

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 21, 2006
City Hall
3rd Floor Conference Room
6:40 p.m.

Members Present: Dick Bauer, Michael Payne, Andrew Upton, Cheryl Vanderbilt, DJ Chagnon**, Susan Fontano*, Abby Freedman, Susan Rabinowitz**, Brad Stearns*. Susan Rabinowitz left at 8:00 pm. DJ Chagnon arrived at 8:00 pm. Andrew Upton left at 10:30 pm.

Members Absent: John Bunzick, Barbara Mangum, David Guss*, Jeff Meese*, Derick Snare*.

Alternates*

Non-voting Alternates**

Staff Present: Kristi Chase, Brandon Wilson; Katherine Montgomery, preservation intern

Others present: Mary Cassesso, Mark Chase, Christopher Stewart, Richard DiGirolamo, Alan Taylor, Fred Camerato, John Sawyer, Matt O'Neill, Sal Querucio, Leslie Donovan, Katie Anthony, Molly Markarian.

HPC 06.11 – 2 Bigelow Street

Applicants: Mary Cassesso and Peter Miller, Owners

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A)** to:

1. Replace wood/vinyl replacement windows with all wood Pella® double-hung sash.

Mary presented the need to replace the existing windows. There was some discussion of alternative brands of windows and their pluses and minuses; and true divided light vs. simulated divided light in insulated windows. Andrew made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to install 36 all wood Pella double-hung sash with 7/8" muntin, simulated divided light insulated glass windows to replace existing replacement windows. Vote was unanimous (7-0).

HPC 06.12 – 144 Morrison Avenue

Applicant: Mark Chase, Owner

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A)** and a **Certificate of Non-Applicability (C/NA)** to:

1. Install vents for furnace, bathroom & dryer on back of building (C/A);
2. Change previously approved double-hung windows on east side rear of building with a transom (C/A);
3. Install new exterior electrical outlets per requirements of ISD (C/A);
4. Seek review and approval of proposed window casing trim (C/A);
5. Install cobblestone and brick parking surface for 2 cars (18' x 16') (C/A); and
6. Install light fixtures and doorbells (C/NA).

Kristi Chase recused herself from involvement as staff because the applicant is her brother. Any staff involvement regarding follow-up should be with Brandon Wilson.

*Mark presented his case. The bathroom and dryer vents would be enclosed in a wood box, open at the bottom that would match the cedar shingling of the building. Andrew Upton made a motion, seconded by Cheryl Vanderbilt, to **grant a Certificate of Appropriateness** to install vents for furnace, bathroom & dryer on back of building with a wood enclosure as presented. Vote was unanimous (7-0).*

The proposed transom/piano window would allow for the placement of a couch or high furniture against the side of the ell while adding more light to the room. Michael and Dick both said that the concept was not appropriate to the historic style of the building, being too ornamental and not consistent with the established pattern language of the building. Abby Freedman said that it would not be particularly visible.

*Andrew made a motion, seconded by Abby, to **grant a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a transom/piano window subject to Staff review and approval. Vote was 2-5. Certificate was **denied** for the reasons noted above.*

The Applicant did not want to install the electric outlet on the front of the building but had been requested to do so by the electrical inspector. It was noted that this type of utility would be incongruous with the historic character of the building, especially as seen from the main road. Since MGL 143 s3A allows for non-compliance with code for historic properties, the HPC could deny the request for electrical outlets on the main façade of the building. One could be installed in the rear near the kitchen door where the building services would traditionally be located and would be substantially less visible.

*Andrew made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano to **grant a Certificate of Appropriateness** for an electrical outlet on the rear deck but to **deny** an outlet in the front of the building. Vote was unanimous (7-0).*

The Applicant presented several trim profiles he was considering with the pros and cons of each. In the order of Commission's preference per vote taken.

Andrew made a motion, seconded by Dick, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for trim found at Moriarty, providing that it was the closest match. Vote was unanimous (7-0).

Andrew made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for style FCM151. Vote was unanimous (7-0).

*Andrew made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for style 3891. Vote was (1-4 with 2 abstentions). A Certificate was **not granted** for this style.*

The Applicant would like to construct 2 parking spaces in the rear yard with cobblestones and brick pavers down the center.

Andrew made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to install a parking area as presented. Vote carried (6-0 with 1 abstention).

The remaining item is automatically granted a Certificate of Non-Applicability because the authority of the Commission shall not extend to the review of ... storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae, lawn statuary and similar appurtenances, or any one or more of them.” (Section 6).

