



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 / District(s): 25-35 Atherton Street Carr School LHD, Spring Hill NRDIS, NRIND
Case: HPC 2013.037

Applicant Name: Sara-Ann Patterson, Trustee for Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust
Applicant Address: 25-35 Atherton Street

Date of Application: May 30, 2013
Legal Notice: *Replace slate roof with EcoStar™ Majestic Slate™; and replace flashing with copper*

Staff Recommendation: Denial of Certificate of Appropriateness; Issuance of Certificate of Non-Applicability
Date of Public Hearing: July 16, 2013

I. Building Description

Architectural Description: The Martin W. Carr School of 1898 is a mixture of Renaissance and Colonial Revival Style architecture designed by Aaron Gould. The three-story brick building faces south on Atherton Street, two short blocks from the busy arterial of Somerville Avenue. The freestanding building is situated on a level site on the southern slope of Spring Hill, and is set back from Atherton Street.

The school is surrounded mostly by parking in a relatively intact residential neighborhood with stylish mid-nineteenth century single-family houses and later two-family and few apartment buildings. The H-shaped school is finished entirely with red brick with a granite foundation.



25-35 Atherton Street

Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel: Located in a residential district on the south side of Spring Hill. The Carr School was converted from a school to 19 rental units in the early 1980's and later into a condominium complex. The entire building is under preservation restrictions for portions of the interior as well as the exterior. It is a well-designed and preserved example of Renaissance and Colonial Revival institutional architecture, and is one of the few surviving works of local architect Aaron H. Gould in Somerville. Built on the site of the earlier Spring Hill Primary School (1850) and the First Baptist Church (1852), it has associations with

the development of the Spring Hill area, one of Somerville's earliest residential \ subdivisions (1847-). As an imposing public building, it reflects the expansion of City facilities to meet the strong population growth at the turn of the century.

The Carr School was opened in 1898 to serve as a 14-room grade school. Two additional rooms were devoted to manual training facilities used by upper grades. The Carr was the first H-plan school in Somerville. This modern plan allowed maximum light and air into the classrooms. Gould's Ellis School (1898) and the Kelley School (1902, razed) both in Cambridge were similarly designed. Although originally considered spacious, the School Report of 1901 noted that the building was already becoming seriously crowded. When opened, the Carr was one of 24 schools in the city and accommodated 700 pupils. Somerville's schools served a population which rose from 40,152 in 1890 to 61,643 in 1900.

Martin W. Carr (1829-1902), for whom the building is named, was president of M. W. Carr and Company, a Somerville jewelry manufacturing firm with a national market. Carr served as an alderman and as a member of the School Committee. He lived on Craigie Street, at the edge of the Spring Hill neighborhood.

The immediate area was platted in the mid-nineteenth century as a railroad commuter's neighborhood, intended primarily for Boston businessmen by George O Brastow. The Carr School was among the last additions to the area. The Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Second Empire Style single-family houses which surround the school site are testament to Spring Hill's early period of significance. Opposite the school to the south is the "Round House" built by inventor Enoch Robinson in 1856.

The turn of the century brought a substantial number of two and three-family houses and a significant increase in public building, particularly schools. The Carr School is one of the few unaltered survivors of this period.

Aaron H. Gould (1865-19) was born in Nova Scotia. Trained as a carpenter, he worked on large hotel and residential projects in Maine and in the South before moving to Somerville in the 1890s. He resided at 50 Columbus Avenue, in a Colonial Revival house of his own design, and maintained an office "there and at 42 Court Street, Boston. Gould was responsible for major public projects in Somerville including the now-razed Central Fire Station (1895) and the City Stables and Water Department (1898). He was also the architect of the Drouet and Richmond Blocks on Bow Street in Union Square.

II. Project Description

Proposal of Alteration: The Applicant would like to replace their slate roof with Sage green blend EcoStar Majestic synthetic slate and installing snow guards rather than repairing the entire roof.

