

Docket Item #4  
BAR CASE# 2004-0251

BAR Meeting  
January 19, 2005

**ISSUE:** Composition roof

**APPLICANT:** Linda Burch

**LOCATION:** 423 South Fairfax Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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**BOARD ACTION, DECEMBER 15, 2004:** Deferred at the request of the applicant.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy of a more historically appropriate roofing material.

#### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of an asphalt shingle roof on the residential property located at 423 South Fairfax Street.

The applicant has provided an actual sample of the asphalt shingle proposed which Staff will make available to the Board members at the public hearing.

#### **II. HISTORY:**

The residential structure at 423 South Fairfax Street is a frame two story, two bay freestanding house that dates from c.1790 according to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* (p.49). At some point Victorian period window lintels, doorway pediment and cornice were added to the facade.

In 1991 the Board approved metal railings for the front steps (BAR Case #90-247, 1/2/91).

#### **III. ANALYSIS:**

Primarily for economic reasons, the applicant is requesting Board approval of composition shingles. This type of roofing material is clearly not historically appropriate for a late 18th century structure and according to the *Design Guidelines* was not widely used in Alexandria until the middle of the 20th century.

The test the Board has established for reviewing historically appropriate roofing materials is a four part test based upon the following criteria:

1. The **age** of the structure and its architectural style;  
In this case the structure is a late 18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular Federal style residential building.
2. The **historic** cultural and architectural importance of the structure to the City of Alexandria;  
Architecturally, the present structure is an interesting example of a Federal style residential structure that was “updated” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with architectural detailing.
3. The **location** of the structure within the Old and Historic Alexandria District or along the George Washington Memorial Parkway;  
The structure has a prominent visual location on South Fairfax Street.
4. The **visibility** of the roof surface from a public street, way, pathway, easement or waterway.  
The roof of the structure is highly visible.

Historically appropriate roofing materials would include a metal roof or a wood shingle roof. A slate roof on a wood frame house is exceedingly rare.

Based upon these criteria and those outlined in the roofing section of the *Design Guidelines*, Staff must recommend deferral of the application for restudy of a more historically appropriate roofing material.

Since 1991 when the Zoning Ordinance was changed to allow administrative approval of historically correct replacement material, the B.A.R. Staff has approved approximately several hundred requests for replacement of historically correct roofing materials.

In several instances where the Board has denied the installation of historically inappropriate roofing materials there have been appeals to City Council. On several occasions, City Council has supported the Board and approved the installation of historically correct roofing materials. In two cases Council supported installation of synthetic roofing materials while drawing narrow distinctions regarding the reasoning for such action and each time has been at pains to point out that the approval of synthetic roofing materials for specific historic buildings should not be viewed as a precedent. Additionally, Council has specifically commended the Board of Architectural Review for its steadfastness in upholding the intent of the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance approved by Council regarding use of inappropriate materials in the historic districts.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy of a more historically appropriate roofing material.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

No comments.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

Replace with what?