



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site: 27 Columbus Avenue c.1892 Julia Gustin
Case: HPC 2016.078 Single Building Local Historic District

Applicant Name: Peter Sisk, Owner
Applicant Address: 27 Columbus Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: September 28, 2016

Legal Notice: *Replace one 70's-era casement window in 2nd floor street-facing side and one 70's era sliding glass window on 3rd floor with one-over-one double hung windows.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness

Date of Public Hearing: October 18, 2016

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION: from the Form B.

The use of various construction shapes create an interesting asymmetrical plan in this 1893 Queen Anne house. The butt shingJ.es and slate roof give make an interesting textural effect. The two and one-half story dwelling has a hipped roof, cross gables, round corner tower with conical roof, an accentuated, large, pedimented dormer within a castellated third story balcony, and an enclosed entrance porch with full sidelights flanking the door over which there is a sunburst fanlike design.

Located on the north side of Columbus -Avenue at the head of Bonner Street, the house is a focal point when approaching from Union Square.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

Prospect Hill, one of the most substantial residential neighborhoods of Somerville, evolved throughout the late 19th century. Prior to that it was an agricultural community of farms - Columbus Avenue, once known as Warren Avenue, ran from Walnut to Bonner Street until the 1870s when it was continued through Bonner property to Washington Street. Its proximity to Union Square a center for commercial and transportation activity made it a desirable place to live. Columbus Avenue was and is half way to the top of Prospect Hill.

This property had been part, of a large tract of land owned by William Bonner and -later his sons, Charles and George Bonner. In the l870s, many plans for subdivision were made including Bonner land. However, it was not until 1892 that Herbert S. and Julia Gustin purchased this lot from William H. Bonner. Gustin was a commercial merchant selling produce in Boston's Faneuil Hall.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION*1. Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Replace one 70's-era casement window in 2nd floor street-facing side and
2. Replace one 70-s era sliding glass window on 3rd floor with one-over-one double hung windows.

To quote the Applicant in their 2010 Application, "The windows appear to date from the 1970's or 1980's and are completely out of character with the rest of the house and very cheaply made. The second floor window is a casement whose mechanism has fallen apart and the third floor window is a glass slider that is in poor condition and leaks. I want to replace the second floor window with a standard Marvin double-hung sash and the third floor window with a pair of narrow glass doors that will open onto the third floor balcony. I would need to build a low railing around the balcony to bring the parapet up to a safe height. The construction of the railing is to be in character with the house (I will provide cuts or photos of all proposed materials).

"The problem of the third floor window or door opening onto the balcony is more difficult than I had originally imagined. Indeed, I have no idea how this area of the house was originally constructed. It is clear that the current sliding window is both grossly out of character with the house and is a relatively recent addition. I am hoping that the discussion with the Historical Commission will clarify what can and ought to be done to replace this window with construction that is in character with the house and meets our needs.

"The window on the second floor would seem to be a much simpler issue. The existing unit is a replacement apparently dating from the 1970's. It is a crank-operated casement whose mechanism is so badly broken that we can no longer operate it at all. I hope to have guidance from the Commission as to what sort of window would be an acceptable replacement."

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS*1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

2002.039 27 Columbus Avenue C/NA, C/A

1. Remove driveway, widening it by 1'6" on the house side of the driveway, and the concrete apron in yard in front of the stable;
2. Replace them with concrete pavers similar to a cobble and new retaining wall in an antique rustic pattern Versa-Lok® bricks; and
3. Add iron railings of the simplest design, to be mounted on either the cheek wall of the steps or the steps, to meet building code requirements.
4. Remove window in laundry room;
5. Remove privet hedge from front yard; and
6. Install a new combination screen/storm door on front porch, and re-insert sidelights.

2010.086 27 Columbus Avenue C/A

1. Replace casement window on 2nd floor front with a single-pane 2/1 double-hung window to match the other second floor windows; and
2. Replace 1970s glass slider window on the 3rd floor with a glass multi-pane window to be reviewed and approved by the Staff.

1. Precedence:

- Are there similar properties / proposals?
 1. Replace one 70's-era casement window in 2nd floor street-facing side and
 2. Replace one 70-s era sliding glass window on 3rd floor with one-over-one double hung windows.
- No cases of the replacement of similar windows have been found.

2. Considerations:

- What is the visibility of the proposal?

The windows are on the front of the house on the second and third floors.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

The existing windows are of a much later style inappropriate to a Queen Anne style house. The proposed windows have not been submitted to the Staff for evaluation. See photos at the end of the document.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

GENERAL APPROACH

The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.

- A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*
- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*
- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*
- E. *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.*
- F. *The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.*

The windows were not discussed in the Form B. The deteriorated windows are not original to the building and should be replaced with a more historically appropriate configuration. No historic features will be replaced or altered. The original window styles are not known although it is likely that the sash had a 2/1 or 1/1 configuration. The windows are visible from the public right of way.

