



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

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

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Site / District(s): 17 Bow Street Bow Street LHD / NR  
Case: HPC 2012.135

Applicant Name: Josh Freeman, Heath Properties  
Applicant Address: 74 Clarendon Street #A, Boston, MA 02116

Date of Application: December 20, 2012  
Legal Notice: *Replace aluminum downspouts with copper downspouts and add one conductor box, all on right side façade.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness  
Date of Public Hearing: January 15, 2013

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**I. Building Description**

*Architectural Description:*

The Prospect Hill Congregational Church illustrates the Richardsonian Romanesque style through rounded arches and semicircular forms, a square tower at the corner of Walnut and Bow streets, and two masonry colors. Rusticated granite is utilized along the exterior ground wall of the foundation and for the arches, sills, lintels, and transoms. Windows are primarily stained glass and set within deep reveals. The roof is articulated so the upper half appears pyramidal with a concave slope, which is typical of the Romanesque Revival style prior to contributions of Henry Hobbs Richardson.



*Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:*

The structure was designed by Henry McKay and constructed in 1887. H.P.Hood and John North of North Packing Company in Cambridge are responsible for the construction of this Romanesque style building, which was converted into condominiums during the 1980s.

## II. Project Description

### *Proposal of Alteration:*

Applicant, Josh Freeman of Heath Properties, proposes to remove the aluminum downspouts on the right side façade as they are enabling water problems to persist. These downspouts would be replaced with circular copper downspouts that measure 4"x 4". The Applicant told Staff via email on 1/2/2013 that a conductor box is not going to be installed. The copper downspouts should help correct the situation and reduce future water damage in this specific area.

## III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

### 1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

Since Heath Properties has taken over the management of this building early in 2012, Staff has issued three Certificates of Appropriateness for repairs and maintenance to spot point brickwork, re-caulk windows, and repair the copper gutters.

### 2. *Precedence:*

The Commission prefers to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness in situations, such as this, where replacement materials are being replaced with original materials. This will not only rectify the water problems on this portion of the building, but the materials that compose the gutter system will be consistent and, therefore, work better together as a drainage system.

### 3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*  
The downspouts on the right side façade are clearly visible from Bow Street. The color of the aluminum blends into the façade, so although the downspouts are not obtrusive to the exterior of the building, they are visible. Additionally, the copper downspouts will be more visible as new copper does not easily blend into the façade but, over time, will turn green due to the exposure to oxygen in the atmosphere and be more consistent with the color of the gutters in time.
- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*  
The right side façade is currently experiencing water infiltration due to the insufficient water capacity of the existing aluminum gutters. Previous Certificates of Non-Applicability have addressed repointing the brick in this area; this effort will be lost if the water issue is not properly addressed.

*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?*

*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 Applicant has chosen to replace the aluminum downspouts with copper downspouts in an effort to make the gutter system materials consistent, which will also help address the water problem, and to restore this element of the façade to the original material. Since details of the original copper downspouts are unknown, the Applicant proposes to use 4"x 4" circular downspouts which are consistent with the circular shape of the existing ogee style copper gutter.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

*A. Exterior Walls - (2) Masonry - b. Original mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.*

Upon dismantling the aluminum downspouts and installing new copper downspouts, mortar may be displaced. Any mortar removed as part of this application to install new downspouts on the right façade of the structure should ensure that the new mortar will be duplicated in all material qualities listed above.

*B. Roofs - (4) Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as...gutters...Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*

The ogee shape of the gutter will be preserved and the downspouts will continue to be inconspicuously located on the right side façade. As the downspout would return to the original copper material, and the existing copper gutters are not currently painted, Staff does not believe the new copper downspouts should be painted to match the façade. However, for purposes such as theft, the Commission may choose to have the copper painted to match the façade as well as secured to the façade of the building.

### 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 grant Josh Freeman of Heath Properties a Certificate of Appropriateness to remove the aluminum downspouts and install circular copper downspouts (4"x4") at 17 Bow Street.**

*17 Bow Street*

