

**STAFF REPORT: JULY 13, 2022 MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: A. DYE/J. ROSS**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: 22-7906**

**VIOLATION NUMBER: 21-442, 22-575**

**ADDRESS: 1659 LONGFELLOW**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: BOSTON EDISON**

**APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER: WILLIAM KOLOBARIC, ABI INVESTMENTS**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: JUNE 20, 2022**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JUNE 29, 2022**

**SCOPE**

REPLACE WINDOWS, REMOVE WINDOWS, INSTALL AND PAINT VINYL SIDING, INSTALL FRONT WALKWAY PIERS

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Constructed circa 1916, the house at 1659 Longfellow sits mid-block on the south side of the street. A stepped front walk, flanked by short brick piers at each set of steps, bisects the front yard and leads to a covered front porch, which is supported by full-height brick piers. The centrally placed front door is balanced by a large window opening at each side, while smaller mulled window openings and a small, centrally placed single window create a similar three-part pattern at the second floor. The raised porch, stepped-in second floor windows and the porch's hip roof, lead the eye upward to the centrally placed dormer and three-part window opening. The ribbons of windows, wide fascia, overhanging boxed eaves and unadorned yellowish-brown brick, create a vernacular Prairie style expression to the house. Due to narrow lots, there are only a few feet between the house and its eastern neighbor, but a shared driveway offers a few extra feet between the house and its neighbor to the west. The property features a hipped main roof with four, hipped-roof dormers. Cream-colored vinyl siding and white vinyl windows have been added to each of the four dormers.



*HDC staff photo, June 29, 2022*



*Applicant photo*

Cream-colored vinyl siding is also present at the building's the rear, projecting wing and the east/side elevation projecting bay. White, vinyl double-hung windows were installed on each elevation. The front entry contains a solid panel replacement door. White doors (possibly an original door at-grade, and replacement doors leading to each porch) are located at the rear elevation.

## **PROPOSAL**

With the current submission, the applicant/current owner is seeking the Commission's approval to mitigate exterior work items which were undertaken **without the Commission's review and/or approval**. Specifically, the applicant is proposing to undertake the following:

- Retain the existing 1/1 vinyl windows which were installed without HDC approval. The existing vinyl siding which currently wraps the window trim/exterior casing will be removed and the trim beneath shall be painted. Muntin grid (light configuration/muntin design unspecified) will be adhered to the exterior surface of the "windows that are visible on front and the side" from New Panes Creations [How to add window grids, window grilles, french door grids, patio door grids to your home. \(newpanes.com\)](http://newpanes.com) Retain vinyl siding at rear elevation. Paint all existing vinyl siding (at rear elevation and rooftop dormers) Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- Remove vinyl siding at east elevation projecting bay to reveal stucco finish. Paint stucco Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- At side projecting bay, remove two windows and enclose openings with stucco/paint to match adjacent
- Retain wood rear porches and railing. Paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)

- At west elevation, remove windows flanking chimney, infill opening with stucco and paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- At front elevation, retain existing door which was installed without HDC approval and paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9/ and Black/#B19 from HDC color charts)
- At rear elevation, first and second stories, retain metal doors which were installed HDC approval and paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 and Black/#B19 from HDC color charts)
- At primary elevation porch, retain existing buff brick piers at front approach
- At basement, retain glass block windows. Install a screen in front of each window which is painted the Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)

