

## Somerville Historic Preservation Commission

### MINUTES

Tuesday, April 18, 2006  
City Hall  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
6:30 p.m.

#### 6:40 p.m. Meeting Called to order

**Members Present:** Dick Bauer, Abby Freedman, Michael Payne, Cheryl Vanderbilt, DJ Chagnon\*\*, Jeff Meese\*, Derick Snare\*, Brad Stearns\*. Jeff Meese and DJ Chagnon arrived at 7:00 pm with Jeff entering the room first.

**Members Absent:** John Bunzick, Barbara Mangum, Susan Fontano\*, David Guss\*, Susan Rabinowitz\*.

#### Alternates\*

**Alternate\*\* voting on 9-11 Aldersey Street only.**

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

**Others present:** Elvin Phillips, Gerard Meehan, Kenneth Poole, Raelinda Woad, Ann Bonugli, Jennifer Griffin, Julie Schneider, Luann Abrahams, David Abrahams, Martha Wigglesworth, Janine Duffy, Jack Hamilton, Martina Schinke, Matt O'Neill, Leslie Donovan, Joe Lynch, Kyann Anderson.

#### **HPC #06.24 – 156 School Street**

Applicant: SML Investments

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriateness** to:

1. Install HVAC unit on roof.

*Elvin Phillips, Architect for the Applicants presented in their absence. The HVAC unit would be located on the downhill side of the building, behind the skylights, no more than 3'4" high and is not visible from the street, only from the path between the High School and City Hall. The Staff noted that these types of utilities are generally located on roofs and therefore not unexpected or particularly jarring visually, especially if painted a light gray, which would blend with the horizon. If the unit were located in the yard/parking area behind the building, it would be more visible. The Staff recommended that the Applicant's request be granted a **Certificate of Appropriateness** noting that the NPS Preservation Brief 24 states that one should not "place condensers, solar panels, chimney stacks, vents or other equipment on visible portions of roofs or at significant locations on the site." The unit could be placed on the ground by the parking area but would be more obtrusive. The proposed location is behind a raised skylight, near a chimney in the least visible location for this type of equipment.*

*Dick Bauer made a motion, seconded by Cheryl Vanderbilt to grant a motion to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to install an HVAC unit on the roof as described in the plans provided and dated*

03/30/06 on the condition that it be the only such unit for the building and that it be painted light gray.  
Vote was 6-0 with 1 abstention (Brad Stearns).

**HPC 06.22 – 9-11 Aldersey Street**

Applicant: Gerard Meehan

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for the following:

1. Open up both porches and reconstruct side porch with porch posts to match existing main porch posts but proportionally smaller;
2. Install railings and balusters on both porches.

*Abby Freeman recused herself because of her long involvement with the proposed development and left the room. DJ Chagnon took her place as a voting member of the Commission.*

*Kenneth Poole, Architect presented for Mr. Meehan. The Staff had given “at risk” permission to the Applicant to remove the porch enclosure on the main porch, which had been a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition, The posts would be repaired and replicated on a smaller, proportional scale on the reconstructed side porch. The Applicant said that his insurance company would require the railings even though the height of the porch was approximately 30” off the ground and the area could be re-graded. The proposed rails and simple square balusters would match those found on the site. (These railings and balusters were never part of the building, having been left there by one of the tenants of the building.)*

*The Staff noted that railings were inappropriate to a Greek Revival building but recognized the need to meet certain safety requirements. The Staff also noted that both the use and style of railings were indicative that they were not original to the building and that a simpler style was more appropriate.*

*Public comment by Luann and David Abrahams, speaking for the neighborhood said that they wanted the building to be maintained in a historically correct manner, noting that they had all been in agreement that the neighborhood had historic significance and 9-11 Aldersey was the most important building on the street. David Abrahams suggested that the center panel of railing be removed and stairs be installed at that location to highlight the original main double-doors that had been previously hidden. The Applicant said that he would be planning to do that in the next phase of work if all approvals came through.*

*Commission members said they liked the height of the railing that matched the height of the windowsill, agreed that the center entry might be nice but was not on the plans brought before the Commission. All were agreed that the removal of the enclosing panels on the main porch was appropriate.*

*Michael Payne made a motion, seconded by Cheryl Vanderbilt, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to*

1. *Open up both porches and reconstruct side porch with porch posts to match existing main porch posts but proportionally smaller;*
2. *Install railings and balusters on both porches no higher than 34”.*

There will also be an **informal review** of a plan to construct two (2) new structures on a lot with a pre-existing historically designated structure, known as 9-11 Aldersey Street. Due to the preliminary nature of the schematic plans being submitted, the purpose of the review will be to

focus on the proposed development's impact on: a) the overall Aldersey-Summit Historic District; b) the architectural integrity of the historic streetscape; and c) whether the proposed new construction respects the overall design fabric of the historic district.