III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

<i>1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:</i>				
2003.02	Eric Shediak, Garo Development Corporation	C/A, denial	02/14/03	1. Open five (5) bricked-up basement windows; 2. Install 4/4 hopper style, insulated, clear glass windows consistent with the original windows in order to convert existing basement space to a two-bedroom condominium unit; and 3. Create a two-car parking area for same

2003.08	Eric Shediak, Garo Development Corporation	C/A	03/03/03	1. Re-open a sixth bricked-up basement window; 2. Install insulated frosted glass window that would service a bathroom in order to convert existing basement space to a two-bedroom condominium unit; and 3. Create a two-car parking area off Cleveland Street for same with landscape improvements.
2003.40	Eric Shediak, Architect for Garo Development Corporation	C/A	09/22/03	1. Install brick paving instead of a previously approved brushed aggregate surface on a parking pad on Cleveland Street side of building.
2006.15	BJ Roberts Management, Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust	C/NA	03/14/06	1. Repair slate roof in-kind; 2. Repair and replace copper chimney cap in-kind.
2006.43	Carr School Condominium Trust	C/NA	07/28/06	1. Repair slate roof in-kind; 2. Install ice & water shield; 3. Replace copper valleys and panels as needed; 4. Install copper eave apron on interior side of building; and 5. Install snow rails.

2. *Precedence:* There have been *only 2 cases* where an existing slate roof was replaced with another material. In both cases, the replacement roof was to be returned to true slate at the end of its life, 25-40 years, giving the owners time to plan for the needed replacement.

These cases are:

18 Summit Avenue (2010) due to the condition of the Pennsylvania slate which tends to be the "soft" slate with a life expectancy of 75-125 years and was have limited to a single property on the Aldersey-Summit Local Historic District with the condition that *"When the time comes for replacement, slate shingles must be used to match the currently existing ones."*

53-55 Meacham Road (2012) when an error had been made by Inspectional Services Division which could not be undone without great cost, and was have limited to a single property on the Meacham Road-Campbell Park Local Historic District. A **Certificate of Hardship** was granted on the following contingent upon the following conditions:

2. At the time when the owner of this property seeks to replace the roof of this structure, *the owner must replace the roof with slate to match the existing slate* on the rear of the building.
3. The applicant shall file a certified copy of this certificate with the Southern Middlesex Registry of Deeds to provide notice to future owners of the conditional approval of this certificate.
4. A copy of the receipt from the Southern Middlesex Registry of Deeds shall be filed with the City Clerk and with the Historic Preservation Commission.

The only use of EcoStar Majestic slate has been on the **Bow Street Police Station at 50 Bow Street**. *This was for new construction*. Its use was to give indication that this was not the historic roof but a modern reconstruction similar to the roof that had originally been there. In this case, the roof is slightly lower than the original, the brick was of similar but not identical color to the original, the chimneys are shorter, and the cresting was not a replication of the original.

1. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?* The roof of this building is visible from all near-by streets and at a distance as the building is located on Spring Hill a couple of short blocks from Somerville Avenue. It should be noted that due to the pitch of the roof, it becomes less visible, the closer one stands to the building.



- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?* This 20 unit condominium trust has been maintaining the building for years repairing small portions of the roof at a time. However, according to an undated inspection by Morgan K Cohen Company Inc., house inspectors.

“The slate roofing has several slates that are damaged, dislodged, cracked, and broken. Damaged slates and improper repairs were observed on all sides of the roof, throughout the roof. This condition can cause water infiltration and deterioration to the roof and roof framing. Signs of ongoing leakage were observed in the attic and on ceilings in top floor level units. Daylight was also observed through the roof structure in the upper portion of the roof at the center area. Repair is recommended. Consult a roofing contractor that specializes in slate roof repairs. This is a significant project, which will need to include setting up staging surrounding the building during the time period when this work is being completed.

“The slate roofing is aged and has reached its average life expectancy. Slates may continue to crack, loosen, or fall from the roof. Falling slates are a safety hazard in addition to resulting in damage and possible leakage to the roofing. This type of roofing should have regular evaluation and repair as needed by a slate roofer, and you should expect ongoing repairs, and to replace this roof in the medium term future.

