

Docket Item #7
BAR CASE# 2004-0258

BAR Meeting
December 15, 2004

ISSUE: Shed

APPLICANT: Paul Linnell

LOCATION: 911 South Alfred Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

- 1) If moved from the proposed location to be behind the rear fence; that the shed design be approved as proposed; or,
- 2) If located outside the fence as proposed, that the shed design be approved with revisions to reduce the height by at least 1', to eliminate the windows and window boxes and to change the roof to a single slope (shed) roof with the high side abutting the fence; and,
- 3) That under either option, the fence and shed be stained or painted.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of a storage shed at the rear of the property. The proposed shed is constructed of cedar with cedar lap siding and roof shingles. As shown in the materials accompanying the application, the shed has a barn type door and a four light window with a window box on the gable end. The shed will have a 6' x 6' footprint and will be just over 8' high at the peak. The shed will be located outside the rear fence, 1' from the rear property line and abutting the north side property line.

The shed will be highly visible from within the expansive public alley and parking area that is in the interior of the block.

II. HISTORY:

The two story brick clad cinderblock rowhouse at 911 South Alfred Street was originally part of an apartment complex constructed in the 1940s or 1950s. In 1977, the Board approved the conversion of the four connected apartment buildings (then known as 911, 915, 919 & 932 South Alfred Street) to eight single family rowhomes (now known as 909, 911, 913, 915, 917, 919, 921 and 923 South Alfred Street). Michael and Michael served as the architect for the conversion. Architectural embellishments were added to the fronts of all eight units and the exteriors of a several of units were painted while openings at the rear were altered, allowing each unit to read and function as a separate two story rowhouse. The work was completed in 1978.

The Board has approved several alterations subsequent to the 1977/1978 conversion. In 1981, the Board approved a deck at 923 South Alfred Street and in 1999 minor alterations at 909 South Alfred Street (BAR Case #99-0060, 5/5/1999). More recently, on August 18, 2004, the Board approved a rear addition at 921 South Alfred Street (BAR Case #s 2004-00113 & 00114).

In 2003, the Board approved an after-the-fact shed within the same city block, at 902 Green Street (BAR #2003-0076). The approval included several conditions intended to make the shed more compatible with its surroundings. The conditions included lowering the shed, staining the shed and removing the windows and flower boxes.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed shed complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

While Staff concurs with the applicant that the shed does appear to be of "a high quality," it is a

pre-fabricated shed of a type more commonly found in the suburbs. Its unpainted cedar siding, cedar roofing, barn type door, window and window box give it a charming rustic look that is somewhat at odds with the urban character of the historic district. In other recent shed cases, including 902 Green Street, the Board has expressed a preference for simple, utilitarian sheds that are as unobtrusive as possible. The *Design Guidelines* also call for accessory buildings to complement the architecture of the main building and discourage the use of pre-fabricated structures (Accessory Structures - Page 3).

Therefore, Staff recommends that the shed be moved inside the fence so that all but the top 2' of the gable roof will be hidden from the public right-of-way. Alternatively, if the shed is to remain in the location proposed, Staff recommends the following changes to reduce its visibility: reduction in height by at least 1', elimination of the windows and window boxes and alteration of the roof to have a single low pitch with the high side abutting the fence.

In addition, Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* recommend that wood accessory buildings and fences be stained or painted (Accessory Structures - Page 3 and Fences - Page 3). If painted or stained the same color as the fence, the shed will be less obtrusive.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

- 1) If moved from the proposed location to be behind the rear fence; that the shed design be approved as proposed; or,
- 2) If located outside the fence as proposed, that the shed design be approved with revisions to reduce the height by at least 1', to eliminate the windows and window boxes and to change the roof to a single slope (shed) roof with the high side abutting the fence; and,
- 3) That under either option, the fence and shed be stained or painted to match.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The proposed shed falls below the minimum size required for a building permit. Should the design or size of the shed increase prior to construction, the applicant shall contact the Code Enforcement Bureau to determine if construction permit requirements apply.
- C-1 All exterior walls within 5 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 skylights within setback distance.
- C-2 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”