



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:	26 Bow Street	c.1874 Lambert-Bell House
Case:	HPC 2016.062	Bow Street Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	James A. McGinnis, Owner	
Applicant Address:	26 Bow Street, Somerville, MA 02143	
Date of Application:	July 30, 2016	
Legal Notice:	<i>Install sign on fence</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	September 20, 2016	

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

This combined residence and doctor's office is one of six remaining from the 19th century "Doctor's Row". The asymmetrical plan, facade and roofscape are tied together with horizontal and vertical 'stickwork' framing the windows. Stickwork also expresses the second floor and attic floor levels, as well as some vertical 'framing' under the front gable. Infill between the 'sticks' as principally feather-edged clapboards, with board and batten under the eaves and occasionally over or under a window. The front entrance has a transom supported by posts and finely-detailed knee braces. There are front and back second floor porches. Wide eaves are supported by brackets. The roofscape includes three gables and six dormers, most having scroll-work and vertical board and batten. The two chimneys have corbelled and paneled brick details. The interior of the house includes mahogany paneling, tile fireplaces, and stained glass windows. The craftsmanship throughout is excellent.



26 Bow Street - 2009 photo.



26 Bow Street - c. 1975 photo.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Install a sign on the fence.

The driveway is frequently blocked by cars and trucks by people intending to pick up or drop off items at nearby business. The owner would like to install a "Please do not block the driveway" sign on the chain-link fence next to the driveway. See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

- *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

During the 1990's the Applicant undertook extensive renovations of the exterior of the building. More recent alterations have dealt mostly with quality of life issues such as a privacy fence at the rear of the property and updated heating vents. Other repairs were made as needed.

1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
 - i. Install a sign on the fence.

No similar proposals have been made for this type of signage. Interpretive signs have been added to a few properties.

2. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The fence is visible where the sign is placed.

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

There is a small section of chain-link fence to the left of the driveway that is not otherwise hidden by the hedge. The driveway is frequently blocked by idling cars and trucks. The sign is not attached to the house and its location does not affect the integrity of the historic district. The sign is attached by zip or cable ties to the chain link. This is an easily reversible solution to a problem that does not affect the District as a whole, only the one property. See photos at the end of the document.

The Historic District Ordinance section 6 C has the following exclusions:

1. temporary structures or signs, subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the Commission may reasonably specify;
4. signs of one foot square or less in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and if illuminated is illuminated only indirectly; and one sign in connection with the non-residential use of each building or structure which is not more than twelve square feet in area, is appropriately located and consists of letters and/or symbol or trademark compatible with the character of the area and if illuminated only indirectly; or either of them;

The sign is a modern sign requesting certain behavior of the passer-by with attachment holes in each corner. It is similar in size, shape and material to other signs on the street. It does not meet the exemptions noted above. While the attachment type is clearly reversible, the message is meant to be semi-permanent. It is not attached to the building and does not affect the historic fabric of the building in any way. The Historic Guidelines for signage relate primarily to commercial not residential needs.

- *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 fence is not discussed in the Form B. The fence is visible from the public right of way. No architectural materials or features will be affected by the installation of a sign upon its fabric.

Signs, marquees and awnings

- 2. *New signs, marquees and awnings should not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.*
- 3. *New signs, marquees and awnings should be of a size, material, shape and color with the building and its current use, and should also be consistent with other signs and buildings along the street.*
- 4. *Signs, marquees and awnings applied to the face of a building should be attached in such a way that they can be removed at a later date without damaging the material to which they are fastened.*

The sign will not obscure any part of the building or its architectural features. It is of a similar size to street cleaning and other informational city signage. It is readily removable from the fence near the driveway.

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 James A. McGinnis, owner of 26 Bow Street a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a small sign on the fence.

1. If changes are necessary to the prosed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
2. The sign shall be affixed to the chain-link fence to the east of the driveway.
3. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that it was executed in accordance with this Certificate and approved plans.





Signage in situ.