

Somerville Historic Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Tuesday, September 26, 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: Michael Payne, Abby Freedman*, Jeff Meese*, Brad Stearns*. Susan Rabinowitz* arrived and Brad Stearns* left at 8:00 pm.

Members Absent: Dick Bauer, John Bunzick, Stephen Glines, Barbara Mangum, Cheryl Vanderbilt, David Guss*, DJ Chagnon*, Susan Fontano*, Derick Snare*.

Others Present: David Owens, Ron Mesard and Gretchen Rowe

The meeting was called to order at 6:50 pm.

Approval of HPC Minutes

Application: **HPC #06.52 – 28 Highland Avenue**

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

The Applicant seeks approval for the following:

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

Ron Mesard and David Owens presented their case. This was the first time that these owners have appeared before the Commission. They bought their condos from the developer, Jack Sennott Carroll who apparently did such shoddy work that much of it needed to be redone. Porch elements have rotted because poor quality materials were used. Siding needed to be replaced due to missing and rotted gutter. The newly constructed back porches either did not meet code or were pulling away from the building, and were therefore unsafe. They had trouble finding a contractor who was willing to take on the job, and the one they ultimately selected (John Correia) did not have English as a first language. He appears, however, to be conscientious and willing to do what is required, but has not provided any specific drawings.

Because much of the previous work had not been reviewed by the Commission, and was in violation of previously issued Certificates of Appropriateness, the Commission wanted to be sure that the proposed work was clearly described, both to protect the condo owners and to specify the basis of the Commission's final decisions that would then be passed onto the Inspectional Services Dept. The Staff noted that they had received verbal descriptions of the proposed porch reconstruction, but had received nothing in writing from the Contractor. Since the Condo Association has a very general contract regarding the scope of work, SHPC members advised them to request more specific information from the Contractor, such as materials, shapes and styles of the various elements.

The front porch should match those in the historic (2001) photograph of the building. These should not be too difficult to replicate. Brad Stearns gave several possible sources for the millwork needed to reconstruct the porch elements.

The Contractor had recommended that the Applicants' use fiberglass columns to replace the wood ones previously used for the back porch and were now splitting. The Commission noted that these were similar to vinyl siding in that they encased wood in a synthetic material that was inappropriate for an historic building. The Commission noted that the back porch style should draw on the front for styling but with simpler construction details. Brad Stearns volunteered to be on call for any advice that they needed.

*Michael Payne made a motion, seconded by Jeff Meese for a **Certificate of Appropriateness** to be granted to:*

- 1. Repair and replace rails, baluster and handrails in-kind on front porch to match existing on ground floor front and to match historic photograph on second floor front with details to reviewed and approved by Staff; and*
- 2. Install railing height on second floor to match the original height not the height of the replacement railings currently in place (see violation notice dated 7/31/02).*

The vote was unanimous (4-0).

Michael Payne made a motion, seconded by Jeff Meese to continue the meeting due to lack of information. The vote was unanimous (4-0). Therefore, the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the reconstruction and design of the back porch was continued until the next Commission's meeting on October 17, 2006 to give the Applicants time to work with their Contractor on the porch details before the Commission can make a final determination.

Demolition Reviews

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 | Determined Significant | Preferably Preserved |
| 03/14/06 | 03/21/06 | 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 | Determined Significant | Preferably Preserved |
| 04/20/06 | 09/16/03 | 05/16/06 |

Brad Stearns and Kristi Chase met with Mr. Mahoney and David Knuttunen, Structural Engineer on 7/25/06. The Staff has not heard from Mr. Mahoney or Mr. Knuttunen regarding the findings.

HPC #05.57 D– 280 Broadway – Update on proposed demolition of 1901 Elbridge Davis Carriage House

Applicant: Fred Camerato, Developer

Received
10/31/05

Determined Significant
11/15/05

Preferably Preserved
03/21/06

According to Attorney Richard DiGirolamo, his client Mr. Camerato did not find the meetings productive and therefore he is choosing to wait out the 9 months.

Demolition Reviews by Staff Since Last Meeting in August

HPC 06.50 – 135R Lexington Avenue, Corrugated Metal & Concrete Block Storage Shed

Applicant: Chris Poutahidis

Received: 08/18/06

Determined Not Significant:

HPC 06.48 – 17 Kidder Avenue, Concrete Block Garage

Applicant: Michael Chiu, Owner

Received: 08/25/06

Determined Not Significant:

Certificates of Non-Applicability Issued by the Staff

HPC#06.52 – 28 Highland Avenue

09/12/06

Applicant: David Owens, Trustee, 28 Highland Avenue Condominium Trust & John Raposa, Contractor

1. Repair and replace rails, baluster and handrails in-kind on front porch to match existing on ground floor front and to match historic photograph on second floor front;
2. Install railing height on second floor to match the original height, rather than the height of the replacement railings currently in place (see violation notice dated 7/31/02); and
3. Repaint as needed.

HPC#06.53 – 205 School Street

09/18/06

Applicants: Judith Wynn & Henry. Jung, Owners

1. Repair front porch in-kind including skirt, columns and ceiling.

Section 106 and FCC NEPA Reviews by Staff

None

Other Business - Project Updates

LHD Expansion Project - Review of Proposed Properties for LHD Designation and Preliminary Report of Consultant, and Final Vote Before Submission to MHC and Somerville Planning Board

The Staff noted that some additional properties that they recommend for consideration as part of this Preliminary Report on the LHD Expansion Project: Cota Funeral Home at 197 Washington Street, and the Union Square Post Office at 237 Washington Street.

