

Docket Item #5
BAR Case #2004-0006

BAR Meeting
October 6, 2004

ISSUE: Alterations to previously approved plans

APPLICANT: Old Colony Associates, LLC

LOCATION: 615 First Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 18, 2004: On a motion by Mr. Smeallie, seconded by Ms. Neihardt the Board approved Staff recommendations #'s 1-5 which were:

1. Approval of the alteration to the piers on Unit #61;
2. Approval of the alteration to the north side doorway on Unit #62 with the condition that the door surround be simplified;
3. Approval of the addition of a gate in the south side of the wall at Unit #62;
4. Approval of the extension of the garage for the Manor House property (Unit #63) by 1' in the length;
5. Approval of the request that the Board delegate to Staff administrative approval of future minor modifications for the Liberty Row development; and

Deferred for restudy the wall on the west side of the Registration building and asked the applicant to consider the removal of the lintels on the garage so that it was more subordinate to the house.

The vote on the motion was 6-0.

REASON: The Board agreed with much of the Staff analysis, but believed that clearer drawings depicting how the low brick wall and the serpentine wall would meet and tie together were needed. The Board asked for elevation drawings of this detail.

SPEAKER: Lee Weber, Holladay Corporation, spoke in support

UPDATE: The plans for the fence/wall on the west side of the registration building have been modified slightly from the plans seen by the Board on February 18, 2004.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

- 1) That if possible, the extended fence run along the west side property line to a point where it dead ends into the existing serpentine wall;
- 2) If this is not possible, that the 4' wide slot between the extended fence and existing serpentine wall be landscaped to screen the transition;
- 3) That the metal portion of the fence be painted a different color from the brick portion; and,
- 4) That the applicant submit a minor site plan amendment.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the fence on the west side of the registration building (also known as the Manor House and Unit #63). The proposed design extends the existing fence at the south end of the property across the rear (west) side of the house to meet the serpentine wall and effectively enclose the rear yard. The change is requested by the purchaser to provide a buffer between the busy street and the property. The new fence will match the existing fence that surrounds the south end of the property. A 1 ½' high brick wall is surmounted by a 3' high metal picket fence and punctuated by 5' high brick piers set approximately 8' apart. The applicant proposes to remove an 11' section of the existing fence, where it turns east to join the southwest corner of the house. The removal of this portion of the fence and extension of the fence to the north would create a continuous yard around the south and west sides of the house. The fence will include a 4 ½' high metal picket gate located on line with the entranceway that will be created on the west elevation of the building. The gate will be 3 ½' wide and will have small sections of fencing on either side for a total width of 7'.

The revision concerns the connection between the new fence and the existing 3 ½' high brick serpentine wall at the north end of the property. In the previous submission, the new fence met the existing serpentine wall at the north end of the house. This entailed demolition of approximately 11' linear feet of the serpentine wall as it passes in front of the west wall of the house at its north end. The intent was to create a rational meeting point for the fence and wall at the end of the house. However, even this "rational" solution raised questions about how exactly to achieve the connection between the two structures: the curving and lower serpentine wall and the straight and taller extended fence. At the February 18, 2004, the Board requested additional information addressing how this connection would work. Subsequently, it was discovered that the Special Use Permit (SUP) conditions for the Liberty Row development forbid removal of even a portion of the serpentine wall. Thus, the applicant has responded by leaving the serpentine wall fully intact as it passes across the west wall of the house for approximately 11' where it then simply ends, curving in toward, but not meeting the house. Instead of meeting the serpentine wall, the new fence will now continue approximately 15' beyond the gate and then turn east, in toward the house, continuing to a point 2 ½' out from the west wall of the house.

There it will turn north for 2' feet to connect with the railing around the basement areaway at the north end of the house. This 2' segment is shown as a solid wall 3 ½ ' tall. Thus, the new wall and serpentine wall do not join, but parallel each other, separated by a slot of yard approximately 4' wide.

The applicant proposes to paint the existing and new portions of the fence a buff color. The Board already approved painting the house buff when it approved the plans for its renovation.

II. HISTORY

The renovated motel registration building (Unit #63) is part of the Liberty Row development which will also include the two new townhouses (Unit #s #s 61 & 62), two new condominium buildings and various site improvements on the site of the former Best Western Old Colony Motor Lodge, located on the east side of the George Washington Memorial Parkway between First and Second Streets. The Motor Lodge was designed by the architectural firm of Joseph Saunders and Associates with Charles A. Pearson, Jr. as project architect. The Board approved the plans for the motel on May 14, 1958 and the building permit was issued the following year (Building Permit #6887).

The Board approved the demolition of the Motor Lodge (excluding the registration building) in 1999 and re-approved the Permit to Demolish in 2002 (BAR Case #98-0147, 1/20/1999 & BAR Case #2002-142, 6/19/2002). The Board approved the plans for the Liberty Row development in 2001 and 2002 (BAR Case #2000-269, 5/2/2001 & BAR Case #2000-270, 7/19/2002). In addition, the project required a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP2001-00001) which was approved in July 2001. More recently, on February 18, 2004, the Board approved alterations to the two townhouses, but deferred the alterations for the fence on the west side of the former registration building (BAR Case #2004-0006).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements. Section 7-202(A)(1) of the zoning ordinance permits in a front yard open fences not exceeding 3.5' in height. Section 7-200 (C) of the zoning ordinance permits the BAR to modify or waive the fence requirements if the Board finds that a proposed fence will be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

Staff has a number of reservations about the proposed extension of the fence across the west side of the former registration building. Foremost is the continued awkwardness of the meeting of the existing serpentine wall and new brick and metal fence. The two structures are different in character and height and will meet at an illogical point in relation to the west elevation of the Manor House. More logical meeting places would be at the end of the house or at the end of the property. However each of these presents its own set of design problems and requires demolition of a segment of the serpentine wall, which is not allowed under the SUP. Staff is not sure the connection now proposed, with a 2' wide solid straight wall set back from the front of the property, is the most effective solution. Furthermore, Staff is concerned that the extension of the brick and metal fence across the west (rear) yard of the house further encloses and delineates the site. The retention of open space, or at least visually accessible space, was an objective of the

Planning and Zoning Department throughout the planning for the Liberty Row project. However, while a more open fence would be preferable from the standpoint of allowing more visual access than the existing hybrid wall/fence, Staff would not want to see yet a third type of fence introduced here.

On the whole, Staff believes the proposed fence is acceptable. It matches the existing fence, is compatible with the architecture of the house and is relatively open. Staff believes its 4 ½' height is acceptable because it matches the existing fence and recommends that the Board waive the 3 ½' fence requirement. Staff still wonders if a cleaner connection could be made between the wall and fence and thus requests that the applicant consider simply dead ending the extended fence into the serpentine wall wherever that would occur along the west property line. In addition, Staff believes the metal portion of the fence should be painted a different color from the brick wall and piers; either black, the traditional color for metal fencing, or a color to match the trim of the house.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the request to extend the fence, with the following conditions:

- 1) That if possible, the extended fence run along the west side property line to a point where it dead ends into the existing serpentine wall;
- 2) If this is not possible, that the 4' wide slot between the extended fence and existing serpentine wall be landscaped to screen the transition;
- 3) That the metal portion of the fence be painted a different color from the brick portion; and,
- 4) That the applicant submit a minor site plan amendment.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 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.

Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”