



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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Address: 83 Boston Street
Case: HPC 2014.082
Applicant: James & Dina Traniello

Date of Application: September 26, 2014
Legal Notice: *Install 2 new fences*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness
Date of Public Hearing: October 21, 2014



I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

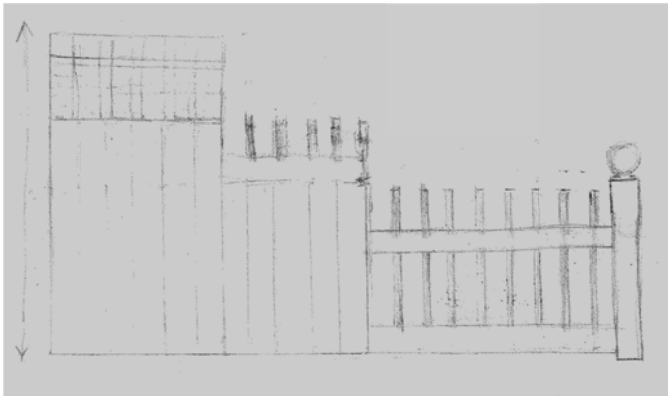
Architectural Description: The following italicized text is predominantly from the survey Form B. *Situated on the north side of Boston Avenue near the top of Prospect Hill, the large and elaborate Queen Anne house has a steeply pitched hipped roof on the main block with a three story corner turret, which has a slate covered conical scalloped slate roof. There are two large gable dormers (one on the main facade and one on the east side), projecting from the roof of the main block. The wide wrap entrance porch has a pediment with an applied scroll and leaf design and spindle screening which is repeated on the large porte-cochere on the east side of the house. Other details include the turnip top metal piece on the tower, the latticed sash on top floor windows, the turned posts of the porch and porte-cochere, and the large brick Queen Anne chimneys. The house is built on a fieldstone block foundation, and is sheathed in shingles.*

Historical Context: The following text is predominantly from the survey Form B. *The property is one of several large single family houses built on Prospect Hill in the late 1800s. It is a fine example of an elaborate Queen Anne Style house popular among prosperous businessmen of the area. Much of the land of Prospect Hill was subdivided and developed in the 1880s and 1890s. This parcel has part of the Hollander estate on Boston Avenue. IN 1891 the estate of Maria T. Hollander was subdivided and this lot was sold to J. Abbott Clark who in the next year built this house and sold to Jennie Ayer Marden, wife of Frank W. Marden in 1892. The house was built on a large 10,000 square foot lot between two existing Hollander houses. City Directories state that Marden worked in oils on Purchase Street in Boston. Thus he was one of the many prosperous commuters who moved to Prospect Hill during the late 19th century building boom.*

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposal of Alteration:

The Applicant proposes to install two types of fencing (picket and stockade), each with a different height. The 4' picket fencing would be most visible located along the right and left sides of the parcel, beginning at the front property line and extending toward the rear for approximately 50 feet. The transitional fencing panel would be approximately 8' in length and be similar to the middle picture below. Please also refer to the sketch below. The Applicant proposes that this transitional piece would have similar curvature as the turret and the bottom would be solid while the top would continue the rhythm of pickets. Staff recommends a transitional piece that is either picket or stockade. This transitional piece would be located approximately where the existing porte-cochere is located, and would be less visible due to vegetation. The 6' stockade fencing would begin at the rear of the transitional component and extend to the rear property line of the parcel, which is minimal to not visible due to the dwelling and rear garage.



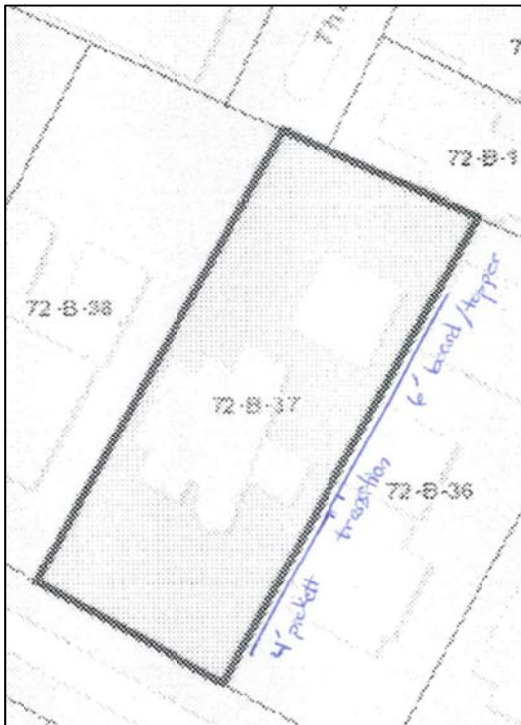
*Top Left: Proposed 4' fence
Top Middle: Similar to transitional component proposed
Top Right: Proposed 6' fence
Left: Sketch of transitional component*

III. FINDINGS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed: Certificates of Appropriateness and Non-Applicability have been issued for numerous repairs and alterations over the years by prior homeowners.

- September 2010, a Certificate of Appropriateness was granted to remove the existing wood shingle siding and a Certificate of Non-Applicability was granted to repair/replace clapboards, shingles, batten boards, windows and trim pieces.
- December 2012, a Certificate of Non-Applicability was issued to repair and replace the finial on the front turret.

Precedence: The Commission has approved several fencing requests over the years. Often, these requests were for one type of fencing, but several did request 4' and 6' heights as appropriate to the front and rear portions of the property along with a transitional panel. The Applicant has identified in the diagram where the two heights would be located as well as the transitional panel.



Left: Parcel plan with fencing locations

- *Visibility:* The 4' fencing will be highly visible along the Boston streetscape and is similar to the existing picket fence; while the transitional and 6' fencing will be less visible due to the dwelling and garage blocking views of the rear portion of the site, these will likely be most visible in the winter months.
- *Existing Conditions:* The house is located on Boston Street and the previous certificates that have been issued note that the homeowners are slowly restoring the dwelling back to original photographs.
- *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 guidelines 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.

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 architectural features will not be altered. The fencing proposed is similar to the existing fencing located nearest the streetscape. The transitional piece proposed will have elements of both the picket and stockade fencing and would be less visible. Staff recommends either a picket or stockade transitional element. The 6' fencing would be minimally visible due to the location of the dwelling and garage.

Typical Fence Guidelines for historic districts:

Fences are prominent landscape features and should be constructed in a manner and design that is sensitive to the character of the historic structure and district.

1. *Natural materials should be used for fences and walls especially those that can be seen from the street. Appropriate materials are wood, brick, stone and cast iron. Wood fencing should be stained or painted to match the house trim. Materials and style should blend with buildings, walls and fences found in the neighborhood.*
2. *Fences should not be used to screen front yards, rather front yard fences should be open and decorative in nature.*

The fencing proposed would retain the character of the district as the fence would be composed of wood and not obstruct views of the historic dwelling. Additionally, the 6' fencing would be minimally visible from the streetscape.

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 83 Boston Street Local Historic District. Therefore, Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission grant James & Dina Traniello a Certificate of Appropriateness to install 4', 6', and transitional fencing in accordance with the picket and stockade style proposed; **Staff also recommends the transitional panel be either of the picket or stockade style to match one of the two proposed fencing types.** This alteration would not be "incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the historic district."



83 Boston Street