

Docket Item #7  
BAR Case #2003-0310

BAR Meeting  
January 21, 2004

**ISSUE:** Permit to Demolish and Capsulate and alteration

**APPLICANT:** R.B. Adams

**LOCATION:** 304 South Fairfax Street

**ZONE:** RM residential

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### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the existing siding be retained and repaired rather than replaced on the front and north sides of the house which are visible from the public right-of-way;
2. Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds; and,
3. The above statements in C-1 and C-2 must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

### DISCUSSION:

#### Applicant's Description of the Undertaking:

“Removal of rear roof and parts of rear wall for bump-up addition.”

#### Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the north and west walls and the roof at the rear addition of the two story house at 304 South Fairfax Street. The extent of demolition includes:

- east (rear) side - an area approximately 6' x 6' on the second level containing a single window;
- north side - an area approximately 6.5' x 5' on the second level containing a single window;
- roof - removal of the roof and framing system of the second level of the rear addition. This roof area is approximately 10.1' x 9.4'.

The rear of the house where the proposed demolition is to take place is not visible from the public right-of-way. Nevertheless, since the extent of the proposed demolition exceeds 25 s.f. it is subject to review and approval by the Board. However, because the rear is not visible from the public right-of-way, the proposed alterations are not subject to Board review.

The proposed alterations include: new windows and a door will be installed on the rear (east side) of the house; a new bay window with false shutters will be built on the north side of the house; the roof of the rear two story addition will be raised approximately 3 ½' and the house will be re-sheathed with all new wood siding.

The new wood siding is visible from the public right-of-way and is subject to Board review and approval.

#### History and Analysis:

304 South Fairfax Street is a two story, two bay frame residential rowhouse dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> century according to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* (p.46).

However, Staff inspection of the framing and foundation of the house would indicate a somewhat later date of construction, more likely mid part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rear addition where the bulk of the proposed demolition is proposed to take place appears, according to information on the Sanborn Insurance maps, to date from the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning when the first insurance map of Alexandria was published in 1877, there was no rear addition at this house or its twin next door at 306. By 1885, there is a one story rear wood addition (this addition is listed as 1 story on the 1896 maps) and by 1907 this addition has been raised to 1 ½ stories which is the same height as presently listed on modern day Sanborn maps. Thus, the current 1 ½ story rear addition would appear to date from sometime between 1896 and 1907.

The siding on the front (east) elevation and side (north) is plain beveled siding with substantial paint build up. In the opinion of Staff, it is likely that this siding is original to the construction of the house. The siding of the rear addition and the rear of the house is German lap siding. This siding is likely contemporaneous with the construction of the rear addition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Proposed demolition, encapsulation and side addition comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff has not located any record of previous Board action concerning this property.

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, Sec. 10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

Because the rear addition appears to date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is the opinion of Staff that none of the criteria are met. Therefore, Staff has no objection to the demolition proposed for the rear (west) elevation or to the north elevation.

However, Staff does object to the wholesale removal of the historic wood siding on the front and sides of the house and replacement with new wood siding. As noted above, this existing siding

appears to be contemporaneous with the original date of construction of the house. Therefore, Staff recommends that the existing siding be retained and repaired rather than replaced on the front and north sides of the house which are visible from the public right-of-way.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed bay window projects within the 3 foot setback distance from the lot line and is Code compliant. All exterior walls within 3 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided.
- C-1 All exterior walls within 3 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides, with no openings permitted within the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to porches with roofs and skylights within setback distance.
- C-2 Prior to the issuance of a demolition permit or land disturbance permit, a rodent abatement plan shall be submitted to Code Enforcement that will outline the steps that will taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-7 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.
- C-8 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

### Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 According to Ethelyn Cox's *Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, A Survey of Existing Early Buildings*, the house on this property was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tax records indicate that two free African American households were located on this

street face in 1810 and 1830, but the exact addresses are not known. Additionally, a vinegar manufactory was present on the block. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources which could provide insight into early industry and into domestic activities, perhaps related to free blacks, during the late 18<sup>th</sup> through early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
- R-2 The above statements in C-1 and C-2 must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.