

STAFF REPORT: 02/08/2024 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: D. RIEDEN

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00184

ADDRESS: 2491 LONGFELLOW

HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON-EDISON

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: STEVE MAMAT

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 04/17/2024

DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 05/03/2022, 04/19/2024

SCOPE: ALTER DWELLING (WORK COMPLETED WITHOUT APPROVAL), REMOVE TREE, INSTALL PARKING PAD AND FENCE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Built in 1922, the property at 2491 Longfellow has a hipped asphalt-shingled roof which features a centrally placed dormer facing the front and at each side of the house. The eaves are bracketed, and the house is clad in light brown brick. The symmetrically placed windows, which were once wood and featured true divided-light mullions, and arched transoms, have been replaced by vinyl windows with between-glass grids. All original windows, except for those on the garage have been replaced on this property. The original shutters are still present. The front porch roof was originally supported by a series of paired round columns, which have since been replaced with 4 four square columns, painted black. The original front porch deck was rebuilt and resurfaced within the same footprint without approval. Property files indicate that there are no former Historic District Commission (HDC) approvals on this property.



Site Photo 1, by Staff April 19, 2024: (North) front elevation showing replaced vinyl windows, altered porch and landscape.



Image, 1980: (North) front elevation showing original windows and porch condition.

PROPOSAL

The current project is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for work that has been completed without HDC approval by a previous owner to include the current asphalt roofs of the house and garage, the rear porch, the front and rear doors, the garage doors, the front porch light fixtures, the removal of landscape foundation plantings, and the house dormer, shutters and porch trim painted black. In addition to this previous unapproved work, the applicant would like to propose the installation of a parking pad near the rear garage, installation of fence, and the removal of a tree.

ROOF (Work completed without approval)

Replace asphalt roof on house and garage with asphalt roof per attached photos.

WINDOWS (Work completed without approval)

Except for the two (2) garage windows, replace all windows with vinyl windows and basement windows with glass block, per attached photos.

FRONT & REAR PORCHES & DOORS (Work completed without approval)

- Rebuild front porch deck with new brick, repour concrete deck and steps per attached photos.
- Replace front porch pairing of wood round columns with single, custom built wood square columns, per attached photos.
- Replace front porch lights per attached photos.
- Replace rear porch with wood porch and roof per attached photos.
- Replace front door with wood door per attached photo.
- Replace rear wood door with steel door per attached photo.
- Replace garage door with steel garage door.
- Replace garage wood man door with steel door.

PAINT (Work completed without approval)

- Paint front and rear porches, front door trim, dormer siding, and shutters color black.

LANDSCAPE

- Remove front foundation shrubs and replace with lawn (Work completed by previous owner without approval).
- Remove rear tree.
- Install rear gravel parking area and walking path per attached site plan.
- Install 6' wood privacy fence to match existing privacy fence per attached site plan. Stain fence after one year of installation.



Aerial 1 of Parcel # 10002637, by Detroit Parcel Viewer, showing the proposed pad location (arrow).

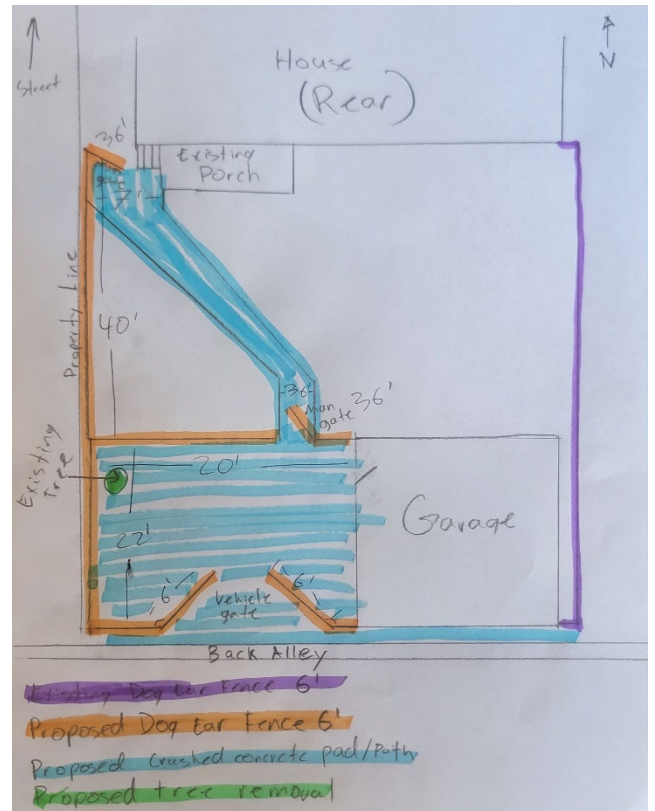


Fig 1, by Applicant: Proposed installation of the gravel pad and walkway, fence, and tree removal.