“This roofing has many areas of flashing, and much of it is in need of replacement. Cap flashings are bent and pulling up, valley flashings are worn, chimney flashings are poorly repaired and in need of replacement, as well as have daylight observed from inside attic area. Additionally, snow guards and ice clips on the roof are deteriorated, loose, and damaged. This is a significant project that should be completed at the same time as roof repairs as indicated in comment 2.0

“Gutters are aged and worn. Holes in gutters were observed on the west side of the building in several areas. There are areas on the ground below the inside corners of the gutters that show signs of ongoing overflow. Repair is recommended. This is a significant repair, because copper gutters will need to be replaced or re-lined. It is also recommended that diverter flashings be added at the inside corners of the gutters to help reduce overflow at these areas.”

Staff gave a list of 9 slate roof contractors to evaluate the condition of the roof. Only one slate roofer, Joe Squillante, Inc inspected the roof and evaluated its repair. He found that:

- “1. Approximately 2,000 slates in various areas are missing.
- “2. All chimney flashing is no good.
- “3. 60% of snow rails at the stage of being extremely "dangerous".
- “4. 50% of all existing valleys pitted and full of holes.
- “5. Existing gutters also pitted with multiple holes.
- “6. All underlayment has deteriorated or have possibly never been installed.”

The Applicants believe that repairing small portions of the roof at a time have been ineffective and costly. It would be better to rip off the entire roof and replace it as a whole. The cost would be less to replace the roof with synthetic slate rather than to repair it.

The primary purpose of the Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Local Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the architectural heritage of the City. Guidelines have been developed to ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely affect their present architectural integrity.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*
This alteration does not meet HPC Guidelines for appropriateness.
 - 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.*
The slate roof is a major alteration of character defining feature mentioned on the Form B.
 - B. *Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept).*
 - C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.* The Applicants have received a quote for extensive repairs of the roof. This is a viable option. It would cost a few thousand dollars more per unit.
 - D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.* The proposed synthetic slate is based upon the existing material but does not have all the properties of the original material.
 - 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.* While the synthetic slates are cast from real slate and come in several different molds and colors. The color is not the same as the original slate and does not have the same sheens in all weathers. Improper installation can lead to cupping and bowing.

*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.** This feature of the building is highly visible.*

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines? No, it does not.*

B. Roofs

1. ***Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.** The roof shape has not been altered.*
2. ***Retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.*** No information has been received as to why the roof slates are failing.
3. ***Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.*** The proposed synthetic slate does not match the original slate in terms of composition, color, shape, size or texture. The installation techniques are also different. While the synthetic slates are cast from real slate and come in several different molds and colors. The color is not the same as the original slate and does not have the same sheens in all weathers. Improper installation can lead to cupping and bowing.
4. ***Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*** These other architectural features are being retained.
5. ***New dormers will be permitted if they are related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors. If possible, new dormers should be confined to the rear of the house.*** No dormers have been installed.
6. ***Skylights with flat profiles may be installed on the rear of the property.*** No skylights have been added.
7. ***Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.*** No new utility equipment has been added to the main visible façade of the building.

With the exception of the gutter and flashing repairs, the work proposed is **not appropriate.**

The proposed alteration also does not meet the guidelines for a Certificate of Hardship. *Under the Massachusetts General Law, the granting of a certificate of hardship will be based on "conditions especially affecting the building or structure involved, but not affecting the historic district generally." In other words, the hardship must be unique to the applicant's property and affect it in a particular manner. It cannot constitute a condition which generally afflicts other property within the district. For instance, a fire escape may be essential on a particular building in order to keep the building up to fire safety codes.*

That would be a specific condition affecting a particular building and might warrant the granting of a certificate of hardship. A certificate of hardship for vinyl siding is not a specific condition affecting a particular building. All the buildings in the district have the same condition - they all need protection from the weather and vinyl siding is inappropriate on all buildings found in the district. The majority of the buildings with slate roofs of the same age have not requested this alteration. The condition is not unique to this building. The removal of the original slate roof is inconsistent with the intent of MGL 40C.

