



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: 16 Westwood Road c.1911  
Case: HPC 2015.007 Westwood Road Local Historic District

Applicant Name: James Veneziano, Owner  
Applicant Address: 18 Westwood Road, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: February 25, 2015  
Legal Notice: *Reconstruct widows walk, replace dormer windows, and alter front porch railings and posts.*

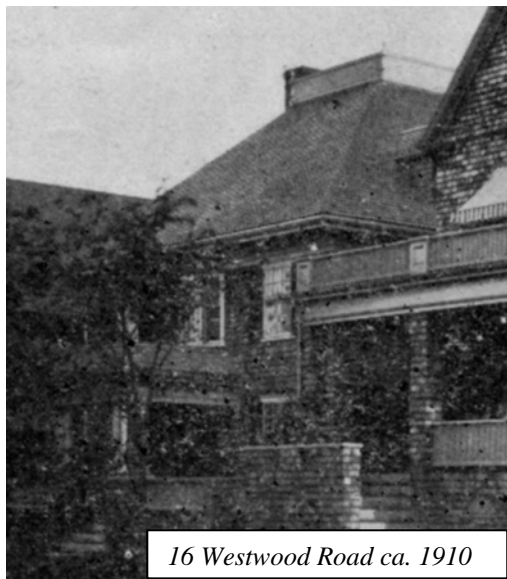
Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness with conditions  
Date of Public Hearing: March 17, 2015

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

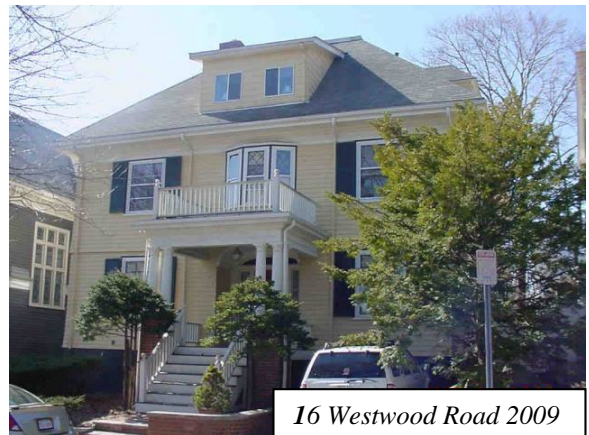
This symmetrical 2 ½ story Colonial Revival four square house is located toward the Benton Road end of Westwood Road. It has a center entry with a colonnaded entry porch. The front door has side lights and is surmounted by a fanlight.



16 Westwood Road ca. 1910

A shallow bow front on the second floor has diamond panes in the upper sash.

Jerkin headed dormers are located on the sites of the hipped roof. A flat roof dormer was added circa 1968 and at some point the original widows walk was removed.



16 Westwood Road 2009

Architecturally, the house is very similar to those produced by the Radford Architectural Company of Chicago.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:**

The property is one of several examples of Shingle style homes on Westwood and Benton Roads. Westwood Road was originally platted on the Shute estate and Benton farm in 1874, but was not developed until 1894, when hardware dealer Charles Bradshaw replatted the entire subdivision. To landscape the street, Bradshaw moved mature elms and maples from elsewhere on the estate to the street line and retained the estate's granite posts as the entrance to the road. Eight Shingle Style houses designed by Somerville architect J. St. Clair Harrold, were initially built by Bradshaw, and by 1905, a total of 17 houses had been constructed. The first owners on Westwood Road held a cross-section of Somerville business and

professional interests at the turn of the century. Divided between Boston and local concerns, the owners included lawyers, pharmacists, shoe, jewelry and desk manufacturers, and dairy and produce dealers. Westwood Road is Somerville's closest representation of a picturesquely-planned nineteenth century subdivision and remains one of the City's finest collections of Shingle and Colonial Revival style residences.