C. Windows and Doors

1. *Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.*
2. *Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence. If aluminum windows must be installed, select a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim. Investigate weather-stripping and storm windows with a baked enamel finish as an alternative to the replacement of historic sash.*

There is no intent to alter the openings. Interior photos show the bull's eye corner blocks and railroad casing to be different on each window. The second floor casing appears to be a replacement while the third floor casing appears to be original. This is a case where one original opening is unknown. If the sizing is correct, it is likely that it was a Queen Anne window. This would have had small colored panes surrounding a large clear glass pane. If the opening was made smaller to hold the existing sash, it is likely that the window was double-hung and rose to the stringcourse on the second floor similar to the other windows on that floor. The third floor window may have been a decorative Queen Anne window that fit the existing casing.

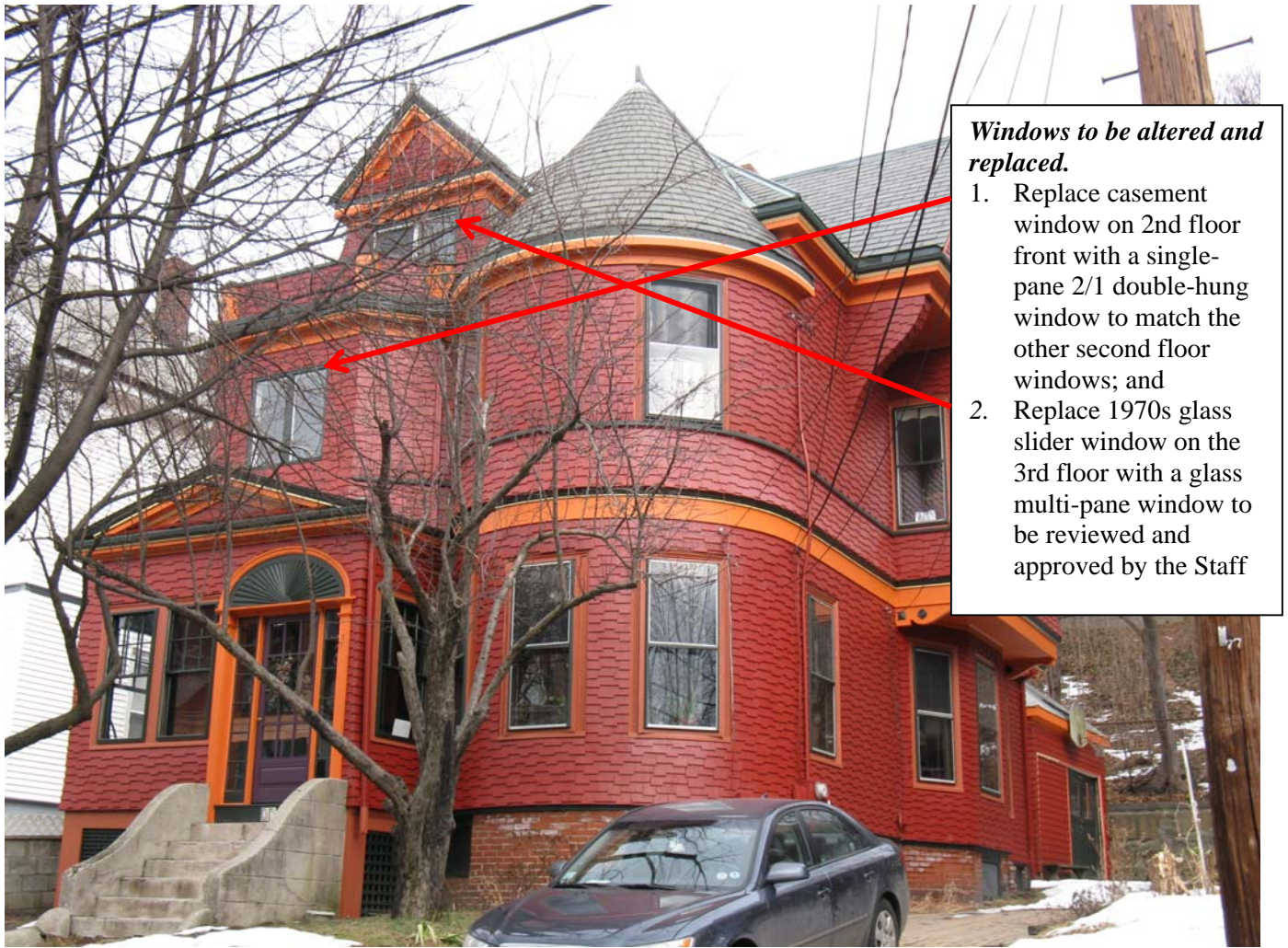
III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the 27 Columbus Avenue Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Peter Sisk a Certificate of Appropriateness** with the following conditions.

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. If changes are necessary to the proposed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
3. Replace casement window on 2nd floor front with a single-pane 2/1 double-hung window to match the other second floor windows; and
4. Replace 1970s glass slider window on the 3rd floor with a glass multi-pane window to be reviewed and approved by the Staff.
5. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that it was executed in accordance with this Certificate and approved plans.





Windows to be altered and replaced.

1. Replace casement window on 2nd floor front with a single-pane 2/1 double-hung window to match the other second floor windows; and
2. Replace 1970s glass slider window on the 3rd floor with a glass multi-pane window to be reviewed and approved by the Staff