



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

September 25, 2012

Re: **Mystic Water Works, Alewife Parkway and Capen Court, Somerville, MA**
Project Number: **26742**

Dear

I have concluded my review of your appeal of the decision of Technical Preservation Services (TPS), National Park Service, denying certification of the rehabilitation of the property cited above. The appeal was initiated and conducted in accordance with Department of the Interior regulations (36 CFR Part 67) governing certifications for Federal income tax incentives for historic preservation as specified in the Internal Revenue Code. I thank you, and for meeting with me in Washington on June 14, 2012, and for providing a detailed account of the project. After discussing the denial issues, at the conclusion of the appeal meeting, the parties agreed that you would study the issues further and that I would defer my decision on the appeal until you had the opportunity to submit additional information for my consideration.

The additional information was received in this office on July 12, 2012. The submittal included letters from both dated July 5, 2012, a topographic map of the property, and seven architectural drawings (including plans, elevations, sections, details of the proposed windows, and a site-line drawing). After careful review of the complete record for this project, I have determined that the project, as amended by the revisions proposed during and subsequent to our meeting, will suffice to bring the overall impact of the proposed rehabilitation into conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (the Standards), if carried out as described. Therefore, the denial issued by TPS on May 16, 2012, is hereby reversed.

Built between 1862 and 1864, and twice enlarged, in 1870 and 1895, the Mystic Water Works Pumping Station is located in the Water Supply System of Metropolitan Boston Multiple Property District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. TPS certified the building as contributing to the significance of the historic district, and determined that a second, functionally-related building on the site, a 1940s garage, did not contribute to the significance of the property, on April 3, 2012. The water works building is a rectangular brick industrial structure, a tall one story in height with a mansard roof. It still retains such original features as four-over-four light wood sash windows; several wood entrances; brownstone sills, lintels, voussoirs, and quoins; a

wood cornice; and plastered interior walls. Deactivated as a pumping station in 1912, the building was converted to public works offices in 1921 when partition walls and a mezzanine and attic were added.

TPS determined that three aspects of the proposed rehabilitation of this “certified historic structure” did not meet the Standards: 1) the insertion of a new second floor, which would cut across and alter the configuration of the historic windows, 2) the incompatible alteration of the north facade entry, and 3) the construction of a new, four-story building on the site of the former garage building. Consequently, TPS found in its May 16, 2012, decision that the overall impact of the proposed work was not consistent with the historic character of the property and the historic district in which it is located, and that the rehabilitation thus described failed to meet the Standards.

With regard to inserting a new second floor in the main volume of the water works building, TPS determined that it would alter what was “historically a large double-height open volume that originally housed pumping equipment.” However, that volume has not existed in its original configuration due to the insertion of a mezzanine and attic floor into the space in 1921. Thus, for the past ninety years, it has been a multi-story building, and I note that Standard 4 states, “*Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*” Accordingly, I find that retaining the interior as a multi-story space conforms to the Standards. TPS also stated that the new second floor would cut across the building’s historic window openings, “changing its appearance.” Although I agree with TPS that the second floor will have an impact on the appearance of the building, I do not believe that the change will significantly impair the overall historic character of the property. The building’s overall massing and exterior materials will not change; the tall window openings will still be tall window openings. What will change is that the new windows will have a horizontal bar demarcating the thickness of the new second floor, located at a different height than the meeting rail of the original windows. I have determined that the revised designs, dated June 14, 2012, which have a thinner edge to the second floor and a correspondingly thinner horizontal bar than originally proposed, would not significantly impair the overall historic character of the building.

With regard to the alteration of the north facade entry, I note that the original entrances were sized to accommodate the installation and servicing of municipal water pumps—in other words, very large objects. Indeed, I note that the later installation of overhead garage doors large enough for trucks filled only part of those openings. The new use for the building will require doors for people, not large water pumps or trucks, necessitating some reconfiguration of the historic openings. I find that this change is acceptable in concept. However, I agree with TPS that the initially proposed design for the new entrances unacceptably altered their historic character. The additional information and revised designs you submitted at our meeting further explain the design intent and improve upon the initial designs. I have determined that the revised designs for the entries, although different from the historic configuration, are nevertheless compatible with the overall historic character of a nineteenth-century building, and—albeit marginally—comply with the Standards.

With regard to the construction of the new, four-story building on the site of the two-story garage, I find that the revised design, with the new building lowered to forty-seven feet and simplified in massing and materials from the original design, is acceptable. The location is at the rear of the site and is set back from Alewife Parkway so that, even though it is taller than the water works building, the site-line drawing confirms that it will not be visible from the sidewalk on the opposite side of Alewife Parkway. It will also be set back from Capen Court, as was the former

garage, and although visible from that side, it will not significantly detract from the setting of the historic water works building. The topographic map confirms that the new building will nestle into the hill that begins to rise at the rear of the site, behind which are housing units further up the hill. As a result, although the impact on the district is a secondary consideration, I have determined that the new construction will not significantly impact the skyline of the area.

Although I have determined that the proposed rehabilitation as revised now meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, please note that the project will only be designated a "certified rehabilitation" after all work is approved following its completion. Should you have any questions concerning procedures for final certification, please contact Mr. Michael Auer at 202-354-2031.

As Department of the Interior regulations state, my decision is the final administrative decision with respect to the May 16, 2012, denial that TPS issued regarding rehabilitation certification. A copy of this decision will be provided to the Internal Revenue Service. Questions concerning specific tax consequences of this decision or interpretations of the Internal Revenue Code should be addressed to the appropriate office of the Internal Revenue Service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Burns", with a long, sweeping underline.

John A. Burns, FAIA
Chief Appeals Officer
Cultural Resources

cc: SHPO-MA
IRS