

Docket Item #11  
BAR CASE #2005-0194

BAR Meeting  
September 21, 2005

**ISSUE:** Addition and alterations

**APPLICANT:** City of Alexandria Community Services Board by L. Michael Gilmore

**LOCATION:** 115 North Patrick

**ZONE:** CD/Commercial

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement siding have a smooth finish and be installed so that the nails are not visible;
2. That the new and replacement windows and doors have true-divided-lights; and,
3. That the cannister light fixtures have a bronze finish.

**NOTE:** Docket item #10 must be approved before this docket item may be considered..

## **I. ISSUE:**

Currently vacant, the former clubhouse operated by the City's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Substance Abuse is being converted to a multi-family residential building. To facilitate this adaptive re-use, the applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a number of relatively minor alterations and for the addition of a second story connecting corridor. The addition and alterations are described in more detail below:

### Addition

The flat roofed addition will be approximately 10' long, 6' wide and 11' high and will be clad in fiber cement siding. This addition will serve as a second story connecting corridor between the back of the main building and the front of the secondary building that is located at the rear of the lot in the northeast corner. It will be constructed on top of an existing one story addition which links the two buildings on the first floor. The new second story addition will be located on the south side of the existing one story addition leaving a rooftop area on the north side that will become a roof deck. The new addition will have two full length fixed wood windows and a single light door on the north elevation. The door will lead to the deck which will have a simple painted metal railing at the north edge. The south elevation will have no openings. The roof of the new addition will be a "green roof," planted to minimize run-off. However the vegetation will not be visible from the public right-of-way.

### Front (west) elevation of main building

This elevation will be repaired and painted as necessary but will remain largely unchanged. The only significant alteration is the removal of the circa 1980 handicapped ramp and the extension of the front doorway to meet grade. This alteration will allow universal access through the front door. The new wood doorframe and wood six panel door will be 1.5' longer than the existing. Also part of this alteration is a new four light transom, similar to the existing, and new pre-cast concrete plinth blocks at the base of the limestone entrance feature. Bronze finished exterior light fixtures will be installed on either side of the entrance. An existing ornamental metal gate will be repaired, painted and moved forward into the existing brick archway at the head of the alleyway along the south side of the property.

### Rear (east) elevation of main building

This elevation will be repaired and painted as necessary but will remain largely unchanged except for the area where the second story connecting corridor will cap the wall. An existing window above this area will be removed and the opening will be infilled with matching brick. This section of the building is minimally visible from the alley.

#### Front (west) elevation of secondary building

This elevation will also be repaired and painted but will also have a number of alterations. A small area on the second story will be capsulated by the new connecting corridor and a new window will be inserted toward the middle of the second story. The new window will be 12-light wood casement window with simulated divided lights. The existing window to the north of this new window will be replaced with new wood six-over-six sash with simulated divided lights. The roof of the secondary building will be altered to have a green roof, requiring a 3.5' parapet wall around the entire perimeter. The existing parapet ranges in height from 0' on the west elevation to approximately 2' on the north elevation. Therefore, on the west elevation, a 3.5' high wall will be constructed of brick to match the existing and capped with copper coping. This section of the building is minimally visible from the alley.

#### Rear (east) elevation of secondary building

This elevation will be repaired and painted and will have a number of alterations. An existing window on the first story will be removed and the opening will be bricked in with brick to match the existing. A new window will be installed on the north side of the first story. The new window will be an 8-light wood casement window with simulated divided lights. The sill will be brick. The parapet at the rear will be raised by almost 2' with brick to match and copper coping. Two new cannister lights with a white finish will be installed on the rear elevation to illuminate the alley at the back of the property. This elevation is readily visible from the alley.

#### North elevation of main building

This elevation will be repaired and painted and will have a number of alterations at the back or east end of the building. Two small existing windows will be removed and new 12-over-12 windows will be installed in enlarged openings. The windows will be wood with simulated divided lights. The sills will be brick. In addition, a new 9-over-9 window will be inserted in an enlarged opening where there is currently a small opening. This window will also be wood with simulated divided lights and a brick sill. A new exterior light fixture will replace the existing fixture. This elevation is readily visible from the street and alley.

#### North elevation of existing first level connecting link

This elevation will be repaired and painted and will have a number of alterations. The two existing mismatched windows on either side of the door will be removed with only the lintels to remain. Two equal size recessed brick infill panels with brick sills will be created in their place. The existing door will be removed and the opening reduced with brick infill. A new 9-over-9 wood window with simulated divided lights will be installed in the shortened opening. This elevation is readily visible from the alley.

#### North elevation of secondary building

This elevation will be repaired and painted and will have a number of alterations. The existing window sash, sill and lintel on the first story will be removed and the opening infilled with brick to match the existing. On the second story, the existing window opening on the west side will be enlarged and a six-over-six wood window with simulated divided lights will be installed. The existing window on the east side of the second story will be removed as will the wood panel below. A two panel wood door with 9-lights will be installed in the opening. The parapet will

be raised approximately 1.5' with brick to match and copper coping. This elevation is readily visible from the alley.

