

Docket Item # 10
BAR CASE #2006-0005

BAR Meeting
February 15, 2006

ISSUE: Demolition and capsulation

APPLICANT: Ted and Dolores Shine

LOCATION: 115 South Alfred Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the demolition and rebuilding of the top most 3' section of the southeast corner of the south wall. If the applicant believes that additional sections of the wall need to be demolished, Staff recommends deferral of the request for additional information as outlined in the Discussion section; and,
2. Denial of the request to demolish portions of the second level of the west wall for window openings

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the freestanding carriage house at the rear of 115 South Alfred Street. The south wall of the carriage house is proposed to be demolished so that a replacement wall can be built and three new openings for windows will be created at the second level of the west elevation.

II. HISTORY:

115 South Alfred Street is a two story brick rowhouse dating from the early 19th century according to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* (p.2). The two story brick carriage house at the rear of the property appears to date from the middle of the 19th century.

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 shrine?
- (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?

South Wall

The applicant proposes to demolish the south wall because it appears to be in poor structural condition. Staff had an opportunity to view the interior elevation of the south wall on 2/6/06.

Staff agrees that the upper portion of the wall is in extremely poor condition and needs to be rebuilt. Staff believes that the remainder of the south wall should not be demolished, but rather repaired. The applicant did provide a report from a structural engineer detailing the condition of the south wall. However, Staff believes a historic preservation architect should also be consulted to determine whether the south wall can be preserved *in situ* without resorting to wholesale demolition and rebuilding. While the applicant proposes to re-use the existing brick as much as possible in the reconstruction of the south wall, Staff believes that the present proposal does not present sufficient information to ensure the reconstruction of a historically accurate wall. For example, no information has been supplied regarding the proposed brick bond pattern that will be used to reconstruct the demolished wall. The applicant has expressed to Staff that the wall will be reconstructed to be historically accurate. However, because this appears to be an early 19th century wall Staff believes that skilled restoration masons should be used in any reconstruction effort.



Figure 1 Upper portion of existing interior south wall



Figure 2 Lower portion of existing interior south wall

In addition, because of a dispute with the adjacent neighbor, the new replacement wall will have to be constructed entirely from the 115 North Alfred Street property. This further mitigates against an appropriate historical reconstruction of the wall.

Window Openings

The three new window openings are proposed to be created where there is currently an unaltered brick wall. In the opinion of Staff, creating new openings in an otherwise unaltered 19th century brick wall will substantially undermine not only the historic architectural integrity of the carriage house, but will fundamentally alter the overall public perception of a utilitarian outbuilding. New windows on the west elevation will, in the opinion of Staff, create a false sense about this structure.

In considering the criteria set forth above, it is the opinion of Staff, Criteria 1,3, 5 & 6 are met in this instance. Thus, Staff believes it is premature to take action of a request to demolish the south wall without substantial additional information.

Staff also notes that the Board's guidelines state that the Boards "strongly discourage the

demolition of any portion of an 18th or early 19th century structure” (Demolition - Pages 1 & 2). The existing rear flounder section appears to date from the early 19th century and to therefore embody the fabric and craftsmanship of that period.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the demolition and rebuilding of the top most 3' section of the southeast corner of the south wall. If the applicant believes that additional sections of the wall need to be demolished, Staff recommends deferral of the request for additional information as outlined in the Discussion section; and,
2. Denial of the request to demolish portions of the second level of the west wall for window openings.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- 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:

Alterations seem appropriate, but is it necessary to completely replace original brick on south wall?