



**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:	45 Tennyson Street	1875 Lawrence Spinney House
Case:	HPC 2014.038	Single Building Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Jed Lippard, Owner	
Applicant Address:	45 Tennyson Street, Somerville, MA 02145	
Date of Application:	June 12, 2014	
Legal Notice:	<i>Remove landscape timbers &amp; asphalt driveway; and Replace with stone wall and unit block pavers</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	July 15, 2014	

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** from the Form B  
*"The substantial, five-bay, two and one-half story house, built in 1875 is representative of a simply designed Italianate building with a paired door entrance and a side one-story projecting bay that has Colonial Revival details. The dentil moulding of the cornice and of the projecting entrance porch and the square cupola are commonly found on buildings of a later date but may have been part of the early design as the first owners were in the 'building materials' business."*



*45 Tennyson Street, 2003 photo*

**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 Tennyson Street was laid out by 1857 (although not on the 1852 Draper Map) it was not developed until the 1870s and 1880s. This house was built by 1875 when City Directories indicate that Lawrence Spinney lived here and operated a building materials business in Somerville. Leonard Spinney who lived here in the 1880s and 1890s worked as a salesman in Boston.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Remove landscape timbers & asphalt driveway; and
2. Replace with stone wall and unit block pavers.

The Applicant would like to replace the rotting landscape timbers with a Pennsylvania flat fieldstone 'dry-laid' wall and the cracked asphalt driveway with Uni-lock Camelot 6" x 6" pavers. See photos and web site. <http://www.unilock.com/products/classic/camelot/>

See the final pages for details and photos.

## II. FINDINGS

### 1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

CA	Brooks Mostue	1991.011	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove existing double-hung window on side of main house. Retain exterior casing and infill with paired shutters in closed position.</li> <li>2. Remove small side window on rear addition. Install fixed sash (4 ft. x 1.5 ft. with 3 or 4 lites) high in wall. Repair siding to match existing.</li> </ol>
CA	Brooks Mostue	1991.011 A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At rear of house, remove exiting double-hung window and replace with sliding door and divided lite transom. iii"</li> <li>2. Add rear deck with 3 columns as part of railing design.</li> </ol>

### 1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

There are several cases wherein rotted and damaged landscape timbers have been removed and replaced with a retaining wall or re-graded. In the following cases, stone retaining walls that appear to be 'dry-laid' were granted Certificates of Appropriateness: 85 Benton Road (2003); 47 Columbus Avenue (2022); 8 Mount Vernon Street (2011), and 74 Mount Vernon (2010).

There are also cases where old asphalt driveways are replaced with pavers: 53 Atherton Street (2013), 30 Bow Street (2002); 27 Columbus Avenue (2002), 47 Columbus Avenue (2002); 73 Columbus Avenue (2006); 25 Russell Street (2003); and 45 Vinal Avenue (2006).

### 3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The driveway and landscape timbers are visible.

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

The driveway and landscape timbers are deteriorated.

- *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.*

The driveway and landscaping are not discussed in the Form B.

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

The deteriorated driveway will be replaced with Unilock Camelot pavers. The driveway is probably a 20<sup>th</sup> century addition to the property as are the landscape timbers.

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

The historic architectural features will be replaced.

- 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 pavers and wall are closer to traditional materials than the existing asphalt and landscape timbers.

- 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 driveway and landscape timbers are visible from the public right of way.

HPC Guidelines for landscaping which includes paths and driveways state:

### **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.*

The major changes proposed are to the materials of the retaining walls and the driveway. The existing character of the street is primarily that of an 1850-1920 suburb with a few incursions of various automotive related buildings and paving.

Generally speaking the current HPC Guidelines do not address driveways or walls per se. However, it is clear that the Guidelines recommend that historic buildings not be obscured by changes in the landscape. "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 Guidelines further state that "The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing

or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.” Fences “...can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its ... surroundings.”

2. *It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*

Cars have taken over as the major means of transportation since this neighborhood was built. There will be no changes to the essential character of the site.

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.*

There will be no changes to the landform.

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 will be no changes to the layout, only to the material of the driveway and walls.

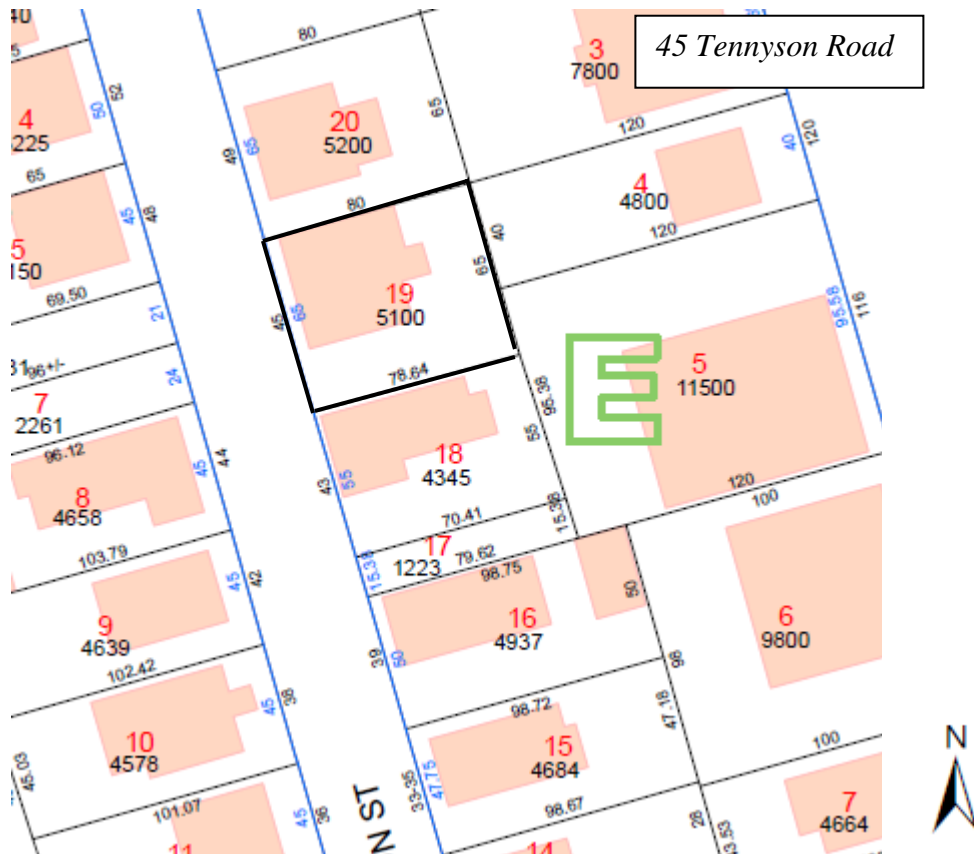
The Applicant’s proposal for a unit block paved parking area will fit in with the neighborhood and not detract significantly from the street. The removal of the landscape timbers, which probably date from the 1950’s or 1960’s, would have no effect on the visibility or the layout. The installation of the pavers will clearly be modern.

### 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 45 Tennyson Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Jed Lippard a Certificate of Appropriateness** with the following conditions:

1. The asphalt driveway shall be replaced with Unilock Camelot 6” x 6” pavers.
2. The rotted landscape timbers shall be replaced with a ‘dry-laid’ Pennsylvania fieldstone retaining wall.







*45 Tennyson Road existing conditions*



*Proposed paving material*



*Proposed wall material*