



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

*Joseph A. Curtatone*

*Mayor*

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

KRISTENNA CHASE, *PRESERVATION PLANNER*  
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*

**Case #:** HPC 2019.055  
**Date:** October 15, 2019

**Recommendation:** NOT Preferably Preserved

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**PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT**  
*for*  
**Determination of Preferably Preserved**

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**Site:** 15 MacArthur Street

**Applicant Name:** Sal Querusio

**Applicant Address:** 8 Munroe Street, Somerville, MA

**Owner Name:** 15 MacArthur Street, LLC

**Owner Address:** 83 Altamont Avenue, Melrose, MA

**Petition:** Applicant seeks to demolish the 1 ½-story wood-framed barn

**HPC Hearing Date:** October 15, 2019

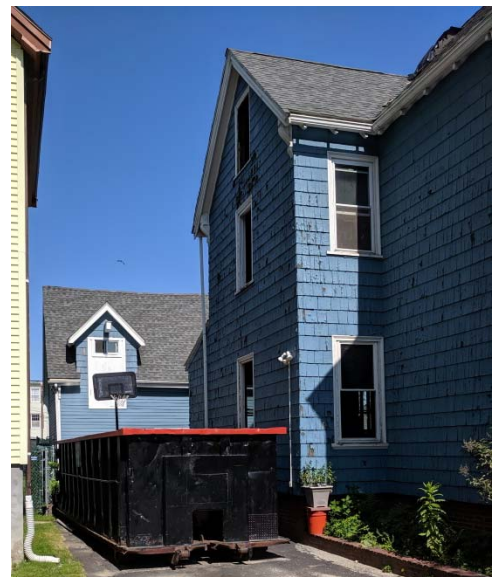
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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1890 1 ½-story wood-framed barn.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

**II. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance**

On September 17, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 15 MacArthur Street is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:



*Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;*

**and**

- (i) *The structure is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth;*

**and**

- (ii) *The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

The Commission found the barn importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its use as a barn or carriage house and the pre- automotive era. It is also associated with veterinary surgeon Erwin F. Schroeder at the beginning of his career.

The Commission found the barn historically and architecturally significant due to its method of building construction and its association with pre-automotive Somerville.

The period of significance for 15 MacArthur Street circa 1895 with its construction as a barn or carriage house attached to the house at the same address. Barns and carriage houses were once common throughout the city for people who had businesses that could not be easily dealt with using the extensive streetcar system. In this case, the first owners were veterinarians. Charles R. Simpson may have cared for animals in the barn along with housing three horses and a hostler in the building. Erwin F Schroeder became a prominent veterinary surgeon and head of the Angell Memorial Animal Hospital.

### III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See attached structural evaluation from Lala Associates Engineers LLC and signed by Sanjay Kaul, a Civil Engineer, describing the condition of the building resulting from poor maintenance and extensive water damage. He states that many of the repairs have removed much of the original fabric and were improperly executed. See photos attached to his report. A structural engineer's report will be submitted on the evening of October 10, 2019, too late for inclusion in this report.

#### *Comparable Structures:*

Barn/stable structures can be found throughout the City. While several barn/stable structures within the City remain in moderate to good condition, many more remain in moderate to poor condition, due to the lack of repurposing this type of structure. Here are a few comparable structures scattered around the city:

The predominant difference between the comparable barns illustrated below is one of maintenance and use. Some have been converted to residences, others to studios and home offices while some are still in use as shelters for automobiles.



*Top: 22 Porter Street (LHD); 15 Linden Avenue; Preston Road;*



Center: Preston Road; ?; Sycamore Street;



Bottom: 38 Marshall Street; 29 Meacham Road (LHD)

#### IV. PREFERABLY PRESERVED

*If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)*

*A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:*

*How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

- a) *How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The form and massing of this barn/stable structure represents a common historic accessory structure that served a variety of purposes. The modified exterior appearance continues to illustrate original features, such as the hayloft door and hoist, while other features that have been since been altered, still have a presence.

