



**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)	24 Pleasant Avenue	circa 1875 J. Frank Wellington House
Case:	HPC 2013.053	Pleasant Avenue Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Susan Kamin, Owner	
Applicant Address:	24 Pleasant Avenue, Somerville MA	
Date of Application:	August 14, 2013	
Legal Notice:	<i>Replace roofing material.</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	<b>Certificate of Hardship</b>	
Date of Public Hearing:	September 17, 2013	

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

*1. Architectural Description:*

This Mansard Cottage is part of a group of 3 at the corner of Vinal Avenue and Pleasant Avenue that are similar in massing and form. They are constructed in a side-hall plan with a front bay. The mansard is punctuated by flat roofed dormers. The entry has double doors that open onto a small entry porch.

*2. Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:*

This group of 3 Mansards were developed by J Frank and Lizzie Wellington at the corner of Vinal and Pleasant Avenues and are among the earliest houses on the block.



**II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*1. Proposal of Alteration:*

- a. Replace 3-tab asphalt shingle roof with Timberline architectural shingles;
- b. Rebuild the front chimney from the roofline; and

- c. Remove the rear chimney.

### III. FINDINGS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

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

2002.020 Susan Kamin & Frank Allen C/A 4/25/2002

1. Replace existing double-hung window on the side nearest Vinal Avenue with new true divided sash to match existing as closely (5" shorter) as possible using stock size.

2004.029 Susan Kamin & Frank Allen C/NA 5/25/2004

1. Replace storm windows.

#### 2. *Precedence:*

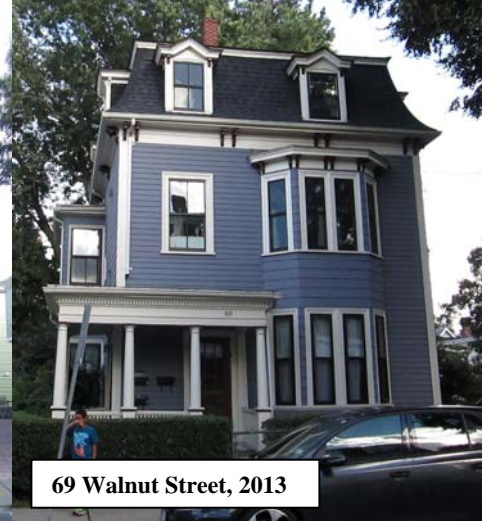
The Commission has not approved Timberline architectural shingles for use on Mansard roofs to replace 3-tab asphalt shingles. The types approved have been GAF Slateline (19R Aldersey Street, 88 Munroe Street, and 170 Summer Street), Owens Corning Berkshire (53 Moore Street), and CertainTeed Carriage House (400 Broadway, and 18 Summit Avenue). However, there is one other Mansard house on Pleasant Avenue with Timberline as well as two well-maintained Mansards on Walnut Street. None of these properties are designated as Local Historic Districts but all are in the Prospect Hill neighborhood.



17 Pleasant Avenue, 2013



81 Walnut Street, 2013



69 Walnut Street, 2013

Chimneys are frequently reconstructed as the mortar fails. Chimney removal is against HPC Guidelines. Since 2001, two buildings have received Certificates of Appropriateness – 30 Day Street because the chimney was minimally visible; and 140 Highland Avenue where building was an asymmetrical Queen Anne so the loss of the chimney would be less drastic, the chimney was a poor reconstruction, not considered character-defining and would be replaced with decorative red slates to match the existing roof pattern.

25 Clyde Street received a Certificate of Non-Applicability because the chimney was deemed to be a newer addition and not visible from the street.



24 Pleasant Avenue, August 2013

And three buildings: 40 Atherton Street, 178 Central Street and 117 Washington Street received Certificates of Non-Applicability for the reconstruction of a chimney from below the roof line and from the attic level upwards, because the reconstruction would be indistinguishable from the original. This work can be problematic due to the unsupported weight of the chimney and fluctuations in dimensions due to changes in temperature and humidity. It is not known whether this work was actually undertaken.

### 3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?* This roof and chimneys are extremely visible on the main façade of the house and from Vinal Avenue.
- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?* The work is already underway. The roof had been 3-tab asphalt shingle. The Applicants made their choice of Timberline based on price, and color. They had seen several houses in the neighborhood, including Mansards, with similar style roofs and believed that it was just a replacement in-kind. The contractor is Quality Roofing by Larry. One of the partners was on vacation when the contract was signed and it somehow got missed when he came back. It was clearly in the contract for them to get the permit and they have apologized to the Applicants.

The mortar is beginning to fail and the chimneys are leaning slightly. This is a good time to rebuild the chimneys and to re-flash them.

*What are the Applicant's needs or requirements?* The Applicant walked around Prospect Hill and noted several well-maintained Mansards with Timberline shingles. She assumed that they were also part of the district and had met HPC approval. The work is underway as noted above.

The Applicant has stated that the added cost of rebuilding both chimneys is something they needed to consider. There would be an approximately \$800 savings.

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

The previously existing roof was 3-tab asphalt and not a feature of architectural significance such as slate. As noted above, there are other roofing products that better approximate the original material.

Chimneys are considered as character-defining features and indicate the disposition of the rooms below and their use. Chimneys demonstrate various eras through their design, materials, and location.

- 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).*

The 3-tab asphalt shingle is not a feature that has not acquired significance on Mansard buildings.

- C. Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*

The original slate roof is long gone. The existing 3-tab shingles could be replaced in-kind

Chimneys are frequently rebuilt as the sacrificial mortar fails.

- D. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

Generally the Commission has approved architectural shingles closer in character to the original slate when an upgrade of shingle type is requested. The neighboring Mansard cottages retain their slate roofs and can be used as physical evidence of the original roofing material and style. Since the roof is partially replaced by longer-lasting architectural shingles on the lower roof level, a roofing material closer to the original slate could be used for the upper level.

The chimney style should replicate the existing with reused bricks and appropriate mortars.

- 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.*

Timberline architectural shingles do not match either the existing 3-tab roof or the neighboring slate roofs in any of these qualities.

For the chimneys, any needed replacement bricks should match the existing in color, texture, form and other visual qualities. The mortar should match the existing to ensure that no bricks are damaged in the reconstruction.

- 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 roof and chimneys are visible from both Pleasant and Vinal Avenues.

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

*B. Roofs*

- 1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.*

The roof shape has not been altered.

The removal of a chimney will alter the perception of the building making it more difficult to understand the building.

- 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.*

The original slate roof is long gone. An 1987 Building Permit has been found to install skylights which indicates that the roof may have been replaced at that time with other alterations

3. *Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture, and installation detail.*

The existing roof was a 3-tab asphalt shingle. Installation techniques for the architectural shingles are similar. 3-tab asphalt shingles do not resemble the original slate in composition, color, size, shape, texture or installation details. Neither do the Timberline architectural shingles.

Any needed replacement bricks should match the existing in color, texture, form and other visual qualities. The mortar should match the existing to ensure that no bricks are damaged in the reconstruction.

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 removal of a chimney is the removal of a character-defining feature. The chimneys should be rebuilt rather than removed.

5. *New dormers will be permitted if they are related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors. If possible, new dormers should be confined to the rear of the house.*

No new dormers have been installed.

6. *Skylights with flat profiles may be installed on the rear of the property.*

No skylights have been added.

7. *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, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.*

No new utility equipment has been added to the main visible 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.*

*24 Pleasant Avenue*