



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

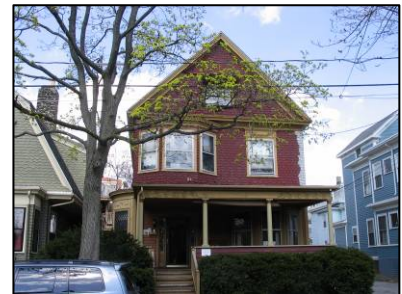
*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

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Site / District(s):	23 Pleasant Avenue	1893 Henry W.P. Colson House
Case:	HPC 2013.047	Pleasant Avenue Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Margaret A. McCarthy and Timothy B. Brown	
Applicant Address:	23 Pleasant Avenue, Somerville	
Date of Application:	July 31, 2013	
Legal Notice:	<i>Install solar panels on roof of house</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Conditional Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	October 15, 2013	



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**I. Building Description**

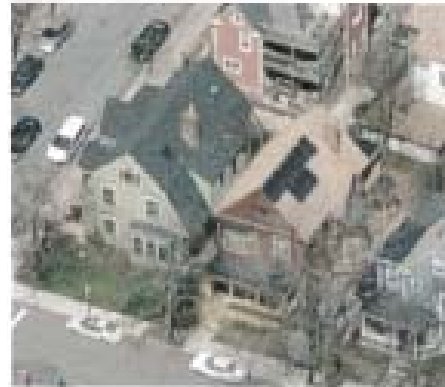
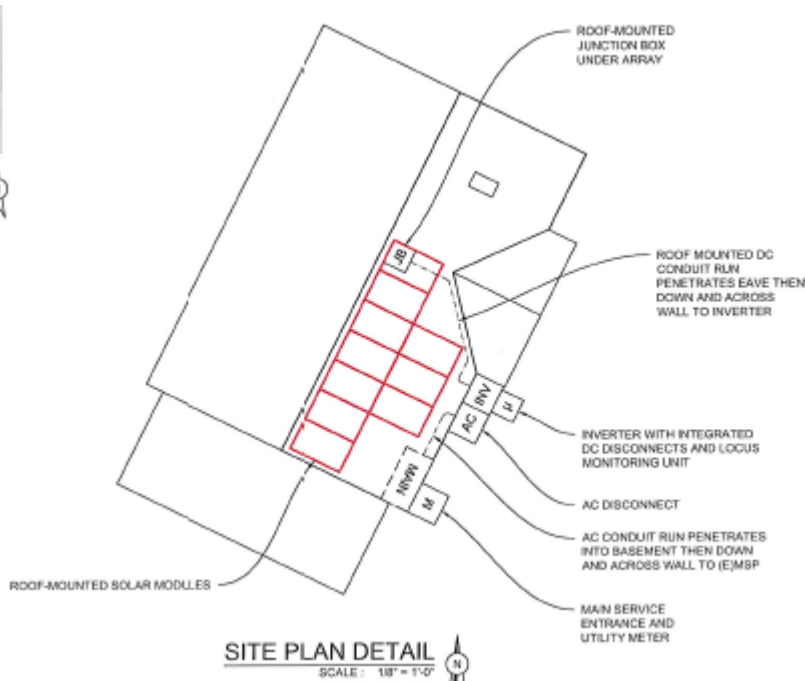
*Architectural Description:* This late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Queen Anne transitions into Colonial Revival with swags surmounting the deep front porch and windows. The house is a side-hall entry plan with a bay window on the ground floor to the east of the door and another bay over the entry door above the porch. A large cross gable with bays extend to the east one room back from the street.

*Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:* The house was built by the prolific contractor Henry W. P. Colson who was also an insurance and real estate agent. He sold it to Fred Haley in 1895, who subdivided the property and built 49 Vinal Avenue next door.



**II. Project Description**

*Proposal of Alteration:* The Applicant would like to install 7 solar panels along the ridge line of the roof and 3 panels below that; all of these will be visible from Pleasant Avenue.