HPC 06.13 – 73 Columbus Avenue

Applicant: Carlos Reverendo and Fernando Leon, Owners

The Applicants seek a **Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A)** and a **Certificate of Hardship (C/H)** to:

1. Install cobblestone driveway and new retaining walls (C/A); and
2. Make revisions to previously approved plans for the reconstruction of the carriage house (C/H).

Chris Stewart, contractor for the Applicant, stated that he had nothing to do with the driveway and retaining wall. Those were chosen by the owners and installed by another contractor. The Staff noted that although the particulars of the unit block retaining wall and pavers had not been reviewed, they were attractive, had a gray granite color and worked well with the landscaping. Andrew made a motion, seconded by Cheryl to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the cobblestone driveway and new retaining walls. Vote was unanimous (7-0).

He also described the reasons for the changes made to the previously approved plans. He said that Inspectional Services requested that the building be moved away from the lot line to meet current code. This change meant that the relationship of the building to the neighboring grade was also altered. The blinded window was eliminated because of the change in grade. The earth now filled the area between the neighboring property and the garage. The schematic plans approved by the Commission turned out to be not constructible, necessitating changes in the size of the windows which meant that the agreed upon light pattern could not be used. He said that Low-E glass was required by code. He did not know that it was generally not desirable in a historic district and that there was more than one type of Low-E coating. The Owners had requested Anderson® windows. He used what was available in that size. The windows have interior snap-in flat muntins. He will investigate applied muntins for the exterior. Michael

noted that clear direction was not given to the Owners; because the original Certificate of Appropriateness did not call out the specifics. Dick noted that due to extensive discussion at two meetings the Owners should have been aware that the fenestration was an important character defining feature and that changes should not be lightly taken. A review of the minutes from the earlier meetings did not give any guidance as to whether the problems of using Low-E on historic buildings were discussed. Staff noted that she should have been paying closer attention to the project and did not visit the site with plans in hand until project was complete. Closer communication would have eliminated some of the problems.

Although the original Certificate of Appropriateness did not resolve all the issues regarding the windows, and particularly the review of the minutes from the earlier meetings did not give any guidance as to whether the problems of using Low-E on historic buildings were discussed, the Certificate that was granted permitted the dormers in accordance with the submitted plan, and the plan plainly included 3 over 3 lights with visible muntins (necessarily exterior muntins). Together with the extensive discussion at two meetings, the Owners should have been aware that the fenestration was an important character defining feature and that changes should not be lightly taken.

Michael made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to grant a Certificate of Hardship on the basis the HPC was not clear in its directions to the Owners. Vote was 3-3 with 1 abstention. The vote did not carry.

*Dick made a motion, seconded by Michael, to **grant a Certificate of Hardship** for the relocation of the building and the elimination of the blinded window. Vote was unanimous (7-0).*

*Michael made a motion, seconded by Susan Fontano, to **grant a Certificate of Hardship** for the dormer on the condition that an acceptable solution is found for the muntins consistent with the Commission's earlier approval of the dormer plans with visible muntins and subject to Staff review and approval. Vote was 4-1 with 2 abstentions.*

Demolition Reviews

HPC 05.57 D - 280 Broadway - Public Hearing (continued) re: Proposed demolition of a 1901 Shingle Style Carriage House

Applicants: Frank Sarno, Contractor; Richard DiGirolamo, Counsel; Fred Camerato, Owner

Determined Significant

11/15/05

The subject of the hearing is to review the SHPC's initial determination, under section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05, that the subject carriage house is considered "significant." Public testimony will be followed by discussion and a vote by the Commission on whether the building should be "preferably preserved" per section 4.3.

Richard DiGirolamo recapped his case that the building was not "significant" and should not be determined "preferably preserved" because it was in disrepair; was unsafe; was a danger and an expense to abutters; would be very costly to repair (approximately \$700,000); had no

usefulness; was not particularly visible from the street; was not of sufficient historic interest (first owner had no historic importance); and lastly the current owner has plans for the site which would incorporate some of the architectural details of the original building.

Fred Camerato, Owner stated that he was glad that the Commission finally had a chance to see the existing poor condition of the building and would be incorporating some of the architectural design to match the front building in his new construction.

Michael read the portions of the Demolition Review Ordinance that pertained to the determination of “preferably preserved” emphasizing that the Commission should be considering whether the “demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City”, then “such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure.”

The Staff stated that the building was an exceptionally fine example of shingle style architecture and unique in Somerville. The quality of the original construction was high and demonstrated the social importance and prosperity of Elbridge Davis, first owner of 280 Broadway.

The Staff read an e-mail from Commission member Derick Snare, an architect who had participated in the previous days site visit, stating that the building was extraordinarily handsome and rare for Somerville. Based on his “recent experience at 38 Meacham Road, the structure at 280 Broadway is not only worthy of being repaired but certainly capable of being repaired. That opinion was shared today at the site visit by Walter Beebe-Center of Essex Restoration.

