

Somerville Historic Preservation Commission

Minutes

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

City Hall

3rd Floor Conference Room

6:30 p.m.

Staff Present: Kristi Chase, Brandon Wilson (in and out), Katherine Montgomery (Intern)

Members Present: Dick Bauer, Michael Payne, Cheryl Vanderbilt, Jeff Meese*, Brad Stearns*, Susan Rabinowitz*. Brad Stearns* left at 8:15 pm.

Members Absent: John Bunzick, Stephen Glines, Barbara Mangum, Abby Freedman*, David Guss*, DJ Chagnon*, Susan Fontano*, Derick Snare*.

Others Present: David Owens, Susan Pyzinski, Ron Mesard, and John Correia

Approval of HPC Minutes

*Jeff Meese moved that the **July Minutes** be approved. This was seconded by Brad Stearns. Vote was 6-0 with Dick Bauer abstaining.*

*Michael Payne moved that the **August Minutes** be approved with revisions as noted. Cheryl Vanderbilt seconded the motion. The vote was 5-0 with Dick Bauer and Jeff Meese abstaining.*

*Michael Payne moved that the **September Minutes** be approved with revisions as noted. Jeff Meese seconded the motion. The vote was 4-0 with Dick Bauer, Cheryl Vanderbilt and Susan Rabinowitz abstaining.*

6:40 p.m. Deliberation of HPC Case

Application: **HPC #06.52 – 28 Highland Avenue (continued)**

Applicant: David Owens, Trustee, 28 Highland Avenue Condominium Trust

The Applicant seeks approval for the following:

1. Reconstruct rear porches with revised, more historically appropriate design.

Because the back porch is new construction, no specificity is required in regards to material and design. The existing columns relate to those in front but have no structural integrity. John Correia, Contractor intends to reuse them by inserting structural members internally to support the porch. A fir lattice skirt would be installed on the porches. Steps would be mahogany. Top caps are needed for the posts at the base of the back stairs. The drawings presented by the contractor need to be clearer. Condo owners can use existing drawings with annotations to clarify what work has been approved for submittal to Inspectional Services.

Jeff Meese made a motion, amended by Michael Payne and seconded by Dick Bauer to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the front porch to be rebuilt in-kind as per historic photos and the rear porch to be rebuilt as described with the second floor rear egress door reverting back to a window to match existing.

Demolition Reviews

HPC 06.60 – 56 Putnam Street – pre- 1895 stable/barn

Applicant: Eleanor Glidden, Owner

Received: 10/16/06

Determination of significance

This carriage house/barn is listing to one side and is sway-backed. The owner would like to take it down as unsafe. See attached photos for existing conditions. Such structures are generally considered significant remnants of our pre-automotive past. This particular one is located in a neighborhood with four or five such structures, most of which are also in poor condition. The Staff anticipates that more of these types of buildings will be coming before the Commission soon.

Brad Stearns noted that stabilization of the structure is needed, the eaves have been clipped and remuddled; there ought to have been a slate roof. He indicated that the buckling seen on the front probably shows that there may be a rotten floor and carrying beam behind it due to moisture problems. The building could be salvaged.

Michael Payne read the definition of “significance” to aid the Commission. The building met the definition by being over 50 years old and by its association with pre-automotive Somerville transportation history. Michael Payne asked whether this was the only basis? The Commission is under an obligation to be consistent in its determinations.

A discussion ensued regarding the tension between vernacular and high styles as being important. Part of what is important here is that it is typical and run-of-the-mill. The building is one of a cluster of similar carriage houses on Putnam Street and Prescott Street. These are vernacular as opposed to high style buildings. Susan Rabinowitz said that such buildings are representative of what was happening and what was the normal. Vernacular architecture is the norm. Somerville was composed of farmers, merchants and working class. This building belonged to an ordinary person not part of the merchant class.

Some questions still need to be answered. The house is not a farmhouse. Why was there a need for a carriage house or barn when streetcars ran frequently nearby? Given the cluster of similar buildings, what were the occupations of the owners? When were they constructed? Staff to do further research on all the buildings.

Jeff Meese made a motion, seconded by Dick Bauer that the carriage house at 56 Putnam Street be determined to be “significant” as defined by the Demolition Review Ordinance. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).

HPC 06.16 D – 55-61 Clyde Street (MaxPac Site) - Update

Applicants: Leslie Donovan, Preservation Consultant; Matt O’Neill, Director of Development, KSS Realty Trust

Received
03/14/06

Determined Significant
03/21/06

Preferably Preserved
04/18/06

Anne Thomas of the Law Department is working on a draft MOA between the SHPC and the development team.

HPC #06.27 D– 46 Pearl Street – Update on proposed demolition of 1871 Ezra Conant House

Applicant: John Mahoney, Developer

Received
04/20/06

Determined Significant
09/16/03

Preferably Preserved
05/16/06

Mr. Mahoney stopped by on 10/11/06 to say that he has yet another idea. He stated that the Structural Engineer’s information was the same as what he had already given to us. The Staff asked him to fax or send over this report from the Engineer to confirm this. The Staff, however, simply received a copy of the contract that David Knuttunnen asked him to sign on Thursday 10/12/06, rather than any new information. The Staff reminded Mr Mahoney that he had previously agreed to pay for an independent survey. The Staff also received a call from Mr. Knuttunnen to say that he had yet to receive the go ahead from Mr. Mahoney.

Demolition Reviews by Staff determined to be “not significant” since last HPC Meeting in September:

HPC 06.55 – 11 Rogers Avenue – 1925 Concrete Block Garage (2)

Applicant: Ally Ladha

Received: 09/26/06

Determined Not Significant: 10/01/06

HPC 06.57– 122 Heath Street, 1924 Concrete Block Garage

Applicant: Morse Constructions, General Contractor

Received: 10/04/06

(demolished by workers before significance could be determined)

HPC 06.58 – 24 Elston Street – 1924 Concrete Block Garage (2)

Applicant: Ken Dornstein

Received: 10/10/06

Determined Not Significant: 10/11/06

HPC 06.59 – 10 Whitman Street – 1922 Concrete Block Garage (1)

Applicant: Karen Spalding, Owner

Received: 10/13/06

Determined not significant: 10/13/06

Certificates of Non-Applicability Issued by the Staff

HPC#06.56 – 40 Atherton Street

09/29/06

Applicant: Edward F Rongone, Contractor

1. Remodel interior; and
2. Replace garage doors, (not visible from the public right of way.)

Section 106 and FCC NEPA Reviews by Staff

None

Other Business - Project Updates

Preservation and Director's Awards: Nominations still needed by end of November.

LHD Expansion Project – A special meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, 11/14/06 at 6:30 pm. in the 3rd floor conference room. Due to low attendance at the last special meeting we will be reconsidering the Proposed Properties for LHD Designation. Please be sure to mark your calendars now for this important meeting.

Staff notes regarding some of the proposed properties

Michael Gleba, new Planning Director and Staff met with Tom Gillespie, a potential owner/developer of the barn at **25 Hamlet Street**. He is planning to rebuild the barn with a new roof and a possible new house portion in the front. His architect, Gerry Couto is on the Framingham HPC. They will come to the Commission for a preliminary review before he takes his plans to the Planning Board and ZBA.

Staff has also received a call from Chris Ritter, architect pertaining to the sale of **461 Somerville Avenue** and had a long conversation with the prospective buyer concerning the ins and outs of rehabilitating such a structure. Staff referred him to Jeff Meese.

Schedule of remaining regular SHPC meetings for 2006: Held on the third Tuesday of every month: November 21, and December 19.