

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 19, 2015

To: Jack MacKeen, Coolidge School Reuse Task Force

From: Alisa Augenstein, Preservation Planner

Subject: Calvin Coolidge Elementary School

Epsilon Associates, Inc. (Epsilon), on behalf of the Coolidge School Reuse Task Force, prepared an updated Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Inventory Form "B" (MAY.28) for the Calvin Coolidge Elementary School, highlighting the building's interior architectural features. This memorandum provides an overview of the historically significant features and discusses features that would be required to be retained for the building's rehabilitation if federal and/or state historic tax credits were pursued, as well as the benefits of a preservation restriction.

HISTORICALLY AND ARCHITECTURALLY SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

The Calvin Coolidge Elementary School (School) has significant interior, character-defining spaces, features, and materials that are located in the basement, first, and second floors, and are typical of early 20th century school building found throughout the Commonwealth. As described in multiple documents, including the 2008 Coolidge School Facility Review and 2010 Town of Maynard Building Observation Report, the building is executed in the Classical Revival style and previously housed an elementary school and the Town of Maynard's Public Schools administrative offices.

The updated Inventory Form B provides a detailed description of the building's exterior and interior, including identifying significant features. These features are summarized here.

Significant exterior features include:

- Red brick masonry with granite watertable and cast stone trim
- Projecting central entry pavilion accented by a cast stone archway and denticulated wood pediment
- Rectangular windows openings with cast stone sills and splayed keystone lintels
- Roofing (slate)

Significant interior features include:

- Central hall plan
- Front paired staircases
- First floor central hall: hardwood floors, plaster arches, Doric columns and pilasters, paneled wood and glazed doors separating the central hall from the rear stair hall, carved wood baseboards, coat hooks, and window and door casings
- First floor classrooms: hardwood floors, carved baseboards, and paneled closet doors
- Second floor central hall: hardwood floors, plaster arch, Doric columns, paneled wood and glazed doors separating the central hall from the rear stair hall, carved wood baseboards, coat hooks, window and door casings, and full-height ceilings
- Second floor classrooms: hardwood floors, carved baseboards, some slate chalkboards, chalkboard frames, built-in cabinets, and full-height ceilings

HISTORIC TAX CREDITS

If a future developer was interested in rehabilitating the building using state and/or federal historic tax credits, most of the significant interior and exterior features would need to be retained. On the interior, the central hall plan and paired staircases are the building's most significant features and would likely have to be retained. Secondary handrails could be added to the existing rails to comply with current building codes, though there are practical and creative options that would not affect the historic fabric of the stair. The rear stair may be removed or replaced, if necessary.

Significant features within the central hall at the first and second floors include the plaster arches, Doric columns and pilasters, paneled wood and glazed doors separating the central hall from the rear stair hall, carved wood baseboards, coat hooks, window and door casings, hardwood floors and full-height ceilings. These items may need to be retained in some capacity, though not completely. For example, if the coat hooks or paneled wood and glazed doors were maintained on one floor or in one area of the building, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the National Park Service (NPS) would likely be more sympathetic to their removal in another area or floor of the building. The dimensions of the central hall (height and width) and its function as the primary accessway to the classrooms would need to be integrated into the School's reuse.

The subdivided first floor classrooms do not retain many significant interior features. The original ceiling height was reduced, the chalkboards and framing were removed, and the window and door casings were replaced with simple, flat surrounds. The hardwood floors,

carved baseboards and paneled closet doors do remain and would likely need to be incorporated into the building's reuse.

The second floor classrooms were not subdivided and therefore retain a number of features that are significant to the historic character of the building, including the hardwood floors, carved baseboards, some slate chalkboards, chalkboard frames, built-in cabinets, and full-height ceilings. The few remaining chalkboards may need to be retained; though the frames could be removed in some areas, as they are largely present throughout. The floors, cabinets, baseboards, and original ceiling height would also have to be retained to the greatest extent possible.

The existing unfinished attic could be incorporated into the building's redevelopment, with the careful placement of skylights and/or dormer windows to provide an adequate supply of natural light into the space.

PRESERVATION RESTRICTION

The MHC encourages having a preservation restriction in place prior to the transfer of a significant historic property to ensure protection in perpetuity of significant architectural features. The MHC has a sample preservation restriction, which is included with this memorandum. The preservation restriction needs to clearly identify those elements on the exterior and interior that are subject to the restriction. For example, if an addition to the building would be considered acceptable, the restriction may want to outline the parameters (such as only on the rear, etc.). The preservation restriction must consider future reuse of the building and allow flexibility while offering protection of significant features. On the interior, a preservation restriction placed on the paired staircases or other architectural features would ensure their safeguarding in the future. However, if a prospective developer interested in purchasing or leasing the property does not want to pursue historic tax credits, a preservation restriction placed on the stairs or other features could hinder the building's future development and prove to be onerous.