- b) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

Although the existing conditions are poor, material alterations have modified the exterior appearance of this structure. There have also been interior modifications resulting in the loss

of historic fabric. The style is utilitarian, but the fenestration pattern is still largely understood. The building still retains a moderate level of integrity, but if the building continues not to be used, the structural integrity will continue to deteriorate.

*c) What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

The Commission found the barn importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its use as a barn or carriage house and the pre-automotive era. It is also associated with veterinary surgeon Erwin F. Schroeder at the beginning of his career.

The Commission found the barn historically and architecturally significant due to its method of building construction and its association with pre-automotive Somerville.

Barn/stable structures were constructed in New England for a variety of general purposes such as to house animals, store food and other general items, and later to shelter carriages. Therefore, the subject structure represents an aspect of local and state (regional) history. In this case, in addition to shelter for horses and a hostler, sick animals may have been cared for there by Charles R. Simpson and Erwin Schroeder, both of whom were veterinarians,

*d) What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

The subject structure is located on a major thoroughfare and serves as a buffer between the busy arterial and the abutting residential neighborhood. It is visible behind the residences on MacArthur Street down the driveway.

*e) What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*

Barn/stable structures are found throughout the City; however, not many remain in existence within the immediate area. Also, few barn/stable structures within the City remain in moderate to good condition.

***Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?***

The Commission found the barn/stable structure historically significant due to the minimally modified exterior appearance, existing fenestration pattern, and traditional use as an agricultural accessory building which served a number of purposes. The structure continues to convey a moderate level of integrity, is visible from McGrath Highway and minimally from McArthur Street, and is one of the last barn/stables in the immediate neighborhood.

Staff, however, finds that the condition of the building outweighs its value of its historic significance to the City. The barn is currently in poor condition that when repaired would result in a total simulation of the original with no sense of its history or use. It cannot be rebuilt the same size with the same materials in the same location due to the changes in code.

#### **I V. RECOMMENDATION**

***Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 15 McArthur Street NOT to be PREFERABLY PRESERVED.***



# LALA ASSOCIATES ENGINEERS LLC

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Strategic Planning and Community Development  
City Hall  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143

October 2, 2019

Attn.: Ms. *Kristenna P. Chase*, *Preservation Planner, Historic Preservation Commission*

Re: 15 Macarthur Street - Structural Evaluation of Detached Barn

Dear Ms. Chase:

I have reviewed the structure of the detached barn on September 26. This is a one story structure 30'-6" x 24'-6" built in early 1900s, with a gable roof. The walls are balloon framed and are bearing on the stone foundation.

The wall studs and posts are damaged at their base due to high moisture, no flashings for the protection from the roof runoff and also from the insects.

The wall sheathing boards have moisture damage. The walls are out of vertical alignment. The roof rafters have rot in many locations due to lack of ventilation. The structure did not get a routine maintenance for several years. The repairs have removed most of the original materials and have not been done to meet the code. Foundation is not deep for frost protection. Concrete repairs are improperly done and are hiding original stone foundation which has disintegrated.

Any kind of repairs would only bring the structure to habitable conditions and not to current building code.

