

Docket Item #9  
BAR CASE #2004-0278

BAR Meeting  
January 26, 2005

**ISSUE:** Signs  
**APPLICANT:** James Symons  
**LOCATION:** 1303 Cameron Street  
**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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**\*\*EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

**\*\*BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the telephone number be eliminated from the sign on the left and that the remaining text on the second line be centered under “George’s”; and,
2. That all signage not approved by the Board be removed.

### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for two new wall signs for the existing automotive repair business at 1303 Cameron Street. The proposed signs are flat wall signs, each 2' high by 10' long. The signs will be located at the top of the two center bays on the Cameron Street face of the building. The metal signs will have a gray and yellow color scheme. The sign on the left will read “George’s” in large block letters and will have the address and telephone number in small block letters below. The sign on the right will read “Foreign Car Service” in large block letters and “tune-ups brakes shocks repairs” in small block letters below. According to the applicant, who is the property owner rather than the business owner, there will be no other signage on the building, which has a frontage of over 50' on Cameron Street. However, there is a small, removable sign with a telephone number and a number of window signs on the building at present.

### **II. HISTORY**

The cinder block and tile garage with a brick facade appears to have been constructed after 1941. Its only architectural feature is the series of four 10' wide by 14' high service bays in the front facade. Each of the bays has been closed in, partially or in full, with concrete blocks. The westernmost bay is entirely closed in, the easternmost bay is closed in except for a small pedestrian door, the center two bays are closed in at the top with matching 10' wide by 8' high garage doors below. In 1989, the Board approved one wall sign and one hanging sign for George’s Foreign Car Service (BAR Case #89-25, 8/14/1989). In 2003, the Board approved alterations to the two center bay doors (BAR Case #2003-0300, 12/17/2003).

### **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed signage complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed new signage will contribute to a more attractive and coordinated appearance for 1303 Cameron Street. Staff believes the two signs proposed are appropriate in scale and character for the mid-20th century garage building. According to the *Design Guidelines*, generally only one sign per business is appropriate (Signs - Page 3). However, for several reasons Staff has no objection to the two signs in this location. Two is a significant reduction from the more than five signs which were on the building for many years and only recently removed. The text in the two signs is not repetitive and the information provided is generally essential. The 50' wide facade can easily carry the two signs.

Staff’s only concern is the inclusion of the telephone number in the sign on the left. The *Design Guidelines* discourage the use of telephone numbers on signs (Signs - Page 4). On the other hand, Staff does note that the Parker-Gray Board has been open to the use of telephone numbers

in certain circumstances, the most recent case being the signs for Allstate Insurance at 522 North Patrick Street 2 (BAR Case #2004-0035, 3/24/2004).

In 2003 when reviewing the proposed alterations to the center bay doors, both Staff and Board expressed concern over the unkempt appearance created by the plethora of signs on the building at that time. Signage then included wall signs in each of the four bays and a decrepit hanging sign, all of which were approved by the Board in 1989, as well numerous unapproved minor wall signs and stickers. The appearance of the building has improved dramatically since the completion of the alterations and repainting in 2004. All of the signs present in 2003 have been removed. However, just in the space of several weeks since the application was made, unapproved signage has multiplied at 1303 Cameron Street. When the applicant took the photograph submitted with the application package, there were no signs. When Staff first went to look at the property subsequent to receiving the application, there was one small wall sign. Subsequently, several window stickers were added. Any signs not included in the present proposal must be removed. Moreover, the applicant and business owner should take note that any additional signs installed in the future must first receive Board approval. Installing signs without approval constitutes a zoning violation and is grounds for a citation and civil penalties.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the telephone number be eliminated from the sign on the left and that the remaining text on the second line be centered under "George's"; and,
2. That all signage not approved by the Board be removed.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The application does not contain enough information to provide a full review of the proposal. The applicant shall contact Code Enforcement and identify in more detail the type of signage and scope of work.
- C-1 A construction permit may be required based upon information submitted by the applicant.
- C-2 Wall signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111] Please indicate the method to be used for anchoring the sign to the wall.

### Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”