

July 26, 2017

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

Lisa L. Mead  
Mead, Talerman & Costa, LLC  
30 Green Street  
Newburyport, Massachusetts · 01950

RE: Preservation Restriction, Samuel Morse House (aka 1690 House), 262 Merrimac Street,  
Newburyport, Massachusetts

Ms. Mead:

Staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) have reviewed the materials you have provided regarding the prior and current conditions following renovations at the above-referenced property at 262 Merrimac Street, Newburyport, as well as additional documentation of before and after documentation provided to MHC by the Newburyport Preservation Trust. The Samuel Morse House at 262 Merrimac Street is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as part of the Newburyport Historic District. The following comments are provided under the MHC's approval authority for preservation restrictions under M.G.L. Chapter 184, Section 32.

**Interior of Building.** Photos taken in 2007 show that the interior of the building retained a remarkable, significantly intact Georgian interior, featuring raised paneling, intact fireplace walls and fireboxes, and elaborate central hall staircase with turned balusters, raised panel interior shutters, etc. Photos of current conditions indicate that the historic interior finishes and materials appear to have been entirely gutted as part of the recent renovations. If an intent has been to protect all or some significant historic architectural features, that opportunity has passed. The interior of the building has lost entirely its architectural integrity.

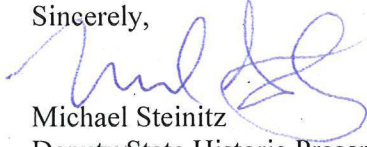
**Exterior of the Building.** Photos taken in 2007 of the exterior of the building document the survival of finely crafted Georgian window surrounds and entablatures, well-proportioned Greek Revival doorway surrounds with sidelights, and historic six-over-six sash. Current photos show that these highly distinctive, character—defining architectural features have all been stripped off and replaced with features that are out of scale and proportion, and that do not remotely match the design, workmanship or quality of the historic elements. The renovation of the exterior of the building does not meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Buildings.

While the historic architectural integrity of the exterior of the Samuel Morse House has been significantly compromised, as a property within the Newburyport Historic District, it still clearly retains its distinctive historic massing, roofline, and massive chimney stack. If it is the intent of the City of Newburyport and the property owner to repair the damage done to the historic exterior of the building by the recent renovation project and to protect a substantially restored exterior, MHC would consider approving a preservation restriction on the property. The preservation restriction would need to include a restoration plan that identified all exterior elements to be restored, detailed plans and specifications meeting the

Secretary's Standards for their restoration based on photo documentation and other evidence of the historic features that were removed, and a timeline for completion of the restoration work.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,



Michael Steinitz  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Director, Preservation Planning Division  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Xc: Newburyport Office of Planning and Development  
Newburyport Historical Commission  
Newburyport Preservation Trust