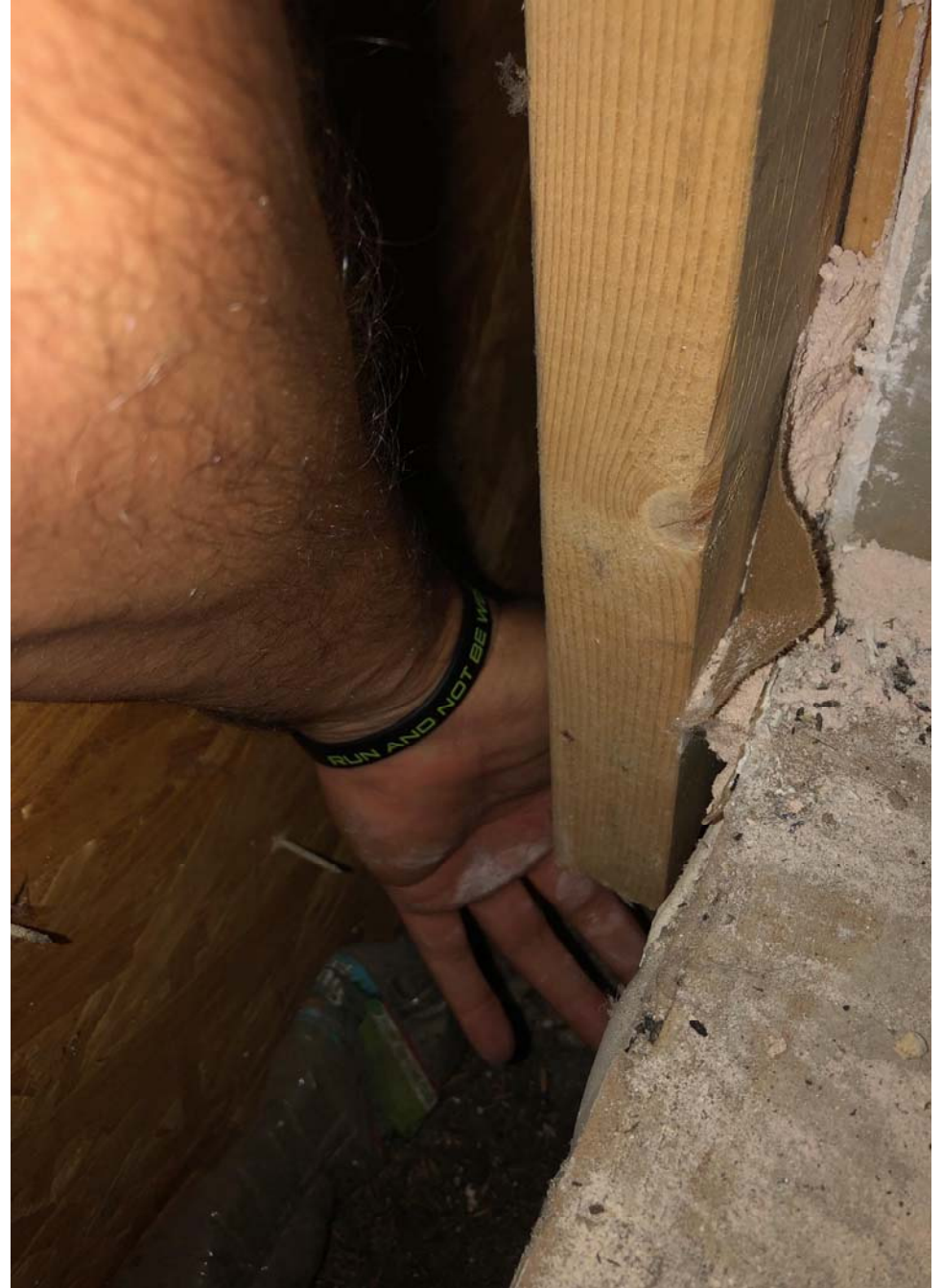
This analysis is in compliance with the IEBC2015 as amended by the State building code 780 CMR 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

Sincerely



Sanjay Kaul, P.E.

