

City of Newton



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

## PUBLIC BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

Stephanie Kane Gilman, Commissioner

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52 ELLIOT STREET

NEWTON HIGHLANDS, MA 02461-1605

TO: Newton Commission on Disability

FROM: Stephanie Kane Gilman   
Commissioner of Public Buildings

DATE: 28 September 2011

RE: Submittal for the Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project  
At the Jackson Homestead

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The Public Buildings Department is pleased to provide the enclosed submittal for the above referenced project for the Commission's review and approval. The Department has been working closely with the Newton Historic Museum, the Community Preservation Committee and has consulted with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board to develop an appropriate design for the archives preservation and accessibility improvements.

The *Newton History Museum Archives Preservation and Access Project* seeks to rehabilitate the existing library/storage area, expand the existing collections storage area, and provide accessibility upgrades to the public entrance and facilities contained within the existing Ell directly adjacent to the main museum.

Although the need to preserve and properly store irreplaceable collection materials is the overriding goal of this project, Newton's "historic resources" include the Museum's archival collections, which are used by homeowners and neighborhood activists, architects and real estate professionals, city departments and mass media, as well as students, scholars, and genealogists. The archives are also used by educators in the schools and elsewhere in Newton to teach local history as the context for understanding American History. The Newton community in its very broadest sense is the beneficiary of this project, which supports the concept of "planning with history" articulated in Newton's Comprehensive Plan (April 2007). To this end the project also provides substantial improvements to provide a greater level of universal access to these important resources including:

- Site Improvements for Accessible Parking, and Accessible Routes.
- Permanent Accessible Ramp to replace existing mechanical Lift.
- New Enhanced Accessible Public Entry.
- New Accessible Unisex Toilet Room at First Floor.
- A Fully Accessible First Floor.

Although the project will provide a number of significant accessibility improvements and all new construction within the Ell is to be fully compliant, the Jackson Homestead is designated as a totally preserved historic house museum, and as such it is not possible for the existing house museum to be altered to meet all requirements of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB). Therefore the proponent seeks to request a variance from MAAB for the museum house for the following:

- Interior Accessible Route Between Floors – does not exist.
- Toilets – required due to remoteness of existing and proposed toilet room locations.
- Floor Grilles – spaces within historic HVAC floor grilles do not comply.
- Door Hardware – historic hardware does not comply (note doors in public areas are typically kept open).
- Door Clearances – do not provide required push/pull clearances (note doors in public areas are typically kept open).
- Stair Handrails – do not comply in architecturally significant historical stairs.

The proponent seeks the Newton Commission on Disabilities' concurrence and approval with respect to the proposed design, accessibility improvements, and requested variances for the house museum.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office regarding this request.

AFC:dla  
Enclosure  
CC: Alice E. Ingerson, Community Preservation Program Manager  
Cindy Stone, Director, Newton History Museum