This house was dated to 1911 by Building Permit issued to W. James as a single family house with asbestos siding, with a pitched roof and brick foundation.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### *1. Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Reconstruct widow's walk as seen in historic photo.
2. Replace 3<sup>rd</sup> floor front windows with diamond/1 sash.
3. Replace decorative balustrade over front entry porch.
4. Replace railings and newel posts on front steps.

See the final pages for details and photos.

## II. FINDINGS

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

C/A, Denial	James Veneziano	2003.025	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replace rotted shingles, fascia, soffits and trim in-kind (C/NA);</li> <li>2. Replace mixed wood and aluminum gutters with all metal gutters (C/H).</li> </ol>
C/NA, C/A	James Veneziano	2014.008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The widow's walk shall be reconstructed of with the proportions and style shown in the historic photograph attached with review and approval by Staff and an Architect on the Commission;</li> <li>2. The sliding glass windows in third floor dormer shall be replaced with double-hung 2/2, 2/1 or diamond pane windows to match those on the first and second floors. Shutters maybe installed, if they are used they must be installed in such a way that they appear to be operable with review and approval by Staff and an Architect on the Commission; and</li> <li>3. The second means of egress shall be constructed per drawings and plan 3-A "stair without roof" by DSA Architects dated 25 February, 2014 with a small roof hood over the door and not extending over the stairs.</li> </ol>
C/NA	James Veneziano	2014.017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The railings and porch posts on the ground floor and the second floor shall match the existing in material, size, shape, and installation detail.</li> <li>2. Any other damaged, rotten or missing wood trim shall also be replaced to match the existing trim in material, size, shape, and installation detail.</li> </ol>
C/A, C/NA	James Veneziano	2004.038	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Install a no higher than 6' fence with lattice top and gates between the garage and house on the Benton Road side of the house at 18 Westwood Road;</li> <li>2. Install a 6' fence with lattice top and gates between 16 and 18 Westwood Road approximately 6' in front of the bay at 16 Westwood Road; and</li> <li>3. Install a 6' lattice top gate at the rear corner of 16 Westwood Road on the east side.</li> <li>4. Install a fence between 14 and 16 Westwood Road which is not visible from the public-right-of way.</li> </ol>

1. *Precedence:* As can be seen above, the Applicant was given a Certificate of Appropriateness a year ago to undertake the widow's walk and had intended to replace the balustrade and porch posts in-kind.

1. *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

1. Add a widow's walk as seen in historic photo.

There are no known cases of the replacement of this particular architectural element. However, the Commission regularly approves the replacement of elements based upon photographic and physical evidence. Details and missing elements have been replaced on 36 Atherton Street (2007), 83 Boston Street (2010), 34 Bow Street (2004), 438 Broadway (2005), 13 Campbell Park (2012), 28 Highland Avenue (2006), 140 Highland Avenue (2013), 8 and 18 Westwood Road (2011 and 2013) based upon photographic evidence. These elements ranged from replication of fencing to doorways to panels and siding materials.

There is a photo of the property next door which shows 16 Westwood Road in the background with the widow's walk clearly visible. While fine details are not clear, the corner posts appear to be turned with a finial on top. As can be seen above, the Applicant was given a Certificate of Appropriateness a year ago to undertake the construction of the widow's walk.

2. Replace 3<sup>rd</sup> floor front windows with diamond/1 sash.

The Commission rarely approves alterations to windows on the main façade. However, the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor dormers and windows are not original to the building. A number of modifications to the structure were made in 1985. A Building Permit from 1968 has been found for the construction of a dormer. According to the current owner, there had been one large window that was then modified in order to reconfigure the house as a side by side two-family.

No exact precedence has been found. Several basement windows on secondary and tertiary elevations have been altered for second means of egress and were minimally visible from public rights of way. One window on 30 Forest Street was altered to a Queen Anne style window to allow for a shorter awning window to replace a double-hung window. Most of the windows at 1 Summer Street were altered from leaded glass church windows to double-hung windows with the leading retained in the arches. A Certificate of Appropriateness was granted a year ago to replace the casement windows. The Applicant has chosen to match the existing diamond pane windows on second floor with similar sash in the dormers as can be seen at 17 Westwood Road.