“Surely this building ought to be incorporated into the development plans for the site, either as residential units or as accessory studio units, perhaps with allowance for some additional structure in addition to the house and the carriage house if this incentive is required to make the project feasible economically.”

Brad Stearns, Contractor said that after viewing the interior he found no fungal rot, that the structure was basically sound. He had walked the perimeter with a screwdriver and found some damage. The cost would not be insignificant but it was fixable. He agreed that site placement was difficult but still doable.

Dick said that the building was extraordinary. The shingled brackets and flares on the building are important architectural elements. The building reflects the status of the owner; a quality building for a prosperous businessman. It was self-evident that the building should be “preferably preserved”.

Michael made a motion, seconded by Dick, that the building be considered “preferably preserved”. Vote was unanimous (7-0). A subcommittee (Brad, Cheryl, Michael and maybe Derick or Jeff) was formed to review the options for the preservation of the building. A meeting was set for April 4, 2006 at 6:30 pm in the third floor conference room.

HPC 06.16 D – 56-61 Clyde Street (MaxPac Site) - re: Proposed demolition of two vacant industrial buildings: 1926 Carlisle-Ayer Company and 1928 Agar Manufacturing Company

Applicants: Leslie Donovan, Preservation Consultant; Matt O’Neill, Director of Development, and John Sawyer, Vice President of KSS Realty Trust

Received

03/14/06

Review and initial determination as to whether the two vacant industrial buildings are considered “significant” under section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05. The Commission will take public comment and will follow with discussion and a vote.

Leslie Donovan and John Sawyer presented the site plans, historical information and changes to the Lowell Street Bridge needed to make the development feasible. Leslie discussed the architectural styles and merits of each of the buildings and their evolution. John discussed how they had held an architectural competition to help design the site with plans included for the retention of the MaxPac Building. None of the plans turned out to be reasonable to construct. Due to the street configuration and their width, access to the site was difficult and would pose a hardship for the neighborhood if the site were to be developed. The alternative access needs to come from the Lowell Street Bridge where there is an embankment between the two bridges. The MaxPac building is in the way of the access ramp that would need to be constructed to make the site usable. The bike path could be used temporarily but is not a long-term option. The Highway Department is currently rebuilding the Bridge. It would be better to install the curb cuts now rather than closing the bridge down a second time later.

The developers have been in negotiation with the neighbors for over two years regarding the density and style of development. The neighbors have already requested that the building be demolished. Because the building would be coming down, we need to start the mitigation procedures immediately. Leslie said that MHC would probably offer standard mitigation. The SHPC should look it over and think about what specifics they would want to add.

Dick agreed with the MHC regarding the significance of 61 Clyde Street as a good example of industrial architecture in Somerville. The other building also has nice brickwork and he would consider both buildings to be significant.

Dick made a motion, seconded by Michael, to consider 55-61 Clyde Street, Agar Manufacturing to be “significant” per section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05. Vote was 4-2 with 1 abstention.

Dick made a motion, seconded by Cheryl, to consider 50-56 Clyde Street, Carlisle Ayer Building to be “significant” per section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05. Vote was 1-5 with 1 abstention. The motion did not carry.

A subcommittee (DJ Chagnon, Brad, Michael and Jeff and maybe Derick) was formed to review the options for the mitigation of the building.

HPC 06.18 D – 16 Butler Drive – re: Proposed demolition of St. Polycarp’s 1951 School, 1951 Convent, 1960 Library

Applicants: Somerville Community Corporation (SCC)

Received

03/16/06

Review and initial determination as to whether the three formerly religious buildings are considered “significant” under section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05. The Commission will take public comment and will follow with discussion and a vote.

Although Dick doesn't have any direct ties to SCC that would require him to recuse himself from their cases, he has enough indirect involvement with them that he recused himself on a discretionary basis from hearing the demolition application.

Katie Anthony, Project Manager presented. When SCC first heard that the church would be putting the buildings up for sale the SCC hoped to be able to reuse the buildings. A tour of the buildings revealed that the interior layouts would not work. The school had no windows on the lower level, being predominantly a gym and a cafeteria and utility are. The roof shape would also need to be changed to allow for greater density. The convent building was divided into fairly small rooms, rundown and not suited for condo development. Neighborhood Community meetings revealed that a mixed-use development would be welcome and that the Just-A-Start program should be retained. The historically and culturally important buildings would be retained. Keeping the church as a church would be the optimal use of the church building. SCC has been negotiating with two churches to purchase a hundred year land lease in order to make sure that the building could not be torn down. They are also negotiating with Just-A-Start for them to move into the old Rectory.

