

Docket Item #7  
BAR CASE #2005-0088

BAR Meeting  
June 1, 2005

**ISSUE:** Permit to Demolish

**APPLICANT:** Lois Clark by James Noel

**LOCATION:** 605 South Saint Asaph Street

**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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**BOARD ACTION, MAY 4, 2005:** The Board combined the discussion of docket item #'s 15 & 16. On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Smeallie the Board deferred the applications for restudy. The vote on the motion was 6-0.

**REASON:** The Board believed that the proposed addition was too large and should be scaled back. The Board suggested a hyphen for the addition or pushing the addition into the rear yard. Additionally, member believed that the addition would compromise the historic fabric of the historic district.

**SPEAKERS:** James Noel, project architect, spoke in support  
Harvey Lester, 603 S. St. Asaph Street, spoke in opposition  
Edith Mayo, 607 S. St. Asaph Street, spoke in support

Update: There have been no changes for the Permit to Demolish application and Staff here repeats the Staff report from the public hearing of May 4<sup>th</sup>.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish to allow for the construction of a new two story frame addition. The house currently consists of a two story, two bay wide historic brick main block with a catslide roof and a narrow one story CMU addition at the rear. The rear addition will be demolished and the new addition will capsule the entire rear elevation of the historic main block. The extent of demolition proposed for the rear wall of the main block is not shown. The roof of the new addition will capsule more than half of the long rear slope of the roof of the main block. Although the extent of demolition of roof structure is not shown it is likely to be equal to the area capsulated.



The house is visible from St. Asaph Street and from Gibbon Street where a small section of the existing one story rear addition and much of the rear slope of the roof can be seen.

**II. HISTORY:**

The two story, two bay brick house is one in a row of four houses built together in the mid-19th century (Historic Alexandria Street by Street, p. 166). All four units are set on raised foundations and have cat slide roofs. 605 South St. Asaph is the only house of the four that has a passageway through to the rear. Although undoubtedly originally meant to provide access to the landlocked rear yards of both of the interior units of the row, the passageway now belongs to 605 South St. Asaph Street. The group of four houses was located on a single plot until 1956 when the four properties were subdivided (Book 431, Page 627, May 11, 1956). Prior to the subdivision the houses were extensively renovated Described as a “blighted corner” in a February 11, 1956 Alexandria Gazette Article, the work was apparently undertaken as a model renewal project

under with active encouragement by the City of Alexandria. As part of the renovation, a one story addition was constructed at the rear of each house.

These additions were approved by the BAR on October 13, 1955.

More recently, the Board approved demolition and a new rear addition at 609 South St. Asaph Street (BAR Case #2003-0137 & 0138, July 16, 2003). This large addition is visible behind the 601-607 South St. Asaph Street row when viewed from Gibbon Street.

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §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?

In the opinion of Staff, the above Criteria 5 & 6 above are met. This is an intact, mid-19th century row of workers housing. The rear of the row is highly visible from Gibbon Street. The proposed demolition/capsulation includes the entire rear wall of the historic main block and much of the rear slope of the roof. The *Design Guidelines* state that “the Boards prefer that the amount of demolition be limited to that necessary to accommodate access to the addition rather than wholesale demolition and replacement of the rear facade” (Demolition of Existing Structures -Page 1).

On the other hand, the Guidelines state that “the Boards are also sympathetic to the needs of building owners to make contemporary [21<sup>st</sup>] century use of a property” (Demolition of Existing Structures - Page 1). Given the constraints of this particular very small house on a small lot, it is difficult to see how additional functional space can be achieved without demolishing and/or capsulating a significant portion of the rear of the house. Staff notes that the Board has struggled with a number of similar cases in recent years involving additions to small early and mid-19th century house in rows and has ultimately recommended approval of the demolition and caspulation: 508 North Columbus Street (BAR Case#s 2005-0002 & 0003, 3/16/2005); 510 North Columbus Street (BAR Case #s 2004-0067 & 0068, 7/21/2004 & 8/18/2004); 128 North Payne Street (BAR Case #s 2004-0094 & 0095, 7/21/2004 & 8/18/2004); and, 132 North Payne

Street (BAR Case #s 20003-0119 & 0120, 10/15/2003).

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- C-1 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.

### Historic Alexandria:

“Where is the source for the round window? Are all windows wood?”

### Alexandria Archeology:

- F-1 Ethelyn Cox’s *Historic Alexandria, Street by Street, A Survey of Existing Early Buildings* indicates that the house on this lot was probably constructed in the mid-1800s. Tax records from 1810 and 1850 indicate the presence of free African American households on this block, but the exact addresses are not known. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into life in one of Alexandria’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century African American neighborhoods.
- 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 statement must appear in the General Notes of the site plan so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.