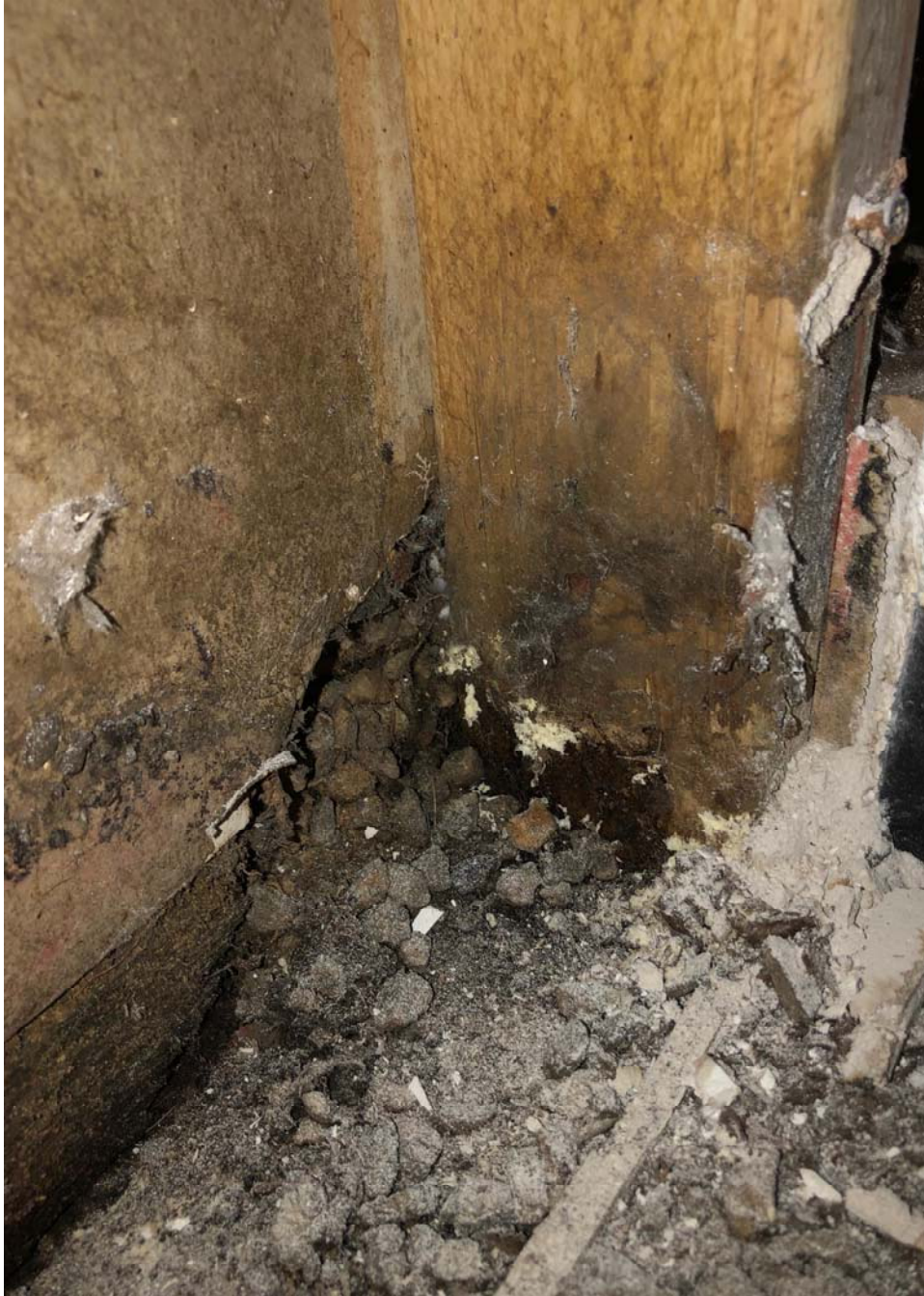
SOMERVILLE 15 MACARTHUR STREET - P1  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2019



