



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 2019.057
Date: October 15, 2019

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 7 Central Street
Applicant Name: Hellenic Association of Somerville
Applicant Address: 7 Central Street, Somerville, MA
Owner Name: Same
Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the wood-framed house.

HPC Hearing Date: October 15, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1870 wood-framed house.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On November 26, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 7 Central 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 Historic Preservation Commission found 7 Central Street 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.

The house is closely associated with the Stone family, prominent in Somerville since the 18th century, and with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City

Central Street was set out as early as the 1680s as one of ten north-to-south rangeways that divided Somerville's land into one and one quarter mile wide lots. Central Street remained unpaved until the mid-nineteenth century. By that time Central Street was bordered by the estates of the Brastow, Nichols, Stone, Shute and Tyler families. Ample parcels belonging to these families contained meandering driveways with landscaped islands and commodious stables and other outbuildings. During the 1890s, the story of the mid-Victorian era, Central Street estates ended with their subdivision into smaller lots for Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Shingle style residences.

7 Central Street serves as a gateway to the Central, Atherton, Spring and Summer Local Historic District and the Spring Hill National Register of Historic Places District. Here, an abrupt visual transition is made from the commercial properties bordering Somerville Avenue to the Spring Hill neighborhood of mid-to-late nineteenth century residences.

The period of significance for the house at 7 Central Street begins circa 1870 with its construction and associations with the Stone family. 7 Central Street has significant historical associations with Somerville's Stone family. The Stones settled in Somerville during the eighteenth century and conducted farming on their land at the southern base of Spring Hill until as late as the 1870s. The late nineteenth century Stones of Central Street (the brothers Nathaniel T. and Jonathan) owned two eighteenth century family homesteads in Somerville. One Stone House was located on the east side of Stone Avenue at Union Square. They owned this venerable dwelling until as late as 1874. Another ancient Stone residence dating back to the 1700s was located on Somerville Avenue, near Central Street just to the south of 7 Central Street. Before moving to 15 Central Street in 1869, Nathaniel T. Stone, a brother of Jonathan Stone of 7 Central Street, lived in the Somerville Avenue Stone homestead (now the site of Dunkin Donuts, at the corner of Somerville Avenue and Central Street).

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

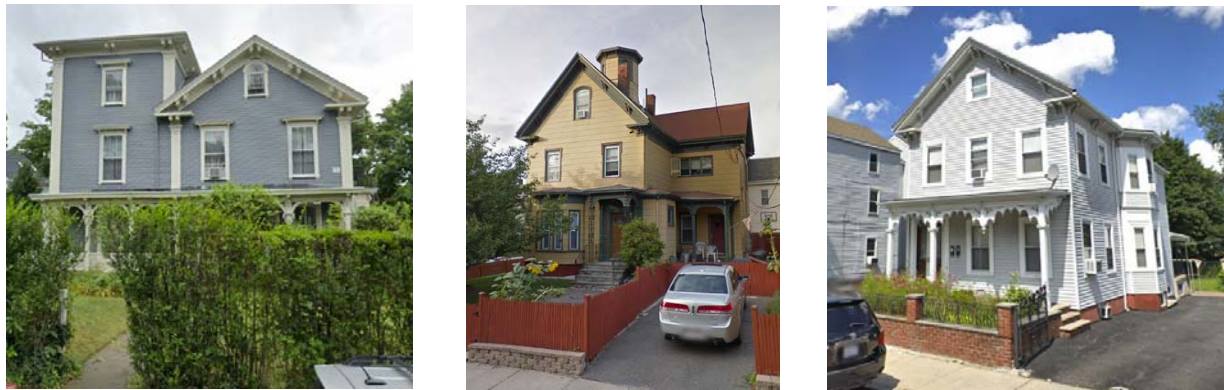
No additional information has been received. At the last meeting it was noted that a fire had damaged part of the building at which time many of the architectural details noted on the Form B were removed. Only the door hood remains along with the building's form, massing and general fenestration pattern.

Comparable Structures:

There are many Italianate structures throughout the city with similar details and form, although none are known to have the deep connections to the city's founding families.



102 Beacon Street, LHD (c. 1874); 71 Central Street (c. 1870); 47 Columbus Avenue LHD (1882)



45 Laurel Street LHD (c. 1860), 27 Maple Avenue LHD (c. 1874), 81 Pearl Street LHD (c. 1860)

II. 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) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*
 - The exterior of the structure (the only portion of the building within the purview of the HPC), retains its massing and form as well as the front entry porch. See determination of significance for a summary of the historic architectural features of this structure.
- b) *What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

- The Historic Preservation Commission found 7 Central Street 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. The house is closely associated with the Stone family, prominent in Somerville since the 18th century, and with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City
 - 7 Central Street serves as a gateway to the Central, Atherton, Spring and Summer Local Historic District and the Spring Hill National Register of Historic Places District. Here, an abrupt visual transition is made from the commercial properties bordering Somerville Avenue to the Spring Hill neighborhood of mid-to-late nineteenth century residences.
 - The period of significance for the house at 7 Central Street begins circa 1870 with its construction and associations with the Stone family. 7 Central Street has significant historical associations with Somerville's Stone family. The Stones settled in Somerville during the eighteenth-century and conducted farming on their land at the southern base of Spring Hill until as late as the 1870s. The late nineteenth century Stones of Central Street (the brothers Nathaniel T. and Jonathan) owned two eighteenth century family homesteads in Somerville. One Stone House was located on the east side of Stone Avenue at Union Square. They owned this venerable dwelling until as late as 1874. Another ancient" Stone residence dating back to the 1700s was located on Somerville Avenue, -near Central Street just to the south of 7 Central Street. Before moving to 15 Central Street in 1869, Nathaniel T. Stone, a brother of Jonathan Stone of 7 Central Street, lived in the Somerville Avenue Stone homestead (now the site of Dunkin Donuts, at the corner of Somerville Avenue and Central Street).
- c) *What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*
- The structure is set back from the street with a large front and side yards.
- d) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*
- The City of Somerville has several examples of this style of house scattered throughout. See the comparable structures above for well-kept examples.
- e) *Upon a consideration of the above criteria is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?*
- Staff finds that the demolition of 7 Central Street would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City due to the importance of the Stone family in the city's history.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 7 Central Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*