## **STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH**

- HDC records dating from September 2005 outlined the issuance of a COA/approval for the installation of new Reddish-Brown colored vinyl siding to the front and sidewalls of each of the four rooftop dormers. The COA also approved the replacement of rotted fascia and installation of new gutters and downspouts
- In February 2006, HDC staff noted that a number of unapproved exterior work items had been undertaken at the home, to include the installation of cream-colored vinyl siding to the rear of the home and the wrapping of the fascia at the main roof with aluminum or vinyl.
- Note that the September 2005 COA for the new vinyl siding at the rooftop dormers allowed for a Reddish Brown finish color. Vinyl siding was installed at the dormers. However, the siding which was installed was color was cream colored vs the HDC approved Reddish Brown finish color
- In May 2021, HDC staff issued a Notification of Work Observed to the property owner to note that the Commission had no record of the installation of new vinyl windows at the home
- The current owner/applicant contacted HDC staff in February 2022 to note that they had purchased the property in June 2021 and that they were seeking to address the vinyl windows which had been installed by the previous owner without HDC approval. The current owner subsequently submitted an application to the HDC for the review of the installation of 1/1 vinyl windows at the March 16, 2022 regular meeting.
- HDC staff visited the site to document the property in preparation for the report for the March 2022 meeting. HDC staff also reviewed the application materials which the current applicant/property owned submitted to the Commission for the March 2022 meeting. As a result of the field visit and review of the submitted materials, HDC staff identified a number of additional unapproved work items at the home to include the following:
  - Replaced front door
  - Dormers vinyl siding was an unapproved color
  - Vinyl siding installation at rear elevation
  - At the east/side elevation, first-story projecting bay window, remove existing windows, enclose openings, and install vinyl siding over stucco
  - The addition of a unpainted wood railing at the first-floor porch and upper porch railing at rear elevation
  - The boarding up of the small west elevation windows flanking the fireplace.
  - Rebuilt brick piers at front walk.
  - The installation of glass block in basement window openings
  - Installation of new metal doors at the first and second story porches, rear elevation

- HDC staff reached out to the applicant to alert them of the additional unapproved exterior work items which they had identified during their field visit and noted that these items could be added to their active application for consideration at the HDC's March 30, 2022 special meeting. The applicant noted that he wished that the March 2022 HDC application be limited to the window replacement scope.
- At the March 30, 2022 HDC meeting, the Commission reviewed and denied the applicant's proposal to retain the home's current vinyl windows which had been installed without approval
- With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to retain and modify the current vinyl windows with the installation of new muntins. Also, per the above narrative, he is seeking the Commission's approval to retain the additional unapproved exterior work items which were undertaken at the front sides and rear of the home.

## ISSUES

- The photos below confirm the original windows were wood, double-hung units with vertical-only muntin bars in the upper sash. The existing vinyl windows were installed between February 24, 2021 and May 21, 2021 (date of HDC violation letter).



*Above: 1974 district designation photo*

*Above right: 1980 photo*



*Below right: 1980 photo of neighboring property shows the original stucco exterior and window openings on 1659's east elevation bump-out, as well as the reddish tile cladding the dormer walls.*

*Below left: HDC staff photo, Feb.24, 2021*



- The wood windows which were removed without approval in 2021 were distinctive, character-defining features of the house; the top sash-only vertical muntin pattern is a common feature of Prairie style houses.



*Above: HDC staff photo, February 2021 Below : HDC staff photo, March 2022*

- As seen in the photo at right, each window on the front elevation was intact. The applicant’s original narrative stated that the windows could not be repaired. Due to the many parts of a historic wood window, repair is always an option (unlike replacement windows which are fabricated as one unit). While the wood windows showed evidence of deterioration, the deterioration didn’t look severe.
- Although the Commission did deny the applicant’s proposal to retain the windows “as is” at the March 30 2020 Special Meeting, they did provide guidance to the applicant to note that any new proposal should address the design and materiality of the existing windows and that the front elevation was the most significant elevation at the home. They also emphasized the importance of retaining any wood/original window trim which might existing beneath the current siding or, if the original window trim was removed as a result of the current vinyl window installation, that the original wood window trim/casing/brickmould be replicated.
- The current application proposes to retain the existing 1/1 vinyl windows and install muntins (light configuration/muntin design and specific window schedule has not been identified) or “Insta Panes” to the exterior surface of the “windows that are visible on front and the side”. Note that these muntins are made of a PVC material which is very thin (3/16" / .1875"). The grids are also easily removable as they are attached directly to the glass using self-adhesive Velcro® hook and loop fastening tape. This treatment will not result in an appearance that adequately replicates an historic wood window and does not meet the Secretary of the Interior’s (SOI) Standards, in staff’s opinion
- The current application proposes to remove the existing vinyl window trim and painting “the area beneath,” therefore is implying that the original wood window trim/casing/brickmould remains. However, no evidence of the trim’s condition has been presented to staff
- The close-up of the below 1980 photo shows the original exterior wall cladding of brick, stucco, and tile created a cohesive design to the structure through material, pattern and color. The stucco on the side projecting bay creates a textural relief against the pattern of the brick and tiled dormer walls. Projecting bays on side walls near the front elevation are a common design feature in the Boston-Edison district. It is staff’s opinion this element is a distinctive character-defining feature of the house and district at-large. Commonly covered with stucco with two-to three small (usually decorative) windows, the installation of vinyl siding has significantly altered this feature of the

