

Docket Item # 4  
BAR CASE # 2011-0040

BAR Meeting  
March 16, 2011

**ISSUE:** Alterations (Porch Floor Replacement)

**APPLICANT:** Richard and Margaret Moose

**LOCATION:** 317 South Saint Asaph Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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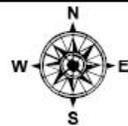
**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the request for synthetic porch decking and approval of a wood, tongue-and-groove porch floor.

**\*\*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 final approval 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 Building and Fire Code Administration (including siding or roofing over 100 square feet, windows and signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.



**BAR CASE #2011-0040**



## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a new porch floor at 317 South Saint Asaph Street. The second story porch floor is in poor condition and the applicant wishes to replace with it with PVC composite (Azek brand) porch boards. The applicant states that a synthetic floor material will last longer than a traditional wood floor.

## **II. HISTORY**

The two-and-a-quarter story brick, flounder form house at 317 South Saint Asaph Street may have been constructed in the **early 19<sup>th</sup> century**, according to Ethelyn Cox in her book *Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street*. The house is shown on the 1877 Hopkins' *City Atlas of Alexandria* and is also on the first Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1885. The 1885 Sanborn, as well as subsequent Sanborn maps up until 1912, show a one-story porch running the length of the south façade of the house. In 1912 and forward, the maps show the porch as two stories in height. The Italianate style first floor bay window is not original to the house; it was constructed sometime between 1891 and 1896, according to the Sanborn maps.

The porch floor is minimally visible from St. Asaph Street.

Staff could find no record of previous BAR approvals for the subject property.

## **III. ANALYSIS**

Staff recommends denial of the applicant's request for a synthetic porch floor. The subject property – although modified somewhat since its early 19<sup>th</sup> century construction – retains a high degree of historic integrity with few, if any, modifications over the past century. The *Design Guidelines* specifically state that: "Porches should be made of materials which are sympathetic to the building materials generally found in the historic districts."

Given the age of the porch, Staff can only support the installation of a wood, tongue-and-groove porch floor. AZEK's own website notes that this solid PVC trim product has only been commercially available since the mid-1980s. Fortunately, there are a number of relatively new natural wood flooring products which may help the applicant achieve a floor with a longer life span than with the traditional southern white pine porch flooring commonly used. Certain species of wood are much more resistant to rot than pine, including: Ipe, which is a sustainably harvested wood from the rain forests of Brazil which has natural waterproofing properties. Mahogany and Cedar are some other wood options. There are also some relatively new 100% treated wood products on the market – this is wood which has been thermally treated or impregnated with a solvent to make it rot resistant. As part of the recent investigation of appropriate Modern and Sustainable Materials, Staff attended an industry presentation at Smoot Lumber, one of Alexandria's oldest businesses. Smoot carries some treated wood products, manufactured by companies such as Design Pine, Pure Wood, Nature Wood, and EcoVantage. Smoot represented that these products are economically competitive with PVC composite flooring.

## **STAFF**

Stephanie Sample, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

**IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

Code Administration:

No comments received.

**V. IMAGES**



**Figure 1. Photo of porch from St. Asaph Street.**



**Figure 2. Photo of porch.**



**Figure 3. Photo of porch floor damage.**



**Figure 4. Photo of porch floor damage.**