**PHOTOS**



1. Historic House Museum with Ell



2. Front Elevation of Ell and Parking



3. Rear Ell Elevation



4. Rear Elevation of Historic House



5. Side Elevation



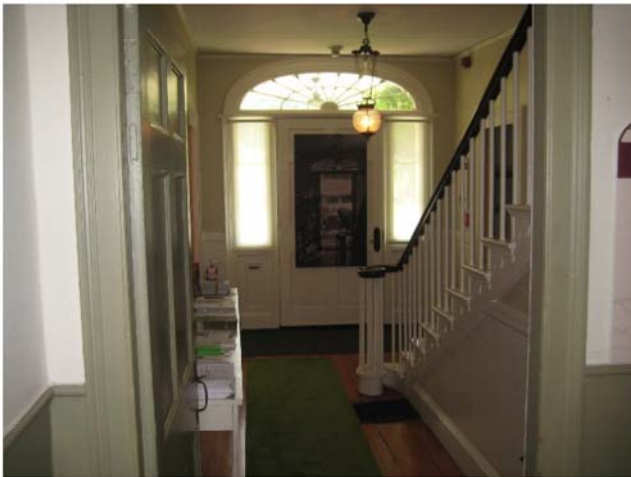
6. Side Porch



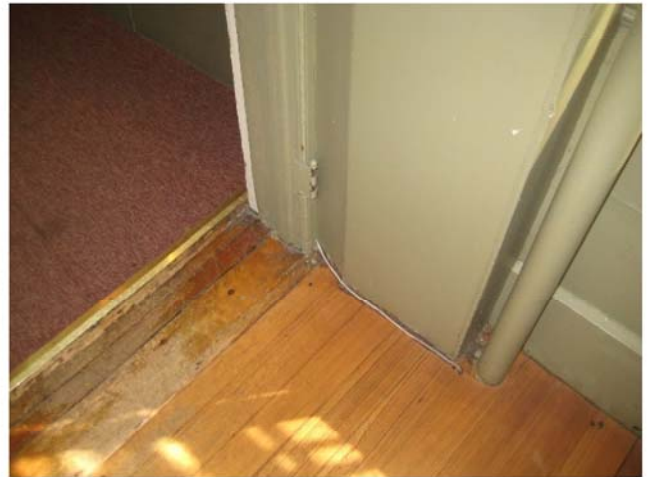
7. Route to Original Entrance from City Sidewalk



8. Original Entrance Porch



9. Original Main Entry Hall



10. Threshold into Ell



11. Side Door (Not Used by the Public)



12. Side Door Threshold and Porch



13. Public Sidewalk on West Side of Property



14. Fence on West Side of Property



15. Bituminous Sidewalk at Rear of Property



16. Sidewalk at Rear of Property



17. Basement Entrance



18. Basement Entrance Door



19. Basement Threshold



20. Basement Vestibule Door



21. Basement Exhibit Space



22. Basement Stair



23. Side / Public Entrance



24. Side / Public Entry Threshold



25. Typical Floor Grille on First Floor



26. Flush Transition on First Floor



27. Staff Office on Second Floor



28. Storage Space on Second Floor



29. Second Floor Door at Stair



30. Typical Historic Door Hardware



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

August 28, 2011

Edward S. Cifune, AIA  
Project Manager  
Durkee Brown Viveros Werenfels Architects  
111 Chestnut Street  
Providence, RI 02903

RE: Jackson Homestead, 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA; MHC# RC.19152

Dear Mr. Cifune:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has reviewed an application for a variance from the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB), received July 29, 2011, concerning the proposed project referenced above. The subject property at 527 Washington Street, historically known as the Jackson Homestead – Timothy Jackson House, is individually listed in the National and State Registers of Historic Places. After a review of the information submitted, MHC staff have the following comments.

The City of Newton entered into a perpetual preservation restriction agreement with the MHC as the result of grant funding (M.G.L. Ch. 184, ss. 31-33). The active preservation restriction agreement entitles the MHC review and approval authority prior to the implementation of any major alteration to the Jackson Homestead – Timothy Jackson House and its setting and also assures the MHC that the Jackson Homestead – Timothy Jackson House will be adequately maintained.

The proposed project involves the renovations of the existing historic ell for a new accessible entrance, unisex toilet room, kitchenette, and expanded archival storage.

At this time, the MHC is unable to determine what effect the proposed project will have on the historic property listed above. The MHC requests the following information. Please indicate the specific section or sections that you are seeking a variance from in the *MAAB Rules and Regulations*. Please submit the comments and signatures from the Newton Historical Commission and individuals with disabilities and their organizations. The MHC looks forward to receiving and reviewing the above requested information.

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 9, Section 26-27C, as amended by Chapter 254 of the Acts of 1988 (950 CMR 71.00). Please do not hesitate to contact me at this office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan T. Maciej".

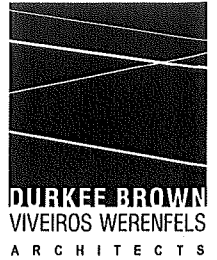
Ryan T. Maciej  
Preservation Planner  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: City of Newton – Public Buildings Department  
Thomas Hopkins, Massachusetts Architectural Access Board  
Newton Historical Commission



July 28, 2011

Massachusetts Architectural Access Board  
One Ashburton Place, Room 1310  
Boston, MA 02108



RE: Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead  
527 Washington Street – Newton, MA

Dear Mr. Hopkins,

I am writing to request a technical review of the proposed work for the Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead. The project consists of renovations of the existing historic Ell for a new accessible entrance, accessible unisex toilet room, kitchenette and expanded archival storage.

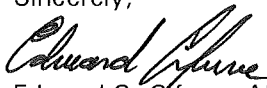
The existing (non-original) interior construction in the Ell will be removed back to the original structure. The original post and beam frame will be preserved; but partially concealed by new construction. New ceilings will conceal new mechanical equipment. New construction also includes walls, ceilings, finishes, plumbing and electrical work. A new fire alarm system will be installed throughout the entire facility; in both the original main house and the Ell. One window will be enlarged to form the new accessible building entrance. An exterior ramp, platform and sloped walkways will be constructed. The work has been designed to be compatible with the historic character of the building as well as to have minimal impact on the house and site, while providing an accessible route to the entrance to the building that all visitors and staff will utilize.