3. Replace decorative balustrade over front entry porch.
4. Replace railings and newel posts on front steps.

Alterations based upon photographic evidence have been approved in the past. A Certificate of Appropriateness was granted a year ago.

3. *Considerations:*

1. *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

All proposed alterations are visible from Westwood Road.

2. *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

Located on Westwood Road, the building is generally good condition. The owner lives next door. Since he received a historic image of his house he has been upgrading his house and now this one to somewhat match the photo. The building lost its widow's walk at an unknown date.

The dormer may have been constructed in 1968 per Building Permit records. It currently has 2 small casement windows that are both ill-proportioned and not compatible with the style of the house.

There is no widows walk. The current railings and posts are generic.

See photos and plans at the end of the document.

3. *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 widows walk was not discussed in the Form B since it no longer existed and no known historic photograph had been found of the building. The front dormer was mentioned as a modern addition.

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

The widows walk would be replaced per the historic photo which is not highly detailed but does appear to have urn-shaped posts with an acorn finial.

The posts and railings and balusters would be consistent on widows walk, balustrade and front porch and steps.

The dormers on the side of the building are narrower than the front dormer and have double-hung windows. The proposal is to replace the sliding windows with double-hung windows on the front dormer with diamond patterned upper sash to match the existing sash in center bay on the second floor. This was reviewed and approved by the Commission back in 1988, however, the details of the approved windows were not in the files but appears to have been double-hung sash.

- 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 widow's walk would be replaced per the historic photo which is not highly detailed.

The dormer windows would be altered.

- 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 of the widow's walk will be in wood. It does appear to have either solid sides or simple balusters, and urn-shaped corner posts with an acorn finial. The Applicant has suggested that it might be about 2 feet high.

The balustrade on top of the entry porch and its posts, rails and balusters would match those on the widows walk.

The windows will also be double-hung wood sash with a diamond pane configuration similar to that of the second floor.

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 widow's walk will be visible.

The front porch is visible.

The front dormer windows are visible.

## **B. Roofs**

1. *Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.*

There will be no change in the roof shape of the main building. The new roof on the second means of egress will follow its contours down the rear of the building.

2. *Retain the original roof covering whenever possible. If the property has a slate roof, conserve the roof slates. Slate is a near-permanent roofing material, and deterioration is generally caused by rusted roofing nails.*

There will be no change in the roof material although there will be the addition of the widow's walk as documented.

3. *Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.*

There will be no change in the roof material although there will be the addition of the widow's walk as documented.

4. *Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*

The widow's walk will be restored as documented although details are a little unclear from the photograph available.

5. *New dormers will be permitted if they are related to the forms, proportions, size and arrangement of existing windows, and constructed in matching materials and colors. If possible, new dormers should be confined to the rear of the house.*

There will be no new dormers.

### C. *Windows and Doors*

1. *Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.*

The window openings will not be altered.

2. *Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.*

Double-hung sash with diamond panes similar in size to those in the center bay on the floor are proposed. This will be single pane, not insulated with a storm window.

### 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.*

Posts will match those shown in the historic photograph as closely as possible. Rails and balusters will be simple due to the difficulty in interpreting their precise style.

