

Docket Item #29  
BAR CASE #2005-0274

BAR Meeting  
December 7, 2005

**ISSUE:** 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 as submitted.

NOTE: Docket item #28 must be approved before this docket items can 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 to make alterations to 115 N. Patrick Street. The major alteration is removal of a section of the roof structure for the sunken roof promenade. A connecting corridor will be constructed to link the main and secondary buildings on the second level. Other alterations involve minor changes to infill or create window and door openings.



The complex is visible from Patrick Street and from the public alley on the north side of the building. The rear is partially visible in a through-block view down the alley. Views of the first story of the main building at the rear and the south side from the public right of way are limited.

In summary, the alterations proposed for this application are as follows:

- Construct a roof promenade set within the roof and set back from the N. Patrick Street elevation, and obscured by the parapet and the distance from the public-rights-of-way. The applicant provided sight lines documentation.
- Construct an interior stairway to provide access to the roof top promenade, the enclosed stairway will be sided with Hardi-plank, and will mimic board-and-batten construction, only a minute portion of the top of the stairway will be visible from the public rights-of-way
- A connector will be constructed, to provide access between the main block of the building and the carriage house, the connector will be sided with Hardi-plank and will contain three fixed wood windows, the new connector will only be visible from the alley, due to its location towards the rear.

## **II. HISTORY:**

The two story, brick building at 115 North Patrick Street was constructed between 1896 and 1902 as Engine House No. 3. The large rectangular building occupied most of the lot. However,

a one story wood shed was located at the rear in the northeast corner and a “drying pan” in the southeast corner. By 1907, the Engine House designation is changed from No. 3 to No. 5. Sanborn maps indicate no physical changes to the property until 1921 when the one story wood shed is shown as a two story brick storage building and a small addition for a water closet links the firehouse to the storage building.

By the mid-1940s, the engine house was no longer required for its original use. The rapid growth of the city ensured that the property would be re-used. In 1946, the City Manager appointed Milton Grigg as the architect for the remodeling of the building as the new home of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for the city. The City Manager’s action was controversial for several reasons. The Chief Judge of the Court did not favor the location, lawyers practicing before the Court felt it was too far away from the other courts housed in City Hall, and the city rescue squad felt that the firehouse should be given to them when it became available after the fire company moved to a new building on Cameron Street. The matter came to a head at the end of the month when a motion was introduced at City Council to abandon the project. In Grigg’s presentation to Council he stressed the cost saving associated with this adaptive reuse project. The motion to eliminate the project failed on a vote of 4-3, but a subsequent motion required that Grigg’s plans be submitted to City Council for final approval. With this narrow endorsement Grigg commenced work on preparing a design.

Grigg’s final design showed a firehouse transformed into a Georgian Revival courthouse with a central pedimented doorway with quoin surrounds, a pair of flanking multi-light windows with a segmental jack arch with keystone on the first floor and large two story arched windows with keystones on the second level. Grigg’s design mirrors closely that of the former Federal Post Office building built in 1930 at the corner of South Washington and Prince Streets with a central pedimented quoined limestone entryway and arched windows with keystones. Bids were opened in December 1946 and the work was completed by October of 1947.

Despite a subsequent change in use to a Community Mental Health Center, the exterior appearance of the facility is largely unchanged from the Grigg renovation. In 1980, a handicapped ramp was approved for the front elevation (Building Permit #36379, 7/2/1980). In 1987, alterations and additions at the rear of the main building permitted the former storage building in the northeast corner of the lot to be used as an office (Building Permit #1252, 12/7/1987). These plans were approved by the Board of Architectural Review on May 20, 1987 (Bar Case #87-88).

Milton Latour Grigg (1905-1982) was one several of the original architects for the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia who subsequently worked in Alexandria. Of these, Grigg did the most work in the city. An Alexandria native, he received his architectural degree from the University of Virginia in 1929 and almost immediately began work at Williamsburg. When the architectural staff was disbanded in 1933, he established his own architectural firm where he continued to practice until his retirement in 1980. Grigg and his firm were prolific and efficient architects and the work ranged widely. He did a great deal of historic preservation and restoration work that drew heavily on his experiences at the Williamsburg restoration. Among Grigg’s best known Alexandria projects are the restoration of the Ramsay House and the Parish Halls for both Christ

Church on North Washington Street (1950) and St. Paul's Episcopal Church on South Pitt Street (1947).

On October 5, 2005, the Board denied the approval of a Permit to Demolish and a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to this property (BAR Case #2005-0193 & 0194). The Board denied the project on the basis of the second story

### **III. ANALYSIS**

The proposed alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements. There are no recorded legal easements for this property.

The issue of proposed use has previously been reviewed by the City. In 2004, City Council considered the CSB application for grant funds from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for a new Safe Haven housing program, identifying 115 N. Patrick Street as the proposed program site. In public hearing on June 22, 2004, Council reviewed City Staff determinations, which found that the use of 115 N. Patrick Street for development of a Safe Haven site (multi-family dwelling) was consistent with zoning and building use requirements, and that no further land use approval was required for use.

Staff believes that the proposed alterations minimize the impact on historic fabric. Nearly all of the proposed alterations on the building's facades are relatively minor. Most of the capsulation and demolition is confined to secondary elevations. The only alterations proposed for the front elevation are the removal of the modern handicapped ramp and the extension of the door opening to grade. It is assumed that the extension of the original opening by less than a foot is required to facilitate access and allows for the removal of the non-original ramp. The capsulation at the second story of the rear of the main building and front of the secondary building for the connector is confined to only that area necessary to achieve the connection. A number of the proposed alterations to infill, enlarge or reduce existing openings will be made to non-original openings. Staff believes alterations to original openings have been kept to a minimum. The demolition of a section of the roof structure of the building is of some concern. However, the roof framing is not something that is or ever was intended to be visible to the public. The relatively recent (circa 1900) date of construction ensures that the roof framing will hold little value in terms of unusual construction techniques or craftsmanship. With the approach to have a sunken roof top promenade, the historic appearance of the building from N. Patrick Street will be largely unaltered.

### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

## 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.
- F-2 Proposed exits discharge past window openings in the public pedestrian way between 115 and 113 N. Patrick Street. A Code Modification or additional fire protection requirements are required, subject to the approval of the Director of Code Enforcement.
- F-3 The rear gate configuration discharges onto the public access easement. The proposed configuration obstructs the existing gate located at 113 N. Patrick Street. The proposed gate and fence location for this project should be coordinated with the property owner at 113 N. Patrick Street.
- 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.”