It should be noted that in designing the new accessible ramp and walkway, DBVW Architects explored at least eight different ramp configurations and locations. Each option was reviewed with representatives of the City of Newton and the Newton History Museum, as well as with Donald Lang. The Drawings submitted with this application depict the option we all feel to be the most appropriate in accomplishing both preservation and accessibility objectives.

The work described above incorporates numerous upgrades for accessibility. However, these improvements do not bring the building into full compliance. The City will need to obtain relief from several other requirements. Please refer to the attached MAAB Existing Conditions Analysis, MAAB Requested Variances and new elevator and handicapped lift study plans we have prepared in support of the variance request. The existing conditions analysis contains color photos of the building and property. The additional upgrades would negatively impact the historic character of the house and would be extremely costly. A formal request for variance will be submitted to MAAB after receiving local and Massachusetts Historic Commission approvals.

I have included a set of drawings for your review. We would like to request a telephone conference call with your office to briefly discuss the project.

Sincerely,

  
Edward S. Cifune, AIA  
Project Manager

111 CHESTNUT STREET  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903

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## **Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) Existing Condition Analysis**

### Overview

Edward Cifune, AIA, of Durkee Brown Viveiros & Werenfels Architects conducted a review of the historic house museum on June 28, 2010. Photos representative of actual conditions follow at the end of this report. The existing building was reviewed for conformance with 521 CMR MAAB, 2006 Edition.

The building is located at the corner of Washington Street and Jackson Road. The house is designated as a totally preserved historic house museum by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is individually listed in 780 CMR 120.Y. It was originally constructed in 1809. It has a prominent Ell constructed in two or three subsequent phases. The archives are currently located in this Ell. The house has two floors, plus a full basement and an attic. The Ell has one floor with a crawlspace under approximately two thirds of the structure. The structure consists of wood framing, post and beam construction with stud infill. The renovations will be concentrated primarily in the Ell. A new accessible entrance, ramp and unisex toilet room will be constructed. The Ell will be completely renovated on the interior.

### Findings

**Site:** The existing walkways in the front yard consist of brick pavers and stone edging. The pavers have shifted and sunken over the years and are no longer level. The walks should be removed, a new sub-base prepared and the bricks re-set. At the rear of the building, a bituminous walk connects the basement level access door to a gate in the perimeter picket fence and out to the city sidewalk. This walk is in good condition. There is a large existing bituminous parking lot on the east side of the property. The lot is not striped. One handicapped parking space is identified by a wall mounted sign near the corner of the existing Ell and main house. This is located near the entrance to the existing exterior accessible lift. The parking space should be striped as a van-accessible space. Re-striping and signage will be done as part of the Ell renovation work. An engineered site survey is currently being obtained by the City of Newton. Once this is completed, DBVW Architects will review to determine if the existing walkway and pavement slopes are compliant with MAAB.

**Entrance:** All of the exterior doors have steps to grade and raised wood thresholds. The first floor of the building is currently accessed via the original side door. The main entrance is not currently used as the primary visitor entrance into the museum. The original main entrance has two wood steps and a landing. The side entrance has granite steps. The accessible entrance is currently located in the Ell. A wheelchair lift is present behind a lattice wall in one of the archways of the Ell. The route to the lift is not MAAB complaint. The lift connects to a wood framed platform in front of an exterior door. This door also has a screen door. Opening the screen door takes up most of the available floor space on the platform. The platform and door do not have the MAAB required clearances and maneuvering distances. Once inside, visitors arrive behind the receptionist in a copy area within the gift shop. The area inside the door does not have the MAAB required clearances and maneuvering distances. The accessible route inside is not clear.

**Interior Doors:** The interior doorways vary in size. Please refer to the attached code plans for sizes and locations. The majority of the doors in the museum are 34 inches in width; however, a few smaller openings are present. Most of the doors on the first and second floors do not have thresholds. The door hardware varies in age and style. Since the doors and hardware are historic, none of the existing hardware is MAAB compliant. New doors will

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be provided in the renovated EII. These doors will be provided with MAAB compliant lever hardware.