*Mr. Poole presented the Applicants latest revisions for the proposed buildings at 9-11 Aldersey Street. The Applicant had been meeting with the neighbors for some time and had listened to some of their concerns. The current proposal was due to those meetings. The proposed number of units would be down to seven; four in the left hand, mansard roofed building, one in the original structure and two in the right hand unit. The size of the proposed buildings would be reduced considerably from those originally proposed. The left building would have the same set back as the original building but the right building would be set approximately 50' back from the lot line. Details and architectural ideas were taken from the neighborhood. They were still developing sightlines and the details. They might make both buildings Mansard.*

*Michael Payne said that the neighborhood was rich in many architectural styles and that the diversity of the proposed buildings was good. The plans had a greater sense of the open space than the plans presented in December 2003. The newly proposed buildings did not overwhelm the original building as much. The proposal was a vast improvement over what the Commission had last reviewed.*

*Jeff Meese liked the steeper roof pitch on the gable ended house and thought that the "L" shaped building might benefit from being made more of a "T". He said he was of two minds regarding the gable end in to the Mansard.*

*Public Comments:*

*David Abrahams was very encouraged that the massing was coming down. Building on the left was still too large. The original building was very imposing as built. Any building that seemed larger than the original was too big.*

*Luann Abrahams said that there had been a lot of dialog between the neighbors and Mr. Meehan and submitted a summary of their concerns. She reminded the Commission that historic character includes the unbuilt space. Most of the empty space on Prospect Hill had been filled. This was an 1850s house on an 1850s lot and that it should be preserved.*

*Raelinda Wood commented on the architect's sketch of the property, which didn't draw the neighboring buildings in their proper locations, making the proposed development seem more open.*

*Janine Duffy said that she had moved to what she and her husband thought was a historic, quiet, mostly family neighborhood. She was particularly concerned about the density.*

*Ann Bonugli noted her concerns about erosion and building proximity. She felt that this plan was worse than the previous one in its affects on her property. She had a structural engineer coming to consult with her.*

*Martina Schinke thought density was a problem and the open space was better and spoke about how a developer had added to her house and how she no longer had a garden.*

*Julie Schneider stated that 9-11 Aldersey was 1/3 of the Historic District and asked what could be built by right.*

*Michael Payne noted that such questions were the prerogative of the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Historic Preservation Commission only looked at the historic aspects of the proposal and that this was an informal review of such.*

*Dick Bauer said that the Commission should keep in mind that historic lot size was part of historic character.*

## **Demolition Reviews**

### **HPC 06.16 D – 55-61 Clyde Street (MaxPac Site) - re: Proposed demolition of one vacant industrial building: 1928 Agar Manufacturing Company**

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

#### **Received**

03/14/06

#### **Determined Significant**

03/21/06

The subject of the hearing will be a follow-up to the SHPC’s initial determination under section 4.2 of the Demolition Review Ordinance #2003-05 that the subject industrial building 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.

*Brad Stearns gave a report on the Subcommittee meeting, which had met to get a jumpstart on the review process once a determination of “preferably preserved” had been made by the HPC since the MHC and the HPC had determined that the building was significant. Memorialization and preservation of the building had been discussed.*

*Michael Payne read the portions of the Demolition Review Ordinance that were relevant and asked the Commission to keep those in mind.*

*Jeff Meese wanted to know if anyone important had worked there. The building had been used to manufacture boxes and bags.*

*Abby Freedman described the relationship of the small workers’ housing with the large industrial buildings. She said that the building was a clear reference to the industrial past of the City.*

*Dick Bauer mentioned the unique architectural character of the building, that its very presence changes the character of the neighborhood.*

*DJ Chagnon tied the building to both the railroad and the industrial heritage of the City; that the building provides a chronicle of one phase of the City’s industrial development.*

*The Staff discussed the ties between the development of the site and the railroad. Buildings were located where they were because of the existence of the railroad and the services provided. When the railroad was no longer used to transport goods, the building could no longer function as intended.*

*Abby Freedman and Dick Bauer discussed whether preferably preserved meant that the building had to be kept and for how long. It was noted that the subcommittee was already looking into mitigation. A MOA could be reached in less than the maximum 9 months allowed.*

*Leslie Donovan said that they needed to work with the HPC to reach an MOA so that her client could get the needed permits for their curb cut. The MOA is part of the MEPA process as well as the Demolition Review process.*

*DJ Chagnon said that there would be an MOA to be reached no matter the outcome.*