Fig 2, by Google Street View, June 2019: (North) front elevation showing conditions prior to previous owner.



Site Photo 2, by Applicant: (South) rear side elevation showing replaced vinyl windows, altered rear porch and replaced rear door.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Boston-Edison Historic District was established in 1974.
- This property has no Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) found on file. This property has the following listed violations on this property, which were completed between 2019 and 2023:
 - House and garage asphalt roof replaced with asphalt roof.
 - All wood windows (except garage windows) replaced with vinyl windows, basement windows replaced with with glass block windows.
 - Front porch deck rebuilt, paired columns replaced with single square columns.
 - Rear porch altered.
 - Front and rear door replaced.
 - Garage door and mandoor replaced.
 - Front porch lights replaced.
 - Landscape foundation shrubs replaced with lawn.
 - House dormer, shutters and porch trim painted black.
- Although staff requested records and documentation of the installed/unapproved products, the applicant has not been able to provide this information. Staff reviewed several real estate agent listings of this property but found no photos that showed prior conditions other than Google Street View and those provided by the current owner. Rather than product information specification sheets, staff has referenced photos for the following items: asphalt shingles, windows, doors, garage door, porch columns, rear porch construction, and front porch lighs.
- At the time of this report, staff received a cost estimate from the applicant. The estimate is from Alexandria, for Sierra Pacific Window installation, dated May 3, 2024, in the amount of \$144,399.70 for the replacement of all vinyl windows with aluminum-clad wood units. Staff observes that this is cost reference material.



Site Photo 3, by Staff April 19, 2024: looking north from the alley, showing garage roof and proposed pad site.

ROOF

- The shingles installed on the house and garage roof are dimensional asphalt shingles that replaced previous asphalt shingles, and, in staff's opinion, appropriate for the district. (See Site photos 1, 2, and 3.)

WINDOWS

- The true divided-light, double-hung windows, and the radial transoms at the front elevation were distinctive character-defining features. Their loss substantially detracts from and destroys the historic appearance of the building.
- No documentation of the condition of the original windows was available but staff observed that the wood windows were present until at least 2019 from Google Street View images. (See figures 2 & 3)
- It is staff's opinion, through limits of fabrication and material, vinyl windows are not appropriate for historic districts.
 - Vinyl windows and wrapped brickmould offer a plasticity and flat/thick appearance that does not adequately match the profile/dimensionality and appearance of historic windows, such as wood.
 - Consumer grade vinyl windows weather poorly, deteriorate rapidly, and exhibit poor detailing and detracting color/sheen.
 - The framing material, glazing, and seals (which keeps the argon gas intact between the insulated glass) of vinyl windows break down more quickly in ultraviolet light than wood or steel-framed windows.
 - Vinyl also lacks rigidity and can expand and contract more greatly than wood and steel. This can result in discoloration and warping of the vinyl frames, as well as condensation between the glass layers.
- In addition to a material change from wood to vinyl, the configuration and operation of the windows was also changed. For example, the dormer double-hung windows were replaced with slider windows. Coil stock is observed around most of the windows so it is not known if the original brick mould is still present. These newly installed windows have several features that are not appropriate:
 - the surrounding coil covering the brickmould is large and gives the windows a chunky appearance and with the arched transoms, larger seems are found around the perimeter,
 - the meeting rails in the double hung windows do not meet,



Site Photo 4, by Staff April 19, 2024: (North) front elevation showing detail of thick, vinyl coil stock around brick mold and seam, and color tinted transom, proposed

