

## ORDINANCE #2734-24-0506

### AUTHORIZING A STANDING HISTORIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor of Somerville originally established the annually appointed an *ad hoc* Historic Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as HAC) in 1994 to conserve, promote, preserve, and make accessible public information about the people, places, and events that comprise the shared heritage of all Somerville residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the HAC has served as an advisory committee over three mayoral administrations and continues to advise the Mayor and Council on preservation and conservation issues related to the Daniel Robert House, Somerville's historic municipal building, and other real historic assets and issues; and

**WHEREAS**, the HAC has proved successful in achieving its initial goals by 1) placing Somerville's Municipal building on the State and National Registers, 2) annually participating in Somerset County's sponsored annual "Weekend Journey" heritage event, 3) creating and updating a history and tourism tab for the Borough's website with the assistance of the Borough's media consultant; 4) published two books on Somerville's history [*Images of America: Somerville* (Arcadia Press, 1998) and *The County's Handsomest House: The Story of an American Gothic Classic* (KDP, 2020)]; 4) creating and periodically updating an inventory of all plaques and monuments on public property; 5) worked with the County Library system to create a digital archive of Borough history and photographs in the Somerville branch library's James Sommerville New Jersey Room; 6) maintaining a list of all Somerville Mayors and Councilpersons since 1909; and .

**WHEREAS**, the HAC continues to seek out funding for the conservation and preservation of the historic interior and exterior of Borough Hall, raising to date more than half a million dollars in grant funds to assist the Borough with preservation efforts; thereby sustaining the Borough's ability to have a working, publicly accessible historic site; and

**WHEREAS**, as Somerville continues to advocate for compatible, sensitive, and appropriate development as well as the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of architecturally significant buildings in the Borough, to seek informed, historically informed advice from residents who are knowledgeable about Somerville's history and current preservation opportunities at the county, state, and national level is increasingly necessary for Somerville's and the Planning Board's benefit; and

**WHEREAS** the mission and scope of responsibility of HAC need to be formally codified.

### **NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. the HAC is authorized to continue in its advisory role to the Mayor, Council, and the Planning Board as a standing committee of the Somerville Borough government. Up to 10, two-year staggered Committee appointments will be made by the

Mayor with Council approval with no limits on re-appointment. A member of HAC shall serve as Somerville's municipal representative to the county's Cultural and Heritage Commission's Municipal Advisory Committee. HAC is not a historic commission and will have no independent fiscal or regulatory authority.

Section 2. Members shall be Somerville residents, Borough employees, or Somerville business owners with interest in the preservation, and/or, document, artifact conservation, heritage education, architecture, heritage tourism, or who have enthusiasm for Somerville history. Formal training or experience in library science, museum services, education, archaeology, communication media, or preservation, or architecture are welcome, but not necessary for membership.

Section 3. HAC shall continue *"to promote, protect, and preserve the historic heritage, character, artifacts, and architecture of the Borough of Somerville, and to encourage remembrance of historic events by the Borough, to educate the public, and to advise the Mayor, Council, Administration and the Planning Board on historic matters."*

Section 4. The scope of HAC activities shall include but not be limited to:

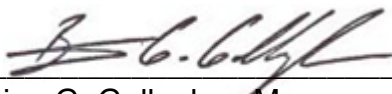
- Advice and comment on all proposed interior and exterior work and structural alterations to Somerville Borough Hall, the National Register site known as "The Daniel Robert House", to ensure that the US Secretary of Interior's standards are adhered to in managing the building as required by the National Register.
- Maintaining and periodically updating the list of state and nationally recognized properties in the Borough accessible on the website.
- Maintaining and periodically updating an inventory of plaques, monuments, and public art in the Borough for insurance and replacement purposes on behalf of the Borough Administration.
- Maintaining a list of all Borough Mayors with biographical sketches and Councilpersons since 1909 for use by the Administrator, our public school system, or the public on request.
- Review and make recommendations regarding the acceptance and retention of any historic documents, photographs, artwork, or artifacts by the Borough in the Somerville branch Library's New Jersey Room Archive, owned by the Borough but managed in cooperation with the Somerset County Library System.
- Advise the Mayor and Council when it is appropriate and desirable for the Borough to apply for County, State, and Federal funds to support preservation projects in the Borough.

Section 5. The current administrative policy requiring the HAC to review any plans to dispose of any Borough property more than 50 years-old shall be continued by the Borough Administrator.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, that if any portion of this Ordinance shall be declared invalid as a matter of law, such declaration shall not affect the remainder of said Ordinance.

**BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED**, that this Ordinance shall take effect upon passage and publication.

Introduction: May 6, 2024  
First Publication: May 10, 2024  
Adoption: May 20, 2024  
Final Publication: May 24, 2024

  
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Brian G. Gallagher, Mayor

  
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Kevin Sluka, Clerk/Administrator