

#### HPC Recommendations

From: Kristi Chase, Preservation Planner, and  
Brandon Wilson, Executive Director

RE: Recommendations for cases to be heard on 3/20/12

#### **HPC 12.019 – 1 Westwood Road, Somerville Museum**

Applicants: Applicant: Barbara Mangum, President of the Trustees of the Somerville Museum

#### Historic and Architectural Significance

See attached survey form.

#### Existing Conditions

The Museum has been maintained on a very small budget for a number of years. This has resulted in a backlog of projects major and minor to be undertaken soon. The most important being the repair and replacement of the slate roof. The Museum received a grant to undertake these repairs.

The high cost of the repairs, especially the roof, triggered the need to bring the building up to modern ADA standards and will entail another capital campaign on the part of the Museum. Currently, the Museum is not accessible. There are stairs to enter the reception area, the exhibition halls and the bathrooms.

The main entry on Central Street is not used because its doors originally came from the Central Library, are fragile and should not be heavily used. The side entry on Westwood Road has become the main entry. This is not visually the prominent. First-time visitors often don't realize that it is the main way into the building. The platform and stairs appear to be cement and stucco with a simple iron railing, while meeting HPC Guidelines for being distinguishable from the historic building, they do not add anything to the building.



#### Proposed Work and Recommendations

The Applicants seek a **Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A)** and a **Certificate of Non-Applicability (C/NA)** to:

1. Repair and repaint all windows, exterior doors and trim in-kind (**C/NA**);
2. Repair and replace all rotted and damaged wood trim and gutters in-kind as needed (**C/NA**);
3. Repair and replace slate roof, copper flashings, gutter liner and valleys in-kind (**C/NA**);
4. Install snow guards (**C/A**);
5. Enlarge side porch to include (**C/A**):
  - a. A wheelchair lift, partially screened from view (**C/A**);

- b. A new roof with a painted wood entablature supported by tapered Doric columns (C/A); and
- c. New stairs (C/A).

As can be seen from the existing conditions above, the Museum is undergoing many repairs and replacements in-kind. These have all received a **Certificate of Non-Applicability**.

- 4. Install snow guards (C/A);

They are adding snow guards to the roof which will greatly slow the descent of snow onto the sidewalk below. These hooks have been in use on slate roof buildings since at least the 1880s. While these are not mentioned in the HPC Guidelines for roofs, Staff believes that they would be historically and architecturally appropriate and recommends granting a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for the proposed change.

- 5. Enlarge side porch to include (C/A):
  - d. A wheelchair lift, partially screened from view (C/A);
  - e. A new roof with a painted wood entablature supported by tapered Doric columns (C/A); and
  - f. New stairs (C/A).

After studying the issue and looking at several alternatives, it was decided that enlarging the porch and incorporating it more fully into the design of the building was the best way to resolve the problem rather than adding a long ramp that would cover either the sidewalk or the driveway.

The porch would be detailed to compliment the 1920s Colonial Revival style of the building and incorporate some of the existing small concrete porch. The proposed porch would hide the wheelchair lift behind a masonry wall. A porch roof and a banner located in a permanent location would offer protection from the elements. To balance the addition of the lift area and to make the side entry to the museum more prominent, the space has been divided into 3 parts.

#### **D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements**

- 1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. *If new pieces are needed, they should match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old.* Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones, or wood porch decks with concrete.
- 2. Fire escapes are very conspicuous features and, as a rule, should only be placed on the rear of the building, or where they are least visible from a public way. If installation on the street or side façade cannot be avoided, fire escapes should be designed and constructed with the same attention demanded by other major alterations and repairs, and are subject to the review and approval of the Commission.

#### **E. New additions**

- 1. *New additions should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible in size, scale, material and character of the property and its*

*environment.* Where possible, new additions should be confined to the rear of the house.

2. It is not the intent of these guidelines to limit new additions to faithful copies of earlier buildings. *New designs may also evoke, without copying, the architecture of the property to which they are being added, through careful attention to height, bulk, materials, window size, and type and location, and detail.* A building should not, however, be altered to an appearance that predates its construction.
3. *New additions or alterations should be done in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the basic form and integrity of the historic property would remain intact.*

Because the existing side porch entry is not original to the building and it must be altered to meet the programmatic needs of the Museum, the Staff **recommends** granting a **Certificate of Appropriateness** because it meets the HPC Guidelines by italicized and noted above.