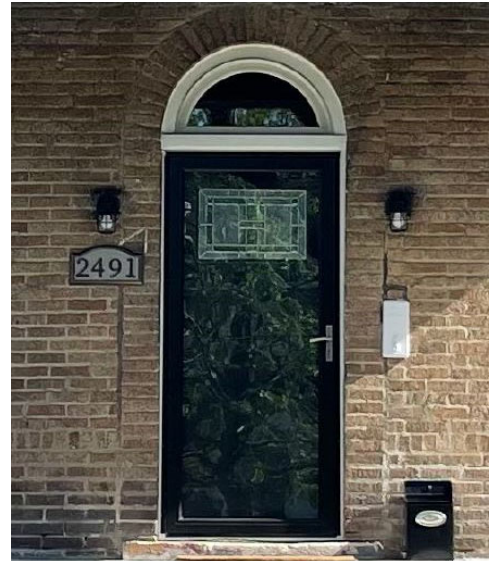


Site Photo 3, by Applicant: (west) side elevation showing replaced vinyl windows.



Site Photos 4&5, by applicant April 2024: east elevation, showing replaced vinyl windows.

- the dimensions of the header and base of the window do not match the original wood windows,
- the between-the-glass grids lose dimensionality of the original divided light and do not match the original placement of the window's 8/1 versus 8/8 divided locations.
- The radial patterns of the true divided light original transoms are lost.
- Although the glass block basement windows did not strictly follow the HDC guidelines by recessing the glass block into the window opening that was once occupied by the historic location of the wood windows, staff has the opinion that the installation at these rear and side basement locations is appropriate.



Site Photo 6, by Staff April 19, 2024: (north) front elevation showing replaced front door and light fixtures.



Site Photo 7, by Applicant April 2024: (south) showing replaced garage door.

FRONT & REAR PORCHES & DOORS

- It is staff's opinion that the pairing of the round-columns at the front porch are characteristic of the Colonial Revival architecture of the property and are character defining features of the house. Each pair, two at each end of the porch, and two side by side, totalling eight (8) columns have been reduced to four (4) single square columns, reducing the form, altering the shape and color, and modifying the design of the columns which greatly alters the porch's distinctive, historic expression. *(See photo 1, and designation image.)* However, it is staff's opinion that the repoured front porch deck, and the rebuilt front porch wingwalls and steps do meet the Standards and are appropriate.
- Staff observed that the original rear porch has been removed and new porch constructed. Scars left on the brick face above the new porch roof show the original extent of the rear porch, which was likely a flat roof that extended to, but stopped short of the window at the first floor in alignment with the windows above it. While the best approach is to closely align the new construction with the historic location of the former roof, it is staff's opinion that the newly constructed rear porch is not demonstrably inappropriate at this rear elevation because it consists of wood materials, has a wood decking, skirting and wood railing that meets the Standards and conforms to the district's Elements of Design.
- It is staff's opinion that the new light fixtures are an appropriate use of design and maintain a similar scale, material and placement to the historic fixtures. *(See photo 6.)*
- While staff has no issue with the material of the front door and rear doors, it is staff's opinion that the vision panel for both the front and rear doors are not appropriate for the design of this house. In the case of the front door, a leaded-glass rectangular form is inconsistent with the simplicity of the colonial revival style architecture. At the rear of the house, the steel doors introduce a fan-shaped window opening at both rear doors that is not compatible and a simple rectangular panel window would suffice, in staff's opinion. *(See photos 1, 2 and 6)*
- The new steel panel garage door and steel man door, in staff's opinion, are appropriate, in staff's opinion. *(See photos 3& 7)*

PAINT

- According to the HDC Color Guidelines, the associated architectural style is Color System C. While black is considered an acceptable color for sash, it is not listed as a recommended color for dormer siding, porches and shutters. It is staff’s opinion that this color is not appropriate at the following locations: front door trim, front porch columns, dormer siding, and shutters. Staff offers the opinion that although “Blackish Green” A:8, can be used as a shutter color, the other items are more typically ranged closer to C:4 and C:5, “Yellowish White” for trim colors.

