



**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:	145 Sycamore Street	c.1899 Addis Dempsey House
Case:	HPC 2016.037	Single Building LHD
Applicant Name:	Constance P. & James V. McCallum, Owners	
Applicant Address:	145 Sycamore Street, Somerville, MA 02145	
Date of Application:	May 31, 2016	
Legal Notice:	<i>Replace chain link fence with metal fence.</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	June 21, 2016	

---

**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** from the Form B

*The larger two and one-half story house is an example of Colonial Revival architecture which was the prevalent style from the late 1890s into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The steeply pitched, hipped roof, the symmetrical façade with a center entrance flanked by rounded bays, the raking cornice, the swag decorated frieze, the pedimented dormer with sunburst design and fluted pilasters, and the clustered columns supporting the entrance porch are all stylistic elements of the Colonial Revival period.*



**HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:** from the Form B

*Winter Hill refers to a large area of development north of Highland, east of Lowell, west of Marshall and bordered on the north by Broadway. The actual geographic drumlin reaches its summit near the top of Adams and Central Streets, which were laid out and subdivided in 1847 but not developed, for the most part, until the 1880s and 1890s. Workers' housing was located in the Ten Hills area and on tracts of land west of Lowell and Adams Streets. In contrast, this area was developed with large, detailed, businessmen's homes.*

*Although many of the houses in the area were built by the early 1890s, later development was a result of infill of further subdivision. This land was adjacent to #141 Central owned by Margaret F. Butler. By 1899 this address was included in the Poll Tax Listings. Addis W. Dempsey, an engraver lived here having moved from Montrose Street.*

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 1. *Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Remove chain link fence; and
2. Install a metal picket fence.

The front yard is fenced with chain link. The owner would like to remove the existing fence which contains the little landscaping there is. He would like to install a metal picket fence similar to that of 2 Bigelow Street. See the final pages for details and photos.

## III. FINDINGS

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

James McCallum	C/NA, C/A	2002.038	1. Repair and replace gutters in-kind; and 2. Repair porches and stairs in-kind. 3. Remove asphalt shingles from dormers walls and replace with clapboard.
James McCallum	C/NA	2006.069	1. Repair front porch in-kind.

### 2. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

#### 1. *Remove chain link fence on either side of the walkway.*

The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness for the removal of chain link fencing to numerous properties: 26 Bow Street (2003), 56 Bow Street, (2012), 24 Chester Street (2009), 58 Columbus Avenue (2014), 47 Franklin Street (2015), 57 Meacham Road (2002), 140 Morrison Avenue (2003), 144 Morrison Avenue (2008), 74 Mount Vernon Street (2010), 28 Warren Avenue (2003), 6 Westwood Road (2008) and 9 Westwood Road (2011).

#### 2. *Install a metal picket fence.*

The Commission has granted a number of Certificates of Appropriateness for historically inspired metal fences and the relocation and installation of salvaged fences. These were 25 Atherton (2014), 27 Chester Street (2011), 58 Columbus Avenue (2014), 47 Franklin Street (2015), 8 Mount Vernon Street (2010), 1 Summer Street (2005), 45 Walnut Street (2013), 28 Warren Avenue (2003), and 3 Westwood Road (2005).

### 3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The proposed fence and gates would be visible from Sycamore Street.

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

143-145 Sycamore Street is located in a 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban lot which has been further subdivided in dense residential district of Winter Hill. The small front yard is enclosed by chain link. See photos at the end of the document.

- *How does the proposal relate to historic conditions of the building/ parcel?*

Chain link fence is not an appropriate material for a 19<sup>th</sup> century residence. The proposed fence and gate are similar in feeling to one that might have been erected at this time.

## 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.*

1. *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**. 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.***

No alterations to character-defining features mentioned on the Form B are anticipated. There will be no changes to any later important features. There will be no replacement of architectural features. The proposed fence will be composed of traditional materials and constructed in a style that would not be mistaken for historic but would complement the historic building. The metal fence would have vertical pickets. The new material is an upgrade from the existing chain link fence. This feature is highly visible.

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

#### **Landscape Features and Paving**

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*
3. *The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.*
4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

There are no changes to the essential landscape features. No re-grading is necessary for the maintenance of the structure. No changes to the features described in the Form B will be altered. The circulation pattern will not be altered.

### 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 145 Sycamore Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant James McCallum, owner a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a short fence, and gates at **143-145 Sycamore Street** with the following contingencies.

1. The chain link fence on either side of the walkway shall be removed;
2. New iron gates and short fences in the design submitted and attached below shall be installed in the existing location of the chain-link fence and gates;
3. The gate and fence shall be black metal pickets with matching posts as per attached; and
4. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate.