**Interior Floors:** Interior surfaces predominantly consist of hardwood flooring. Carpeting is present in the first floor exhibit / meeting room and in the EII. On the first floor, a large threshold is present at the doorway between the main house and the EII. The floors on each side of this threshold do not align. A difference of +/- 2 ½" in vertical elevation exists. This will be removed and made level as part of the proposed renovations to the EII. At the basement level, a non-compliant ramp exists at the existing masonry opening near the well. This ramp will be re-worked to provide a 1:20 slope. HVAC floor registers exist on the first floor. Although the grilles do not date to the period of the house, they are historic and should be retained. However, the grilles do not appear to be MAAB compliant.

**Interior Devices:**

Existing light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats, etc. are present throughout the house. The devices vary in age and are mounted at various heights. The devices located in the EII will be completely replaced and installed at MAAB compliant heights as part of the EII renovations.

**Interior Accessible Routes Between Floors:**

Access between the first and second floors and the attic is via non-MAAB complaint historic stairs. A non-historic, non-MAAB compliant stair connects the first floor to the basement. The existing basement and second floor do not currently have an interior accessible route connecting them directly to the first floor. The basement currently houses an exhibit space. The basement has an accessible entrance that can be approached from the outside of the building. The second floor is currently used for museum storage and staff offices only. A new MAAB complaint accessible entrance to the first floor will be constructed as part of the EII renovations.

**Toilets:**

The existing building currently has two, non-compliant, single user, unisex toilet rooms. The toilet rooms are used both by the visiting public and staff. One is located on the basement level and is accessed via interior steps within the toilet room. There are currently no plans to alter this room. The other toilet is located in the EII. This toilet room will be completely reconstructed as a fully compliant, accessible, single-user, unisex toilet room.

Code Requirements

As per 521 CMR Paragraph 3.3.1, existing buildings in which the proposed work is less than 30% full and fair cash value of the building and more than \$100,000, the building must have an accessible public entrance and toilet room. The existing building is not currently fully accessible. The proposed renovations include a new accessible entrance to the building, removal of the old wheelchair lift, new exterior sloped walk and ramp, and a new unisex accessible toilet room on the first floor. The first floor will be made fully accessible.

If the proposed work exceeds 30%, then the entire building must be brought into full compliance. In November 2009, the City appraised value of the building was \$506,500. The preliminary opinion of probable construction cost for the proposed work was determined to be approximately \$350,000, which is approximately 69% of the total value of the building. Therefore, the entire building is required to be brought into compliance with all of the requirements of 521 CMR.



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
 William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
 Massachusetts Historical Commission - State Historic Preservation Office

**The Americans with Disabilities Act Consultation Process Form**

Name of Property: Jackson Homestead

Address of Property: Street: 527 Washington Street

City: Newton Country: Middlesex State: MA Zip: 02458

**Historic Designation/Status/Listing:**

- National Historic Landmark Date of Listing \_\_\_\_\_
- Listed Individually in National Register of Historic Places Date of Listing 1973
- Located in registered historic district (specify \_\_\_\_\_ ) Date of Listing \_\_\_\_\_
- Listed in State Register of Historic Places Date of Listing 1973
- Eligible for listing (prepare and submit MHC inventory form, attach to application)

**Project Contact:**

Name: Martha Werenfels, AIA

Street: 111 Chestnut Street City: Providence

State: Ri Zip: 02903 Daytime Telephone Number: 401-831-1240

**Property Owner:**

Name: City of Newton - Public Buildings Department

Street: 52 Elliot Street City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: MA Zip: 02461 Daytime Telephone Number: 617-796-1600

Signature: *Stephanie Kane Gilman*  
 Stephanie Kane Gilman  
 Commissioner of Public Buildings

**Consultation with individuals with disabilities and their organizations:**

Name: Donald Lang

Organization: MAAB Appeals Board

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*Attach comments to form.*

**Consultation with local historical commission**

Name: Mr. Donald Lang

Organization: Newton Historical Commission

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

*Attach comments to form.*

**Describe major significant architectural features of property. Include the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior space and features, as well as various aspects of its site and environment.**

The Jackson Homestead is a two-story Federal building featuring a hipped roof with four prominent chimneys and a one-story ell attached to the east elevation.

The building exhibits wood post and beam construction with masonry exterior walls at the east and west elevations. The ell is constructed of wood.

Interior finishes and features are largely original from the early part of the nineteenth century and include fireplaces, decorative moldings and trim and a center stair.

**Explain why applying the General Requirements for Barrier Free Access would threaten or destroy the historic significance of the property.**

Architectural feature(s): Interior destruction of historic fabric would result from the insertion of an elevator or lift.

Approximate date(s) of feature(s): Original, ca. 1809

Describe existing condition(s): Refer to the attached materials.