Abby said that SCC is preserving the most significant buildings. Should we consider the whole assemblage as sacred? Brad noted that the school building is not conducive to rehabilitation, the ground floor might as well be an indoor swimming pool because the interior has no relationship to what is outside the building and has no windows. Michael noted that in looking at the hierarchy of the buildings, the school and convent buildings were not as important to the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of Somerville as the church and rectory.

Brad made a motion, seconded by Abby, that the school and convent be deemed not “significant”. Vote was unanimous (5-0).

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 pm.

HPC 03.03 D – 46 Pearl Street Update

3/15/06 Meeting with John Mahoney, Owner re: proposed residential plans for site.

Brad, Kristi and Lara Curtis from the Planning Department met with the Owner. He is intending to demolish the remaining portion of the house at 46 Pearl Street. He then intends to build a 3-family Mansard on the lot. Details of the proposed building are very sketchy and do not reflect the original structure as well as the plans proposed a year ago. The main doors are off the

driveway. The Florence Street side of the building has the back doors. The building is stepped but not as articulated as the previously proposed building and does not blend as well with the Florence Street rowhouses.

Demolitions determined by Staff as “not significant

HPC 06.14 D – 172 Pearl Street

Applicant: Norma Pereira, Owner

Garage

Received: 03/15/06

Determined not “significant”: 03/16/06

Certificates of Non-Applicability Issued by the Staff

HPC 06.09 – 58-60 Atherton Street

02/21/06

Applicant: Tony Madden, Owner

1. Replace 3-tab shingle roof on rear in-kind.

HPC 06.10 – 404 Broadway

02/28/06

Applicant: Vida Real Church, Owner

1. Renovate 3rd floor interior.

HPC 06.15 – 25 Atherton Street (former Carr School)

Applicant’s Agent: BJ Roberts Management:

1. Repair slate roof in-kind;
2. Repair and replace copper chimney cap in-kind.

Other Business

- **Middlesex Canal Commission Grant**
Dick reported on the annual meeting of the Middlesex Canal Commission on March 16, 2006. Dick is the Somerville representative on the MCC. The big news that was reported was that MCC received a \$250,000 appropriation from this state this year, and has money for projects including restoration and signage.
- **HPC 04.27 – 165 Broadway – Cross Street Elderly Center Update - Brandon**
FY’04 CDBG funds were secured to undertake long needed repairs to the building roof and cornice. Work to be bid and overseen by the Capital Planning staff in cooperation with the SHPC and its Staff. Pre-bid conference for prospective bidders held today.
- **Tentative Plans for Patriot’s Day Event (Monday, April 17th) sponsored by the Mayor’s Office and the SHPC – All Invited!**
Planning is underway to meet at 10:30am at the location of the marker (now the Holiday Inn site off Washington St.) where Paul Revere and others were originally sighted by the British. Following a reception, flag raising and music in front of the

Holiday Inn, participants, hopefully including many in colonial attire, will be led by a Redcoat on horseback through East Somerville streets to Foss Park (10-15 minute walk) where a short program will take place. Paul Revere and his compatriots also on horseback will stop by on their way from Boston to Lexington around 11 am-ish. Everyone, especially local youth in colonial dress, are encouraged to join us from the start or at Foss Park. The Mason's Rainbow Girls, the SHS Band and many others have been invited. Bring friends, family and neighbors!

- **Milk Row Cemetery Preservation Project Update - Brandon**
The contractor Fleming Bros. and his subcontractor ConservArt, stone conservators, have already started work that will continue through the end of June, with the benefit of a grant from the MHC and possibly through the summer with other funds.
- **City-wide Historic Survey Project Update – Brandon**
Consultants Ed Gordon and Arthur Krim have completed their surveying of 162 properties in Somerville and submitted their findings to the SHPC and the MHC. Their final report is being finalized with the Staff. Another grant secured from the MHC will enable the SHPC to oversee discussions with all of the surveyed property owners, with the intent of advising them of the significance of their properties and the reasons to protect them through designation as “local historic districts.”
- **Planning for Preservation Month Events throughout May – Brandon**
Several walking tours (Spring Hill, Sun. May 7th) and Davis Square and Powderhouse Area (Sun. May 14th), a historic bike ride (Sat. May 20th), and the Preservation Awards Ceremony (Wednesday, May 24th) are being planned in concert with other organizations. More details to follow.
- **Invitation to participate in the Memorial Day Parade, May 29, 2006 - Kristi**

Schedule of remaining SHPC meetings for 2006: these are held on the third Tuesday of every month: April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17, November 21, and December 19.