located on the lot. However, the Staff Memo also noted that this is likely the original building with its original massing. Staff stated that they would look further into this.

The Commission stated that this is a front gable, Italianate, worker-sized house. It fits the pattern of development for the neighborhood, though its placement on the lot may not be ideal. The placement on the lot may disturb the rhythm of the street. This is not a particularly good example of that type of house. The highest and best use of the site is a question during the Preferably Preserved discussion. The house does not seem to be particularly Historically Significant.

Member Bauer joined the meeting at 7:07pm.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (0-4-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to find the structure at 5 Wilton Street Historically Significant.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to adopt the following findings:

- The structure is not importantly associated with any historic persons or events.
- The structure does not contribute to the streetscape in a historically significant way.
- The structure is not a reflection of an important architectural style.

RESULT:

NOT HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP26-000007 – 17 Clyde Street**

This case was continued to 4 August 2026.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)
HP26-000015 – 54 Highland Ave**

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

The applicant team explained that this is an unusual architectural style for the corridor and one that stands apart from the other buildings and lots. This house sits a bit lower and reads differently. It does not seem to mesh with the streetscape. The neighborhood behind this structure is much more architectural. This area is becoming a major business corridor, including masonry apartment buildings, the Somerville High School, the new YMCA, etc. The request is that this house be demolished so that higher density can be put in its place.

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

The Commission noted how out of scale and rhythm this structure feels with the rest of Highland Ave in its current context. There was previous discussion regarding potentially relocating the structure within the lot or preserving the house and developing around it. Those are possibilities which could make for good solutions if the applicant is open to them. The house is charming and has some original details left, but it is not consistent with the neighborhood from an architectural standard. The Commission expressed ambivalence regarding retaining the structure instead of removing it to allow for other options.

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Member Chagnon, the Commission voted (1-3), with Member Bauer in favor, to find the structure at 54 Highland Ave Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to adopt the following findings:

- The loss caused by the removal of the property is more than outweighed by the benefit to the City of a building that would be more in keeping with the density, rhythm, and scale of the Highland Ave corridor.

RESULT:

NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED

Chair Parkes retook his seat as Chair.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)**

HP25-000080 – 21 Avon Street

(continued from 20 January 2026)

It was noted that the applicant team was not present at the meeting.

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

The Commission noted that there is an established rhythm to the streetscape in this area which creates a pattern for the house. The house still contains many intriguing detailing in its spindles and dentils, the molding above the front porch, and its general massing and placement on the lot. It would be detrimental to the streetscape if the house structure was removed given the continuity of the design which retains much of its original form and massing. The front gable and bay are similar in spirit.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to find the house at 21 Avon Street Preferably Preserved.

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

- The house is an important part of the historic streetscape in that it picks up on a repetitive pattern.
- The house retains its original form and massing and some of its original detailing.

RESULT:

PREFERABLY PRESERVED

**PUBLIC HEARINGS – DETERMINATIONS OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
(STEP 2 IN THE DEMOLITION REVIEW PROCESS)**

HP25-000081 – 21 Avon Street (Barn)

(continued from 20 January 2026)

It was noted that the applicant team was not present at the meeting.

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

The Commission stated that there is not enough left of the barn structure for it to be preserved and the barn may not be distinctive enough to be preserved. As it is set back from the road, it is not significant to the streetscape. Some Commissioners noted that a number of barns have been lost already in this neighborhood and the mere existence of this one may be enough for it to be deemed Preferably Preserved, especially as the house was deemed Preferably Preserved as well. There was a suggestion regarding an adaptive reuse for the barn as a carriage house or outbuilding.

Following a motion by Vice Chair Kelly, seconded by Member Falvey, the Commission voted (1-4), with Member Bauer in favor, to find the barn at 21 Avon Street Preferably Preserved.

Following a motion by Member Chagnon, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to adopt the following findings:

- The barn does not contribute to the streetscape.
- The barn has lost too much of its original detailing and character to be preserved and to contribute significantly to an understanding of the architectural or social history of the City.

RESULT:

NOT PREFERABLY PRESERVED

OTHER BUSINESS: CPC Update

The CPC grant process will be going through some changes in terms of its timing and the funding allocation.

OTHER BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Falvey, seconded by Vice Chair Kelly, the Commission voted (4-0-1), with Member Bauer abstaining, to approve the 5 May 2026 meeting minutes.

RESULT:

APPROVED

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.](#)