**Describe the proposed alternative Barrier Free Access solution under the Special Rule [4.1.793)]. Include photographs, drawings, and all pertinent information to assist us in our review.**

Refer to the attached materials.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### **Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) Requested Variances**

#### **Proposed New Work:**

1. Front walks will be replaced with new compliant brick pavers set on new level sub-base.
2. A new handicapped accessible entry will be constructed into the EII.
3. New doors in the EII will be replaced as part of the renovations. These doors will receive compliant lever type hardware.
4. Light switches, outlets, thermostats, floor registers, etc. in the EII will be replaced as part of the renovations. All devices will be mounted at compliant heights.
5. A new handicapped accessible unisex toilet room will be constructed in the EII.
6. The existing basement vestibule doors will receive low energy power door operators and push button switches installed.

#### **Recommended Variances**

As per 521 CMR Paragraph 3.9 Historic Buildings, a historic building listed or eligible for listing on the National or State Register of Historic Places, or designated as historic under state or local laws, may be granted a variance by the Board to allow alternate accessibility. A written statement from the MA Historical Commission indicating that the building is listed on the National Register will be supplied with an application for the following variances:

##### **1. Interior Accessible Route Between Floors:**

The existing basement and first floor are presently opened to visitors to the museum. The second floor is home to a staff office and storage. The attic is strictly used for storage. The basement and first floor are currently accessible. However, one must go outside to move from one floor to the next. The basement is reached from the exterior of the building at grade via an accessible route to the sidewalk and into an entry vestibule. Two, three-foot wide hollow metal doors are present in the vestibule. The existing panic hardware and one-half inch high aluminum threshold are fully compliant. However, the vestibule lacks the proper clearances required by Paragraph 26.6 and 26.7. Low energy power door operators and push button switches will be installed on the existing doors as a compliance alternative. Entry to the first floor is being re-done as part of the EII renovations.

At this time, insertion of a fully compliant elevator, LULA or handicapped platform lift to connect all of the floors is not feasible. Any solution would require extensive modification of the interior of the house which would result in significant loss of historic fabric and character. An elevator would require construction of a bulkhead above the historic roof line for the overrun clearances. Floor area lost to the equipment, enclosures and/or a machine room would significantly detract from the intact historic interior of the building. The addition of any such equipment would be cost prohibitive.

Although a vertical wheelchair lift or a limited use elevator is allowable per paragraph 28.12; it is not the desired means of vertical circulation. The building currently has a wheelchair lift which was installed sometime in the early 1980's. They have experienced numerous problems with this unit over the years. This type of lift requires constant maintenance and attention to ensure proper operation. It is fairly common to have downtimes occur, thus making accessible use unavailable.

**A variance is necessary due to the lack of an interior accessible route between the first and second floors. A 10 year time extension is requested to further study the solution and to develop a master plan approach for the property. One possible solution involves a future addition which would be better suited to accommodate vertical circulation.**

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2. Toilets:

As per 521 CMR Paragraph 11.4 Commercial Buildings, wherever public toilets are provided for customers, visitors or clientele, they are required to fully comply with Chapter 30. Paragraph 30.1 also requires that each public toilet room be accessible. However, unisex toilet rooms are allowed if the toilet is located in the same area as the other toilet rooms. **A variance is necessary since the existing and proposed toilet rooms are remotely located.**

3. Floor Grilles:

Existing, historic HVAC floor registers do not comply with Paragraph 29.4. The grilles have spaces greater than 1/2 inch in one direction. New registers in the EII will be ceiling mounted. **A variance is necessary to retain the existing HVAC grilles outside the EII renovations.**

4. Door Hardware:

The existing historic door hardware does not comply with Paragraph 26.11. However, it should be noted that doors within the public areas are typically kept in the open position. **A variance is necessary to retain the existing hardware on the doors outside the EII renovations.**

5. Door Clearances:

The existing doors in the historic main part of the house do not have the required push/pull clearances as required by Paragraph 26. As indicated in Item #4 above, the doors within the public areas are typically kept in the open position. **A variance is necessary to retain the existing door clearances outside the EII renovations.**

6. Stair Handrails:

The existing handrails are not continuous or located on both sides of the stairs as per Paragraph 27.4.1. The two main stairs in the house are original and are very prominent. Any additions or modifications to these stairs would be detrimental to the historic fabric. Adding a second handrail on the opposite side of the stair would impede the required egress width. **A variance is necessary to retain the existing handrails outside the EII renovations.**