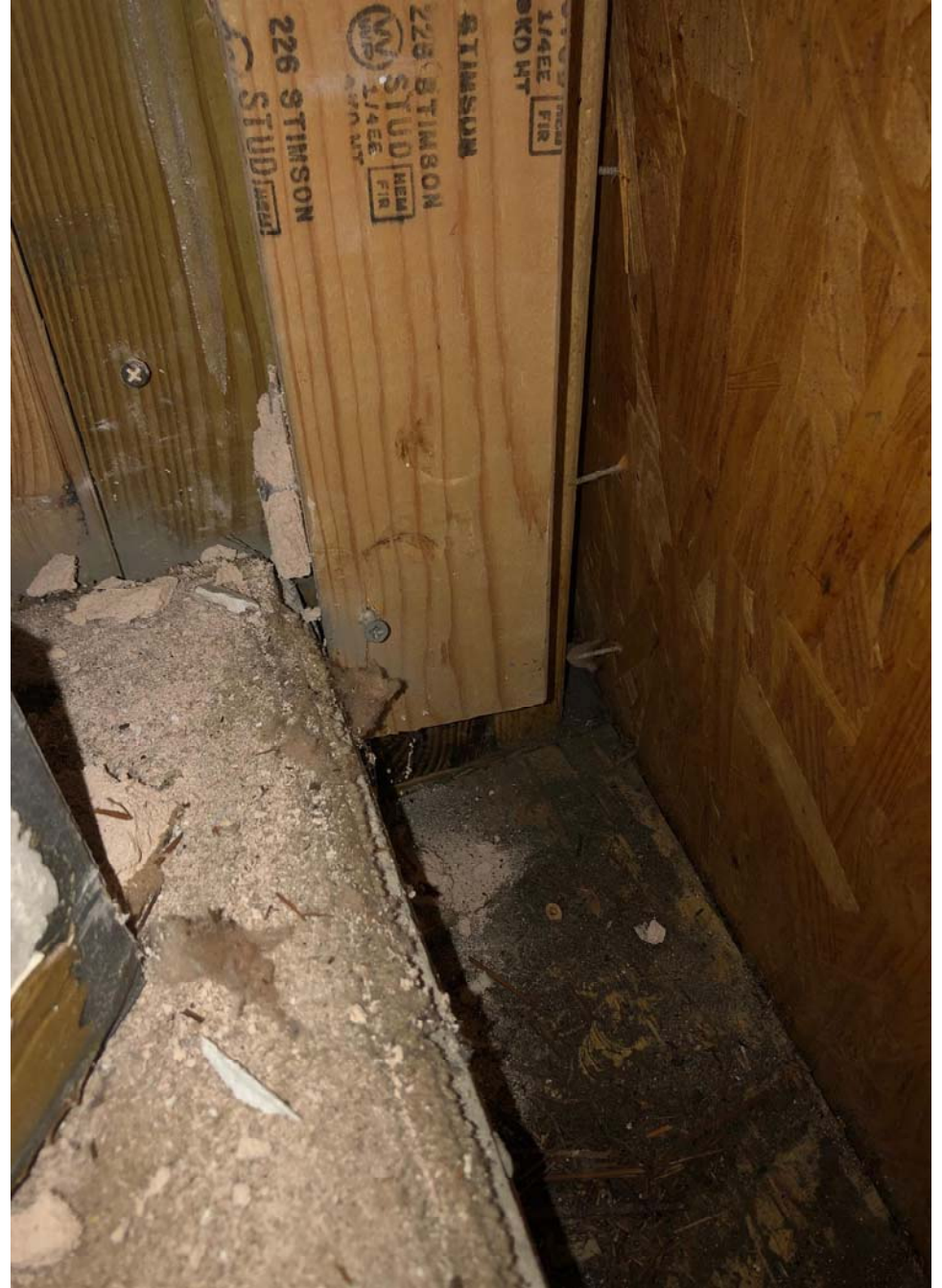
DAMAGED STUDS USED FOR REPAIRS ARE FLOATING ABOVE THE BASE - HAND SHOWS AIR SPACE UNDER THE BOTTOM OF STUD  
OSB SHEATHING USED FOR REPAIRS DETACHED FROM THE WALL STUD



SOMERVILLE 15 MACARTHUR STREET - P2  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2019



ROT AT BASE OF STUD AND WALL SHEATHING, POOR CONCRETE REPAIRS WITH EXPOSED AGGREGATE OF THE POUR.



WALL STUDS NOT SUPPORTED AT THE BASE AND DETACHED OSB SHEATHING INDICATE POOR REPAIRS.



SOMERVILLE 15 MACARTHUR STREET - P3  
SEPTEMBER 26, 2019



STUDS DETACHED FROM THE ROOF EAVE BEAM AND DRY ROT IN THE WALL SHEATHING BOARDS WITH SEVERAL CHECKS.



ORIGINAL FINISH REPLACED WITH GYPSUM WALL BOARD





FULLY DAMAGED CORNER POST AND CONCRETE  
BASE FLOATING ABOVE THE GRADE



DAMAGED TO OTHER CORNER POST AT BASE AND  
DISINTEGRATED FOUNDATION TOP