## 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 Westwood Road Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant James Veneziano, Westwood Road Trust a Certificate of Appropriateness** with the following contingencies:

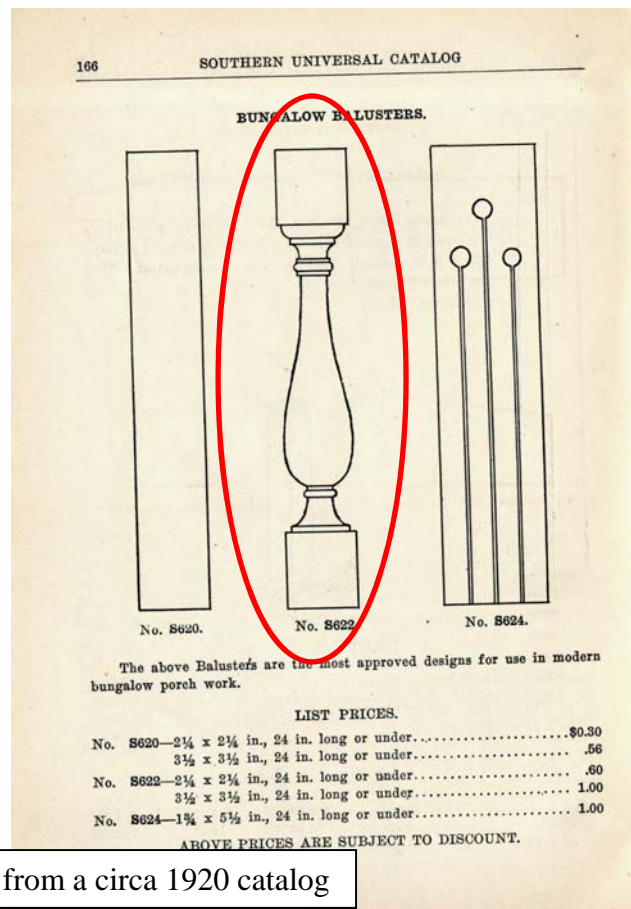
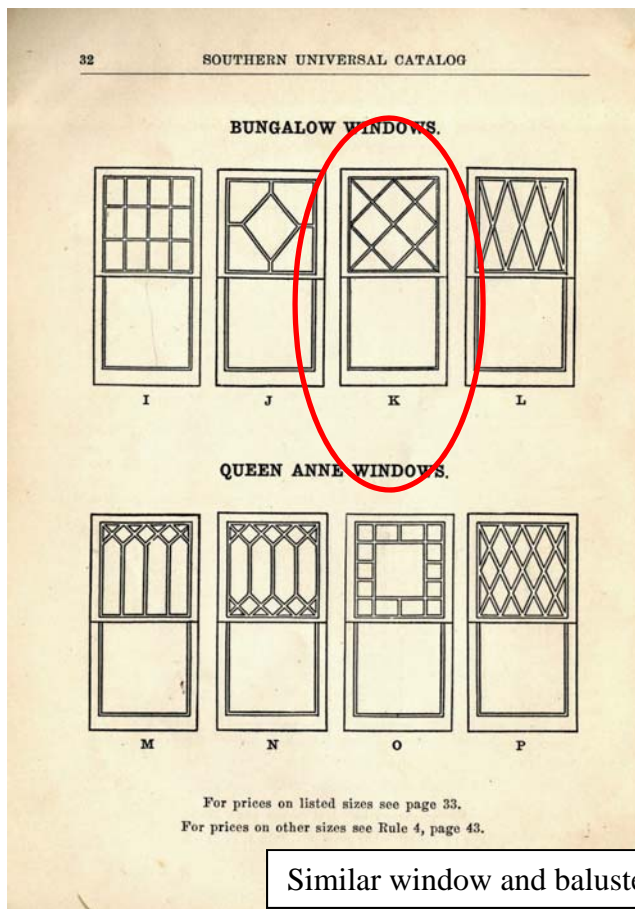
1. The widow's walk shall be constructed *with the proportions and style shown in the historic photograph*;
2. Staff and a Commission Member shall confirm that the posts are similar in style and proportion to the photograph prior to installation.
3. The balustrade on top of the front entry porch, the rails, balusters and posts of the front porch and stairs shall match those of the widows walk.
4. The windows in the third floor dormer shall be double-hung single diamond light upper sash and single light on the lower sash.











Similar window and baluster from a circa 1920 catalog