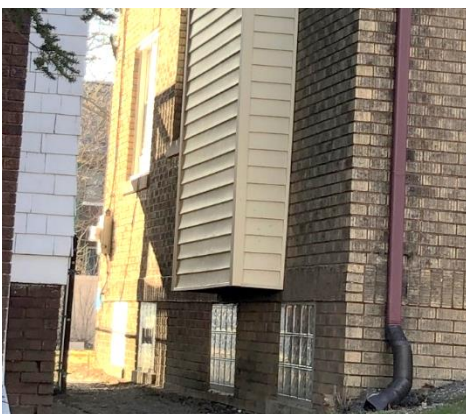
house. The removal of the windows at this location does not meet the SOI's Standards because it will result in an appearance that more closely resembles a stucco box rather than an integrated design feature/a true bay. Therefore, the windows should be restored. However, staff does support the removal of the siding at this location and the restoration of the stucco which remains beneath.



*1980 appearance of side bumpout*



*Current appearance of side bumpout*



*Current appearance of side bumpout*

- The applicant proposes to retain and paint the vinyl siding that was installed at the rear without HDC approval. It is staff's opinion that the vinyl siding at this location is inappropriate to the building's historic appearance. Also, note that the siding had been installed "forward" of the brick base wall and windows, making the historic openings and materials recede against the vinyl siding, further compounding its incompatible appearance.
- It is staff's opinion that the design of the new doors at the rear elevation, at the first and second floors of the porch, do not relate to/are incompatible with the design of the house
- Re: the glass block which has been installed without HDC approval, note that the location complies with the HDC's glass block guidelines; however, the method of installation does not as the glass block was not recessed into their openings. Because the recessed window openings are no longer present which allows the reflectivity of the glass block to be highly visible. The only way to mitigate the existing condition is through the planting of bushes or the installation of new glass block that is recessed within the opening (which would also allow for the installation of screens). However, note that the glass block is only located at the home's side elevations.
- Staff doesn't know when the historic door was replaced (see the above photos from 1980). A solid door has been in place since the first Google street view image in 2007. The historic sidelights appear to remain intact.
- The brick piers at the front yard (leading to the porch) were rebuilt sometime before August 2013 (based on Google street view, see below photos). The location of the piers, stepped relationship between the sets of piers. And the use of a buff brick were duplicated, however the height of the first set of piers was raised for an unknown reason. However, it is staff's opinion that the new, higher piers present an appearance which is generally in keeping with the home's/porch's historic appearance.



*Front porch steps/piers, 1980*



*Front porch steps/piers, current appearance*

*Front porch steps/piers, Google Streetview, 2013*



## RECOMMENDATION

### Recommendation # 1).Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for the following work items because they meet the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation and the Elements of Design for the Boston Edison Historic District:

- Remove vinyl siding at east elevation projecting bay to reveal stucco finish. Paint stucco Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- Retain wood rear porches and railing. Paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- Paint vinyl siding at dormers Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- At west elevation, remove windows flanking chimney, infill opening with stucco and paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9 from HDC color charts)
- At front elevation, retain existing door and paint Benjamin Moore (corresponding with Moderate Reddish-Brown/#A-9/ and Black/#B19 from HDC color charts)
- At primary elevation porch, retain existing buff brick piers at front approach

However, the COA for the above-listed items shall be issued with the following conditions:

- New wood windows at the east elevation bump out bay shall be installed to replicate the windows that were removed without approval

### Recommendation # 2).Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a **Denial** for the following work items because they do not conform to the Elements of Design for the Boston Edison Historic District, nor do they meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular, Standards #:

2. *The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
5. *Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

AND

6. *Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*
- Retain the existing 1/1 vinyl windows and install muntin grid within windows that are visible on front and the side elevations
  - Retain and paint vinyl siding at rear elevation
  - At side projecting bay, remove two windows and enclose openings with stucco/paint to match adjacent
  - Retain and paint metal doors at rear elevation first and second story porches