*Public Comment:*

*Joe Lynch said that the architect was from Chicago and designed buildings for the railroad. The building was originally a transfer station for the railroad and is the only one like it from Boston to the Massachusetts border. It is one of 4 remaining such buildings by the architect.*

*Joe Lynch then gave a history of the proposed development as he understood it, noting that the ENF filed last November did not note that the building had any historic merit. Both he and Kyann Anderson were on MaxPac Design Review Committee and at no time was any historic importance attributed to the building. Some members of the Committee might not have agreed to demolition of the building if they had known the status. Keeping the building was not an option presented to the public. He mentioned other hurdles for KSS to reach their goal of developing their site. He said that HPC's sign off of the building would give the developers the right to tear down a significant building which would be gone forever. The Lowell Street bridge is scheduled to open on Memorial Day or early June. Traffic analysis needs to be done before a curb cut is installed.*

*Kyann Anderson noted that the Design Review Committee had been composed of both "old school" and "new school" people. The "old school" were more ready to tear the building down. She was not sure in the first place whether the building should come down and is now less sold on the demolition of a historically significant building.*

*Michael Payne noted that he had heard new information from Joe that would help him make his vote. Michael then made a motion, seconded by Dick, that the building be determined "preferably preserved" under section 4.3 of the Demolition Review Ordinance. Vote was 6-1 with Jeff Meese against.*

*Michael Payne noted that the proposed MOA had a phrase that said no feasible or prudent alternatives to demolition had been found. No alternatives to demolition had been presented, nor the reasons for their rejection as feasible or prudent. Since KSS has said that they have looked at these, could they be brought to the subcommittee for review.*

*He also listed three things that needed to be known: more hard information on the building; its unique aspects; and alternative schemes to demolition.*

*A subcommittee meeting was set for April 26, 2006 at 6:30 pm.*

### **Demolition Reviews by Staff Since Last Meeting**

#### **HPC 06.20 D – 1194 Broadway**

Applicant: Emerald Development

VFW Logan Post

Received: 03/28/06

Less than 50 years old

#### **HPC 06.21 – 27 Porter Street**

Applicant: Luigi Marinelli, Owner

Pre-1874 Barn

Received: 03/28/06

Unsafe Conditions

### **Certificates of Non-Applicability Issued by the Staff**

#### **HPC 06.19 – 18 Westwood Road**

March 27, 2006

Applicant: James Veneziano, Owner

1. Strip and reroof with 3-tab asphalt shingles in-kind.

#### **HPC 06.22 – 9-11 Aldersey Street**

March 30, 2006

Applicant: Gerald Meehan, Owner

1. Repair and replace rotted and damaged clapboards in-kind as needed;
2. Repair porch, replacing damaged floorboards in-kind as needed; and
3. Repair and replace missing and rotted trim in-kind as needed.

#### **HPC 06.25 – 8 Mount Vernon Street**

April 4, 2006

Applicant: Barbara Castro, Owner

1. Repair or replace front porch floor in-kind;
2. Repair front door;
3. Repair front columns;
4. Replace bricks along front walkway;
5. Repair or replace front porch roof;
6. Replace or repair front porch stairs; and
7. Paint.

### **Other Business**

- **Outcome of SHPC's Patriot's Day Celebration Yesterday – Brandon**
  - Much appreciation to Susan Fontano for donating the wonderfully large and colorful balloons; to Abby for videotaping the Holiday Inn portion of the Program; to Dick for coming to the Program at Foss Park; and finally to Barbara for helping to make the colonial period attire even more historically accurate this year and for enthusiastically participating in full costume with family!!
- **Preservation Awards Program Update – Brandon, Kristi and Katherine**

- Review and vote on Preservation Award drawings submitted by SHS Art Students
- Sneak preview of 10 year commemorative tee-shirt design
- Volunteers for refreshments & set-up for Awards Ceremony on Wed. May 24<sup>th</sup> at SHM
- **Expansion of Local Historic Districts Grant Project Update – Brandon**
  - Photographs of all 174 properties recently taken by Kristi & Katherine b4 spring blossoms
  - Request for quotes from consultants imminent
- **Resignation of Andrew Upton as SHPC Attorney due to Licensing Commission conflict**
- **Planning for Preservation Month Events throughout May – Brandon**
  - Preliminary Calendar distribution tonight – please join us & encourage friends and neighbors!
- **Invitation #2 for “Historic” Participation in City’s Memorial Day Parade on Mon. May 29th**
- **Milk Row Cemetery Preservation Grant Project Update – Brandon**
  - Additional \$10,205 just awarded to the City for this project, for a total grant of \$55,205
  - Signage a-coming
  - Contractors on-site and working hard before June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline!!

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