### III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

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

2002.047	Karla Ellenbogen & Ron Elbert	C/NA, C/A	10/24/2002	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install copper flashing and a copper flat lid chimney cap.</li> <li>2. Rebuild existing chimney on the condition that the Staff review and approve any replacement brick before installation with an appropriate soft mortar of the same color.</li> </ol>
2005.048	Karla Ellenbogen & Ron Elbert	C/NA	8/12/2005	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace shingles in-kind as required;</li> <li>2. Cut back rake moldings on both sides of main gable and mitre into gutter returns;</li> <li>3. Repair and replace gutters and fascia in kind as required;</li> <li>4. Replace soffit return;</li> <li>5. Replace water table board and siding at rear entry;</li> <li>6. Patch porch posts;</li> <li>7. Repair and replace framing and soffits as required on round bay</li> <li>8. Reinstall brackets as required; and</li> <li>9. Paint</li> </ol>
2007.015	Karla Ellenbogen & Ron Elbert	C/NA	3/19/2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace shingles in-kind as required;</li> <li>2. Cut back rake moldings on both sides of main gable and mitre into gutter returns;</li> <li>3. Repair and replace gutters and fascia in kind as required;</li> <li>4. Replace soffit return;</li> <li>5. Replace water table board and siding at rear entry;</li> <li>6. Patch porch posts;</li> <li>7. Repair and replace framing and soffits as required on round bay;</li> <li>8. Reinstall brackets as required; and</li> <li>9. Paint</li> </ol>

2011.107 Brown-McCarthy

C/A, C/NA 1/12/12

1. Remove rear basement door;
2. Remove 2 windows on rear and rear side ell;
3. Replace with siding to match existing;
4. Install new bay window on ground floor rear;
5. Replace 1 window on the west side second floor with an appropriately sized 2/2 double-hung Marvin wood window;
6. Replace 1 window on the west side toward the rear with a 1/1 double-hung Marvin wood window;
7. Remove and replace front, side and rear porch doors;
8. Install a second set of stairs from rear entry landing into backyard;
1. Restore, repair or replace damaged wood clapboard, soffits, fascia, and trim in-kind; and
2. Repair wood windows in-kind as necessary.

2. *Precedence:* The Commission reviewed the installation of solar panels on 22 Summer Street last month. These were approved because they were away from the street and located where they would be minimally or not visible from the public right of way.

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The solar panels on the main roof would be fully visible from Pleasant Avenue. A non-designated house on Summer Street has solar panels located close to the street in a similar manner to those proposed.

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

The house has been well maintained. The current owners did extensive work prior to moving in 2011. It is located on a wooded residential side street on Prospect Hill.

*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.*

The fabric of the Pleasant Avenue Local Historic District is predominantly late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. House styles are generally Mansard and Queen Anne. Solar panels are late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century development and may be considered as a modern intrusion and not in-keeping with the historic character of the neighborhood.



- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

*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.*

The proposal does not adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building as the proposal will be reversible. The existing roof is asphalt.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*
4. *Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, ... should be ... set flush with the surface ...*

The panels will be set parallel to the roof and slightly above it.

Secretary of the Interior Guidelines for Sustainability state:

*Installing a low-profile solar device on the historic building so that it is not visible or only minimally visible from the public right of way: for example, on a flat roof and set back to take advantage of a parapet or other roof feature to screen solar panels from view; or on a secondary slope of a roof, out of view from the public right of way.*

The panels will be fully visible from Pleasant Avenue.

*Installing a solar device on the historic building in a manner that does not damage historic roofing material or negatively impact the building's historic character and is reversible.*

Because the roof has asphalt 3-tab shingles the roof will not be damaged by the installation of solar panels and is reversible.

*Installing solar roof panels horizontally – flat or parallel to the roof—to reduce visibility.*

While the panels would be installed parallel to the roof, they would be fully visible due to the angle of the roof unless they can be set further back from the front eaves and the general view line on Pleasant Avenue.

### **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 NOT appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Union Square Local Historic

District due to the issue of visibility; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission do grant Margaret A. McCarthy and Timothy B. Brown a Certificate of Appropriateness to install solar panels on the roof of 23 Pleasant Avenue on the condition that a way be found for them to be located at a distance of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  way back from the eaves (approximately 17') from the street to render them less visible from the Street.**