LANDSCAPE

- Although in need of some pruning and care, the foundation evergreen shrubs were present until 2019 and were replaced with lawn or no plantings at all. Staff has the opinion that these foundation plantings contribute to the property’s historic character and complement the architecture of the property. Their removal without substantial cause and without a plan for replacement is not appropriate. (See figure 3.)
- The tree is of historic age and in need of pruning. However, the overall health of the tree appears to have reached a point where it is a threat to both the neighbor’s garage and the applicant’s garage due to its proximity and overall condition. The root system appears to be pushing close to the garage’s foundations. It is staff’s opinion that the removal of this tree is appropriate. Staff recommends the replanting of at least one shade tree on the property to maintain the historic canopy of the neighborhood. (See photo 8.)
- Staff finds that the proposed gravel parking area and walking pathway are appropriate.
- Staff has the opinion that the proposed 6’ wood panel fence along the rear property line and inside the backyard are appropriate as they provide continuity to existing fence conditions and follow the HDC guidelines. Staff received clarification from the applicant’s contractor that the reason for waiting one year is allow the treated wood to age before being stained.



Figure 3, by Google Street View 2018: (north) front elevation showing conditions prior to previous owner.



Site Photo 8, by staff, April 19, 2024: (looking northwest from the alley) showing proposed location of parking pad and tree removal.

ISSUES

- No documentation establishing that the condition of the original wood windows was beyond repair was submitted or available.
- It is staff’s opinion that the removal of the original wood windows and replacement with white vinyl windows greatly alters the original *scale, design, and materiality* of the building’s fenestration and the new windows are incompatible and inappropriate for this historic property. Therefore, this work item does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and does not conform to the district’s Elements of Design.
- While the repair and rebuilding of the front porch deck and wingwalls is appropriate, the replacement of the double pairs of original columns with newly constructed single square columns destroys distinctive, character-defining historic features and creates a new architectural expression that is not compatible with the historic features, scale, massing, and proportion of the historic architecture of this property.
- While the material is appropriate, the replacement of front and rear doors is inappropriate as they introduce a design that alters the historic character of the property: the vision panels for each of these doors introduces a new form that is not compatible with the Colonial Revival style of the house.

- Black is not an appropriate color for front door trim, front porch columns and trim, dormer siding and shutters as is not compatible with the Colonial Revival style of the house.
- The removal of foundation plantings without cause or a planting replacement alters the historic character of the property by removing distinctive, character-defining features in the landscape.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Recommendation 1: Replace Original Wood Windows with Vinyl Windows, Replace Porch Columns, Replace Doors, Paint, Remove Foundation Plantings (Work Completed without Approval)

Staff finds that the replacement of the original wood windows with vinyl windows, replacement of front porch columns, replacement of the front and rear doors, painting of front door trim, front porch columns, dormer siding and shutters black, removal of foundation plantings does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the following reasons:

- No documentation establishing that the original condition of the casement windows were beyond repair was submitted or available.
- The replacement of the original wood windows with vinyl windows is not compatible with historic architecture in the house in that they:
 - destroy the distinctive, character-defining features of the original windows, particularly the true-divided lights and radial transom detailing,
 - introduce a new operation, configuration, design, and scale,
 - introduces a new material, vinyl, which is not historically appropriate material and does not conform to the District's Elements of Design.
- The replacement of the original eight (8) front porch columns with four (4) newly constructed square columns destroys distinctive, character-defining historic features and creates a new architectural expression that is not compatible with the historic features, scale, massing, and proportion to the Colonial Revival architecture of the house.
- The vision panel of the front and rear doors are not compatible with the Colonial Revival style of the house.
- The paint color location is not compatible with the Colonial Revival style of the house.
- Removing the foundation plantings drastically alters the appearance and features of the historic property.

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial for the above work items, as it do not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards:

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Recommendation 2: Replace House and Garage Roofs, Install Glass Block Basement Windows, Rebuild Front Porch Deck, Replace Rear Porch, Replace Garage Doors, (Work Completed without Approval), Remove Tree, Install Parking Pad and Fence

It is staff's opinion that the replacement of the asphalt roofs of the house and garage, installation of glass block basement windows, rebuilding of the front porch deck, replacement of the rear porch, replacement of the front porch light fixtures, replacement of the garage doors, removal of a tree, installation of parking pad and fence is appropriate. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work as proposed because it meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Boston-Edison District Elements of Design.

Staff recommends the COA be issued with following conditions, subject to staff review:

- The applicant provides HDC staff with a planting plan that offers at least one shade tree on the property to replace the removed tree.
- The applicant provides HDC staff with a paint or solid stain color for the fence.