"Under Massachusetts General Law chapter 40C, the approval of a certificate ... should not have "substantial detriment to the public welfare" or "substantial derogation from the intent and purposes" of MGL Chapter 40C. According to the purpose section of MGL 40C, local historic districts are "to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the preservation and protection of the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the commonwealth and its cities and towns or their architecture, and through the maintenance and improvement of settings for such buildings and places and the encouragement of design compatible therewith." For instance, the removal of architectural trim would not promote the welfare of the public and would derogate from the intent of MGL Chapter 40C.

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 Bow Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission deny Sara-Ann Patterson, Trustee for Carr Schoolhouse Condominium Trust a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace slate roof with EcoStar™ Majestic Slate™ in "sage green"; and replace flashing with copper on 25-35 Atherton Street but rather issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability to remove and reinstall the slate roof in-kind using existing or matching true slate to replace the roof with new underlayments and long lasting nails.**





Sustainable Roofing



Majestic Slate



Environmentally friendly synthetic slate roofing tiles proudly made in the USA



Majestic Slate



Historically, natural slate is one of the most appealing roofing choices, combining unmatched durability with aesthetic appeal. The cost of natural slate, as well as its weight and difficulty in finding a qualified slate installer, often makes its use prohibitive. EcoStar LLC, the leading manufacturer of premium synthetic steep-slope roofing products, combines classic appeal with modern technology to offer the lightweight and affordable alternative – Majestic Slate™.

Created with recycled rubber and plastics, Majestic Slate offers a sustainable, lighter and easy-to-install roofing product that provides the appearance of natural slate with lower application costs. Available in two widths and designer accents, this slate alternative offers endless possibilities for residential and commercial projects. The architectural detail of a project, whether historic or new construction, is further enhanced by a wide range of available color combinations using the palette of 11 standard color choices and array of custom options.

Curb appeal is everything when it comes to the look of your home, but protection from the elements must be a priority. Majestic Slate offers both.

Majestic Slate Color Palette



Note: Sample pieces, photographs or color samples may not accurately represent the true color level or variations of color blends that will appear on the roof. Before installation, ten tiles or so should be laid out and reviewed for conformity to desired color level. If color levels are unsatisfactory, advise your dealer before proceeding with installation. Colors and specifications subject to change without notice. EcoStar is not liable for color variations or shading. Tiles must be randomly blended for best results. Limited warranties carry terms and conditions. *Significant property insurance discounts may be available when upgrading or building a roof to protect against hail, wind or fire damage in regions where severe weather is common. EcoStar tiles meet or exceed industry standards for Impact Resistance and Fire Resistance. Contact your insurance provider for details.

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See www.ecostarllc.com for available warranties
P/N-602689 ECO-MAJESTIC SLATE CUT SHEETS

Advantages

- Weighs significantly less than natural slate
- Easy application keeps installation costs down
- Significant property insurance discounts may be available when upgrading or building a roof to protect against hail, wind or fire*

Architectural Flexibility

- Majestic Slate widths 12" and 10" can be blended together to create texture and depth
- Majestic Slate Designer Series may also be included to add personal style to your home
- Staggered and offset installations can also enhance roof texture and depth
- Available in 11 standard color choices and an array of custom colors
- Natural appearance of real slate roofing
- Enhance the historical look in both residential and commercial buildings

Strength & Durability

- Formulated to provide improved durability and superior protection from extreme weather conditions that include wind, hail and driving rain
- Significant life cycle savings

Warranty Options

- 50-Year Limited Material Warranty available
- 50-Year Gold Star Labor & Material Warranty available
- 110 mph Wind Warranty available

Environmental Sustainability



- Manufactured with post-industrial recycled rubber and plastics

Technical Information

- UL listed Class A fire resistance (UL 790)
- UL listed Class C fire resistance (UL 790)
- UL listed wind resistance to 110 mph (D3161)
- UL Class 4 impact resistance (UL 2218)
- Prolonged UV Exposure (ASTM G155)
- ICC-ES, AC07 approved (ESR-1715)
- Contributes to LEED® points
- Manufactured in strict adherence to ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management



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