

From: Kristi Chase, Preservation Planner, and  
Brandon Wilson Executive Director,  
RE: Recommendation for 10/18/11

Application: **HPC 11.100 – 91 Boston Street, - 1850, Edwin & Benjamin Munroe House** 9/27/11  
Applicant: Gail Perry Borden, Daughter of Irene and Frederick J. Lund for Life, Owners

Historic and Architectural Significance

See attached survey form.

Existing Conditions

This house has not been maintained for many years. The late Frederick J. Lund held this house as his pride for many years. The porch has recently been repaired and new railings added. These have the narrow turned wood balusters readily available at Home Depot. The existing gutters are wood on three sides of the house and missing on the fourth. The porch has metal gutters. All the gutters are in poor condition and need to be replaced. All the windows have the hardware for shutters but many of shutters are broken and missing.



Proposed Work and Recommendations

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriate** for the following:

1. Replace missing and rotted wood gutters on roof with aluminum K-style gutters;
2. Replace K-style aluminum gutters on porch roof with wood gutters;
3. Install new porch balusters and railings; and
4. Remove rotted and damaged wood shutters.

**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 have been developed to *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.
- 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.*
- 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.*

## **B. Roofs**

1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.
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.
3. Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.
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.*

The applicant would like to reverse the positions of the metal and wood gutters due to maintenance issues. Wood requires regular maintenance to keep them in good condition. If they are well-maintained, they will last over 50 years. The porch roof is more accessible than the upper roof making the likelihood of regular maintenance more possible. Aluminum gutters may clog but will not rot out as quickly if not maintained. The gutters closer to the street would be wooden while those further away would be aluminum. Guidelines state that one should preserve distinctive features such as the wood gutters. The aluminum gutters on the porch are grandfathered and may be retained. Staff **recommends** that the request for the above alteration be granted a **Certificate of Appropriateness** because one would be substituting one grandfathering for another, because the historic materials would be closer to the public, and because the porch gutters are more likely to be maintained as they should be, thereby retaining more of the historic fabric

## **Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements**

1. *Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. If new pieces are needed, they should match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old. Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones, or wood porch decks with concrete.*

The applicant has already installed generic balusters and railings that cannot be mistaken for the original ones. The house is circa 1850 with circa 1895 modernizations. The Commission usually recommends a generic railing and simple square baluster in those cases when the original is not known. The use of the more elaborate and delicate turned generic baluster is more in-keeping with the 1890's esthetic than the balusters usually recommended by the Commission, however, it is recognizable as a generally available and not original style to the property. Staff **recommends** granting a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for a generic style rail and baluster system because it matches *the material being replaced with respect to the physical properties of the material* but will be perceived as a stand-in replacement for the original.

## **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.

These are definite character defining features. The Applicant believes that it would be very costly to replace or rebuild all the shutters and would prefer to spend money on those things that will return the value. Some of the shutters do not fit the windows having been moved from another location, others are broken or missing. Because shutters with original hardware are unusual and usually have been replaced, Staff recommends following the Guidelines and retaining as much of the historic fabric as possible and does **not recommend** granting a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for the change.