



City of Medford

HISTORICAL COMMISSION HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308
85 George P. Hassett Drive
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

Via Electronic Mail

April 2, 2019

Adam L. Hurtubise, City Clerk
Medford City Hall, Room 103
85 George P. Hassett Drive
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

Re: 421 High Street, Determination of Significance

Dear Sir,

The Medford Historical Commission (the “Commission”) has received an application concerning the proposed demolition of the funeral home located at 421 High Street, Medford, MA. The application was filed at the Commission’s regular meeting on Monday, February 11, 2019. Pursuant to Section 48-78(d) of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford, a public meeting was held on Monday, March 11, 2019, in Room 201 of Medford City Hall to determine if the aforementioned property was to be found to be *significant* under Medford’s Demolition Delay Ordinance.

As set forth in Section 48-78, a *significant* building is any structure, or a portion thereof, which is not within a local historic district subject to regulation under the provisions of MGLA c. 40C, but which:

1. Has been listed in or is the subject of a pending application for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; or
2. Has been listed in the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places; or
3. Was built within 75 years or older and which is determined by the commission to be a significant building as provided by subsection 48-78(d) either because:
 - a. It 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; or
 - b. It is historically or architecturally important in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with an important architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

At its February 11 meeting, the Commission made the determination that 421 High Street is a significant building under Section 48-78 of the Demolition Delay Ordinance. The Commission’s determination (passed by a 5-0 vote), was based on the documentation and research contained in the attached Massachusetts Historical Commission (“MHC”) form B prepared by John Clemson, the Commission’s consultant in architectural history. The Commission also reviewed associated MHC area forms and an expanded neighborhood narrative for the area of West Medford in which the premises is located. The facts supporting the findings are as follows:

1. 421 High Street is a contributing resource to the West Medford Commercial Area (MDF.AE). Extending lineally along High Street, this business district is the commercial core of the surrounding residential neighborhood. It centers on the site of the now demolished Boston and Lowell Railroad Depot. The area contains a wide range of establishments housed in a variety of buildings. Most are mixed or adaptively reused structures. Since 1952, this building has been utilized as a funeral home – one of four in the City.
2. 421 High Street contributes to the High Street streetscape. Constructed before 1889 as a residential dwelling, the building is situated on an expansive lot carved from the adjacent Teel House. It matches others constructed along this main artery and serves as an important reminder of the earliest development activity.
3. 421 High Street possesses architectural merit. The original buildings form and style are identifiable. Later changes do not obscure the buildings original design intent. Surviving features include: massing, setback, placement of windows and doors.
4. The building represents the social history of the surrounding neighborhood. The building was erected for Edward and Penelope Shaw. Both were Canadian immigrants and lived in the house until the 20th century. It was rented to a variety of middle-class working families whose occupations relate directly to the surrounding commercial area.

Based on the information available to it, the Commission has found 421 High Street to be historically significant under Section 48-78(d) under criteria a and b, set forth in the definition of “significant building” in section Section 48-77 of the Demolition Delay Ordinance, as it has import associations with the broad architectural history of the City of Medford. It is architecturally important in terms of period and style in the context of buildings in the area of West Medford in which it was erected. These factors, viewed in combination, provide ample support for a finding of significance.

In accordance with Section 48-78(e) of the Revised Ordinances of the City of Medford **the Medford Historical Commission will hold a public meeting on Monday, April 8, 2019, at 7 p.m. in Room 201 of Medford City Hall** to hear public comments and to determine if demolition of 421 High Street will be detrimental to the historical, cultural, or architectural heritage or resources of the City of Medford. Within 21 days from the close of the meeting of April 8, the Commission will issue a formal written determination as to whether 421 High Street should be “preferably preserved” and thus the demolition delay provided for in Section 48-78(h) of the Revised Ordinances.

Any questions regarding this determination and the hearing to be conducted April 8 may be directed to the Chair of the Historical Commission at HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov.

Sincerely,



Jennifer M. Keenan
Chair of the Medford Historical Commission

Copy to: Applicant of Record
Attorney of Record
Building Commissioner, Building Department