



**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):	22 Summer Street	c. 1870 Huff-Mulholland House
Case:	HPC 2013.058	Union Square Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Laura Mackil	
Applicant Address:	22 Summer Street, Somerville	
Date of Application:	August 27, 2013	
Legal Notice:	<i>Install solar panels on roof of house</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	September 17, 2013	

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**I. Building Description**

*Architectural Description:* This classic 3 bay side hall plan gable front Italianate house was constructed c. 1874. It retains its original brackets, door hood and windows. The house is part of a small group of similarly constructed houses on the outskirts of Union Square just off Bow Street.

*Historical Context/Evolution of Structure or Parcel:*

This is one of four similar Italianates on Summer Street opposite Nunziato Field. According to the 1874 Hopkins Atlas the property was owned by Dr. Eben Jackson who lived in Cambridgeport and had a practice in Union Square according to the 1877 City Directory. The residents at that time were Mrs. H. E. Howe, dressmaker; her son, George Howe, clerk; and Henry J. Stevenson, who dealt in boots and shoes at 114 Water Street in Boston. By 1903, the City Directory shows Orrison Huff, machinist, and James Mulholland, paper cutter as residents.



**22 Summer Street, 2010**

## II. Project Description

*Proposal of Alteration:* The Applicant would like to install 15 solar panels on the roof; seven of these will be visible from Vinal Avenue and Summer Street.



## III. Findings for a Certificate of Appropriateness

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:* As one of the properties added to the Local Historic District Map in 2010, there are no prior Certificates of Appropriateness or Non-Applicability for this property.
2. *Precedence:* No historic homeowners have requested the Commission to review the installation of solar panels.
3. *Considerations:*



- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The seven panels on the main roof will be visible from Nunziato Field, Summer Street and Vinal Avenue but not the 8 panels located on the ell. A non-historically designated house two doors down has added solar panels. The proposed panels would have the visibility of those seen behind the dormer.

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

The house is well maintained and located across the street from Nunziato Field. The owner is very conscious of the need to conserve energy as much as possible and has done as much as she can to make the building tight and energy efficient. She strongly believes that this is a good time to add solar, lessen her reliance on the grid and to sell back any excess energy.

*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.*

- *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 affect their present architectural integrity.*

While visible from the street, the proposal does not adversely affect the architectural integrity of the building as the proposal will be reversible.

- *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 ...*

All of the proposed solar panel array will be located at the rear of the property. Eight panels will not be visible and seven will be fully visible behind the chimney toward the rear of the building from the corner of Vinal Avenue and Summer Streets. They will be set parallel to the slope of the roof.

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.*

Eight panels meet these Guidelines.

*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.*

No historic roofing material will be damaged. The installation is reversible.

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

The remaining seven panels would be installed as far from the street as possible, parallel with the pitch of the roof to minimize visibility.

### 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 Union Square Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Laura Mackil a Certificate of Appropriateness to install seven solar panels on the roof of 22 Summer Street and issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability for the eight remaining panels to be installed on the rear ell roof clear plans for their removal at a later date, when they are no longer useful.**

