

SHPC Recommendations

From: Kristi Chase, Preservation Planner, and
Brandon Wilson, Executive Director

RE: Recommendations for cases to be heard on 12/20/11

HPC 11.107 – 23 Pleasant Avenue, 1893 Henry Colson House (continued)

10/7/11

Applicant: Dylan James, Contractor for Timothy Brown, Owner

Historic and Architectural Significance

See attached survey form.

Existing Conditions

The house has recently been sold to new owners. On the whole the house has been well-maintained, but some systems and the kitchen needed to be brought into the 21st century. Interior renovations and rehabilitations are underway. The reworking of the kitchen and bathroom has necessitated the alteration of the rear ell of the building. These alterations would be partially visible across driveways from Vinal Avenue and Grand View Avenue.

Proposed Work and Recommendations

The Applicant seeks a **Certificate of Appropriate (C/A)** for the following:

1. Remove rear basement door;
2. Install new bay window on ground floor;
3. Remove 2 windows on rear and rear side ell;
4. Replace with siding to match existing;
5. Remove and replace front, side and rear porch doors
6. Install a second set of stairs from rear entry landing into backyard; and
7. Replace 2 double-hung windows on rear west side of the building with Marvin wood windows.



I. 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.*

or those for windows and doors which state that one should:

- 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. If aluminum windows must be installed, select a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim. Investigate weather-stripping and storm windows with a baked enamel finish as an alternative to the replacement of historic sash.*

It should be noted that for the most part these are located on the rear of the building and marginally visible from the street.

The top of the rear basement door is visible from Grand View Avenue over the top of a stockade fence. It will be replaced by a proposed oriel window that will be visible from both Vinal Avenue and Grand View Avenue. The proposed oriel echoes the existing living room and office bay windows in its form and will be detailed to match. The proposed windows will be one fixed window and 2 casement windows. The proposed new windows do not match any other windows on the house which are predominantly 1/1 or 2/2. The proposed windows will have a Queen Anne square pattern of lights at the top of the windows.

As a rule, the Staff does **not** recommend **approving a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the enclosing of windows or relocating them **because they don't meet the above Guidelines**. In such cases when they have been approved, it has been recommended that the casing be retained *in situ* and the windows covered either with closed shutters or clapboard as these were common Victorian techniques for dealing with openings in un-wanted on the interior but necessary to the external design. They have also enclosed 2 windows on the rear of the building facing Vinal Avenue and Grand View Avenue for the renovated kitchen and bathroom. This will afford more privacy for the residents in both 23 Pleasant Avenue and the neighboring houses on Vinal Avenue and Grand View Avenue.

Queen Anne Design lacks the formality of many other popular 19th Century styles and often has a sense of playfulness in the rhythm of the architecture. Staff believes that while the window is completely different from anything else on the building it is keeping with the spirit of the time and will not be comparable to other windows on the building.

The door on the second floor porch is proposed to be replaced with a French door with multiple lights. Staff could not review the original door due to visibility issues and has been told that it is not original to the building. It will be visible when the leaves are off the trees. Staff recommends **granting a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the proposed for the alteration to the kitchen door because it is not original to the house and is an upgrade of existing conditions.

They also propose to alter the kitchen entry door and stairs on the side of the building. The door is minimally visible and the stairs would not be visible from Pleasant Avenue. Staff recommends **granting a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the proposed for the alteration to the kitchen door because it is not original to the house and the second set of stairs should receive a **Certificate of Non-Applicability** due to visibility.

The existing front door is not original to the building and appears to be a Spanish Colonial Revival design not appropriate to the *circa* 1893 Colonial Revival/Shingle/Queen Anne House. The Applicants are proposing a choice of doors and materials that may be more appropriate than the existing. They will not be altering the openings.

Staff recommends **granting a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the proposed front door because is an upgrade from the existing and meets the above guidelines.

Staff recommends **granting a Certificate of Appropriateness** for one of the proposed new windows on the Vinal Avenue side of the house because it is a reversion to the original size and configuration of the window which had been altered to hold a smaller sash. The other window is not visible from the public right of way and should be granted a **Certificate of Non-Applicability**.

