The Commission held special meetings on September 11 and September 15th to review all of the properties proposed for LHD designation by their consultant, Ed Gordon. To familiarize the Commission with his recommendations Ed gave PowerPoint presentations on each of the properties, broken down by neighborhoods, and the Commissioners rated each property, based upon a number of

factors, such as the historical, architectural and cultural importance of the building; whether the building is part of a larger district or a critical part of the streetscape; and/or whether the building is endangered by the threat of irreversible alterations. The Commission used a chart previously prepared by LHD Subcommittee members, in order to standardize their evaluation criteria. Individual Commissioners who were not able to attend both of these review and evaluation meetings were able to come to City Hall to review and evaluate the properties on their own.

Abby Freedman and Brandon Wilson noted that the Preliminary Report was in draft form and still needed significant editing and reformatting before it should be submitted to any public review bodies. Abby volunteered to help with that effort. Due to the nearly 200 properties being proposed, not all of them could be fully assessed by the Commissioners, including some whose current owners had notified the Commission that they did not want to be designated, for various reasons. Based on this, Michael Payne made a motion, seconded by Abby Freedman, to fully accept the consultant's designation recommendations, with the caveat that those properties whose owners did not wish to be designated were to be more fully considered at the next special meeting of the Commission when more members could be part of this important discussion and after individual members had a chance to contact some of the dissenting owners directly to better understand the nature of their designation opposition. In the meantime the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to keep all of the consultant recommended properties on the list included within the Preliminary Report that would be submitted to the Planning Board and the Massachusetts Historical Commission for their review and consideration during a maximum 60-day period.

- **Historic Plaque Program – Brandon and Katherine**
 - Ordering of any plaques is on hold until the demand is fully determined among both prior and pending LHD property owners. Funds to subsidize this program expansion will come from continuing sale of the “Preserving Somerville” memorabilia. (See item below).
- **Milk Row Cemetery Preservation Grant Project Update – Brandon**
 - The MHC Grant portion of the overall Cemetery preservation project has been completed within budget and on time. The Final Project Report has been submitted to the MHC, and reimbursement of funds to the City is being processed. Other outstanding items for this phase 1 of the Master Plan execution are: repairing of the eastern stone wall and restoration of the perimeter fencing (awaiting final deliberations with DeMoulas Market Basket, their contractor and City personnel); site signage (awaiting SHPC and its Staff resolution of text and design with DeMoulas); and treatment of the Heritage Elm tree (awaiting SHPC and its Staff discussions with the State DCR grant staff).
- **Preservation Awards T-shirt Project Update – Brandon and Katherine**
 - A new order of “Preserving Somerville” T-shirts, tank tops, and tote bags has recently been placed as the first order of 100 shirts sold out within three months! Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage has agreed to be the sponsor of this second and much larger order, and it was decided that they, as well as ERA Norton Realty (prior order sponsor) and Century Bank (sponsor of Preservation Awards Framing Project for past 3 years) will be credited as part of the slightly modified streetscape design. The Staff expects to be marketing this merchandise, as well as upcoming SHPC sponsored events, at the Union

Square Farmer's Market in September and October, which have been very well attended by people from throughout the Boston area.

- **LHD Repair & Maintenance Loan Program Proposal – Brad**
 - Kristi has made some headway, but is still working on the draft criteria to be proposed to Citizen's Bank. Brandon has recently done some preliminary research on a similar program being offered in the City of Boston, and Katherine will be following up shortly to better understand the funding formulas and lessons learned. The Staff hopes to present a more detailed report for the Subcommittee's review and discussion at the next meeting.

- **Draft Demolition by Neglect Ordinance**
 - The Law Department has presented a very preliminary draft to the HPC and its Staff for review and comment before proceeding. Michael has pointed out that the draft is very sketchy and needs more specific provisions before comments are appropriate. The Staff has not had time to research and provide any specific provisions to the Assistant City Solicitor yet.

- **Recently Past/Upcoming Preservation Outreach Events – Brandon**
 - **Prospect Hill/Union Square Walking Tour** led by Edward Gordon, architectural historian & President of Victorian Society of New England, was held on Saturday, September 16th from 2-4 pm. Nearly 30 people from Somerville and other nearby communities participated, and the Borges Family, owners of the Neighborhood Bakery on Bow St., sponsored a very generous array of appetizers and drinks for everyone. The tour was free, due to funding for the leader from the Mass Cultural Council through a 2006 ArtsUnion Grant.
 - Historic Somerville, in concert with the Somerville Museum, is sponsoring a major exhibit about Medal of Honor winner **George Dilboy and Greek immigration to Somerville**. The exhibit will be on display at the Museum from this fall until the end of next March, and will be accompanied by related events, including a Gala Dinner-Dance at the 57 Ballroom in downtown Boston on Sunday, October 8th, and a Cabaret with The Greek Music Ensemble on Sunday, October 22nd at the Dormition Greek Orthodox Church on Central Street in Somerville. For more details call the Somerville Museum at 617-666-9810.
 - **Davis Square to Powderhouse Tour** given by Ed Gordon, President of the Victorian Society, New England chapter 2:00 – 4:00 pm on Sunday October 15, 2006 starting and ending at the Somerville Theatre at 55 Davis Square Theatre management will be offering a tour of the recent renovations of the historic interior, as well as light refreshments at the conclusion of the tour.
 - The **Second Annual Ghosts of Somerville** will be sponsored by Historic Somerville, in collaboration with the Commission and the Somerville Arts Council, on Sunday, Oct. 29th. More details to follow.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

Schedule of remaining SHPC meetings for 2006: Held on the third Tuesday of every month: October 17, November 21, and December 19.