#### South elevation of main building

This elevation will be repaired and painted and will have a number of alterations. Two existing double hung windows in the first story near the front of the building will be removed and the openings infilled with brick to match. Two new doorways will be installed in the first story near the front of the building. The first will be located in a blank section of the wall while the second will utilize a portion of an infilled window opening. The doors will be metal doors with four panels. Two existing windows located between the first and second stories near the rear of the building will be removed and the openings infilled with brick to match. A series of four white finished cannister lights will be installed at the top of the first story along the south elevation. Views of this section of the building are limited.

#### South elevation of existing first level connecting link

This elevation will have very minor alterations. An existing door will be replaced by a 4-panel metal door and a new cannister light fixture will be installed above the door. Views to this section of the building are extremely limited, if not impossible.

#### South elevation of the secondary building

The existing door on the first story will be replaced with a 4-panel metal door. A new cannister light fixture will be installed alongside the door. The existing parapet wall will be raised with brick to match and copper coping. Views to the lower portion of this section of the building will be blocked by a proposed 6' wood fence. The upper portion is readily visible.

#### Site

Four HVAC units will be located on the roof of the main building, approximately at the center. The HVAC units and roof hatch will be enclosed by a rectangular enclosure 14.5' long, 10.5' wide and 4' high. The enclosure will be constructed of painted fiber cement and will have the appearance of a board and batten wall. As previously mentioned, the roofs of the new second story connector and the existing secondary building will be planted as green roofs. The rooftop HVAC enclosure is likely to be minimally visible from the public right-of-way. The green roofs will be surrounded by parapets and will not be visible. A new 6' wood fence will be constructed at the rear of the property in the southeast corner to enclose the trash storage area. The enclosure will have a gate on the north side. This wood fence will replace an existing chain link fence.

## **II. HISTORY:**

As discussed in docket item #10 the two story, brick building at 115 North Patrick Street was constructed between 1896 and 1902 as an engine house for the Alexandria Fire Department. The building was designated as the new home of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for the city in 1946 and the facade was extensively reworked to appear as a Georgian Revival courthouse. Milton Latour Grigg (1905-1982), a prominent Virginia architect, designed the rehabilitation. Although it has had subsequent changes in use, the exterior appearance of the building remains largely as completed in 1947. The two story brick building in the northeast corner at the rear of the lot was constructed as a storage building between 1912 and 1921. The

small one story addition linking the main building to the secondary building was constructed in the same time frame.

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed multi-family dwelling with rooftop open space complies with the CD zone regulations.

In the opinion of the staff, the proposed rehabilitation is acceptable. It will provide badly needed maintenance and improvements to this important local landmark. Given the size of the building and the complex nature of the conversion from clubhouse to multi-family dwelling use, Staff believes the proposed alterations and addition are quite minimal. In addition, the proposed alterations are handled in a sensitive manner. They are compatible with the historic character of the building, but, by leaving remnants of the original construction such as lintels and sills, will read as alterations. The most prominent alteration concerns the lowering of the main entranceway. Staff believes this relatively minimal alteration of Grigg's grand entry is acceptable given that the non-original and distracting handicapped ramp will be eliminated as a result. Staff has no objection to the raising of the parapet on the secondary building. The parapet will be raised by relatively minimal amounts and will be constructed to match the existing in appearance. As mentioned above, the green roof here and on the new second story connector will not be visible from the public right-of-way.

The connecting corridor addition will be located in an area of low visibility, is as small as possible and is handled in a manner that is unobtrusive and clearly differentiated from the historic building. The addition is clad in fiber cement siding. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to the product.

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
5. That smooth siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Provided that the siding is smooth and installed so that the nails do not show, the proposed use of fiber cement siding will comply with the Board's policy.

The rehabilitation retains the majority of the existing true-divided-light wood windows. The alterations to door and window openings and creation of new openings is relatively minimal and is handled sensitively. New windows and doors are appropriate in style and material to the existing. However, all nine of the new and replacement windows and doors proposed for the project will have simulated- divided-lights. Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* discourage the use of simulated-divided-light windows except on rear elevations with minimal visibility from the public right-of-way (Windows, page 3). Staff is concerned that the difference in appearance between the new simulated-divided-light windows and existing true-divided-light windows will be distracting and recommends that all nine new windows and doors with divided lights have true divided lights.

Lastly, Staff believes that the cannister lights are acceptable, though modern in design. Their simplicity and ubiquity help to make them relatively unobtrusive. However, the white finish that is proposed will increase their visibility. Thus, Staff recommends that the cannister light fixtures have a bronze finish, to match the lanterns proposed for the front entranceway and to better blend in with the brick walls of the building.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

To conclude, Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the fiber cement siding have a smooth finish and be installed so that the nails are not visible;
2. That the new and replacement windows and doors have true-divided-lights; and,
3. That the cannister light fixtures have a bronze finish.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 The scope of this project is not shown. The current use group is classified as B, Business and shall conform to handicap accessibility requirements of Chapter 11 of the USBC. The submitted application shows the elimination of the handicap accessible entrance with no alternative accessible entrance proposed. The code requirements affecting this project will be determined based upon additional information pertaining to intended use of the structure. The following are general comments. More detailed comments will occur at the time of building plan review.
- 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 of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.
- 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.

### Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”