



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 / District(s)	24 Pleasant Avenue	<i>circa 1875 J. Frank Wellington House</i>
Case:	HPC 2014.032	Pleasant Avenue Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Susan Kamin, Owner	
Applicant Address:	24 Pleasant Avenue, Somerville MA	
Date of Application:	May 28, 2014	
Legal Notice:	<i>Alteration of front porch rails and balusters</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	June 18, 2014	

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

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.

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.



24 Pleasant Avenue, 2014



24 Pleasant Avenue, 1988

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Replace existing railings and balusters with simplified ones to match those on 45 Vinal Avenue.

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

1998.038	C/NA	Susan Kamin & Frank Allen	1. Removal of portions of the current porch to accomplish a restoration of the front porch as close to the original Second Empire porch as possible. A lantern light may be suspended from the ceiling of the restored porch. The restored porch is based on the elevation plans and specifications submitted.
2002.020	C/A	Susan Kamin & Frank Allen	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	C/NA	Susan Kamin & Frank Allen	1. Replace storm windows.
2013.053	C/A	Susan Kamin	1. The roof shingles shall be Timberline® architectural shingles. 2. The front chimney shall be reconstructed using bricks salvaged from the demolition of both chimneys. 3. If there is insufficient historic brick, new water struck bricks to match the existing shall be used. 4. The rear chimney may be rebuilt with new water struck brick. 5. Brick shall be of varying hues. 6. Brick on both chimneys should match the existing as closely as possible. 7. HPC Staff must evaluate and approve the match before the beginning of construction.

1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
- *Replace existing railings and balusters with simplified ones to match those on 45 Vinal Avenue.*

The proposed railings and balusters would be based on the ones approved in 2007 for 45 Vinal Avenue which is one of 3 buildings developed by J. Frank and Lizzie Wellington on the corner of Vinal Avenue and Pleasant Avenue. Those in turn were based on those at 47 Vinal Avenue. Both properties on Vinal had pipe rails that were replaced by a version of the generic simple handle rail with the assemblage being both robust and refined.

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The proposed rails and balusters are visible from the street.

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

The original rails and balusters are long gone from 24 Pleasant Avenue as can be seen in the *circa* 1988 photo of the building. These were replaced in 1999 by a custom high Second Empire Style railing and baluster assemblage. After 16 years, these now need to be replaced. The owner would like to replace the current porch railings with a more affordable and less fancy railing assemblage. The current owner has stated that the existing porch would cost \$20,000 to repair in kind and that the proposed system would cost a tenth as much to construct. The building permit record states that the proposed cost for the porch in 1999 was \$5,000.

- *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.*

At the time the Form B was written the current porch posts, railings, balusters and newels did not exist.

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

While the deteriorated porch posts, railings and balusters are in-keeping with the period of the house, they are not original. The proposed railings and balusters are composed of traditional materials and constructed in a traditional style.

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

There is no known physical or documentary evidence of the original porch railings at this time.

- 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.*

The replacement railings and balusters will match the existing in material.

- 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 front porch is visible from the public right of way.

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 would not be incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the historic district and is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Pleasant Avenue/ Vinal Avenue Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation**

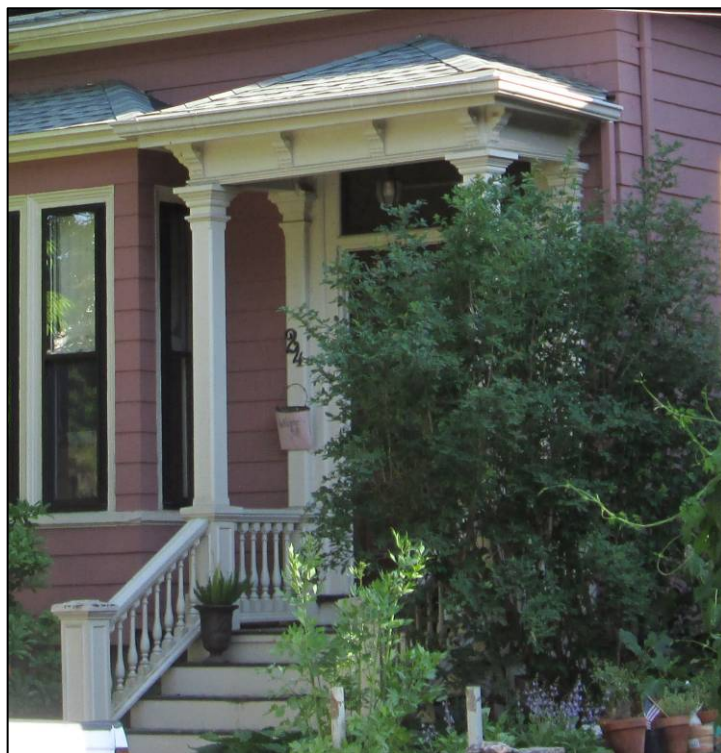
Commission grant Susan Kamin, Owner, a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation new railings and balusters with the following conditions.

1. The new railings and balusters shall *exactly match those on the front of 45 Vinal Avenue in construction, size, shape, proportion, detail and material.*
2. *The existing newels and posts shall be replicated as necessary.*





24 Pleasant Avenue, 1998



24 Pleasant Avenue, 2014



45 Vinal Avenue, 2014



47 Vinal Avenue, 2014