

Docket Item # 14
BAR CASE #2006-0012

BAR Meeting
February 15, 2006

ISSUE: Demolition and capsulation

APPLICANT: Katie & Hack Wiegmann by Robert Bentley Adams

LOCATION: 511 Cameron Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 1, 2006: On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. Keleher, the Board deferred the application for restudy. The motion passed on a vote of 7-0.

REASON: The Board agreed with the Staff recommendation, but believed that it was appropriate to undertake additional design studies to see if an addition could be built which did not compromise the existing flounder rear of the house.

SPEAKER: Robert Bentley Adams, project architect, spoke in support

Update: Based upon the Board's comments and actions at the last public hearing, the applicant has revised the application in significant ways. First the brick wall on the west side of the property is proposed to be raised to a height of 9'6" so that it will obscure any view of a one story addition and the overall height of the addition has been reduced so that it cannot be seen from the public right-of-way. While Staff still has concerns about the demolition of sections of the first floor of the flounder section, the visual impression of the overall form of the flounder will generally not be altered because the addition will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Further, the first floor section of the flounder portion was substantially altered in 1976 when the bay window was added.



Figure 1 Rear elevation

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish.

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 residential townhouse at 511 Cameron Street. Those portions to be demolished are the first story of the rear addition. A total of approximately 31 square feet adjacent to and below the existing bay window will be demolished. The demolition will allow for the construction of a new first floor extension of the kitchen. The remainder of the first floor rear of the flounder will be encapsulated by the construction of the enlarged kitchen.



Figure 2 Front elevation

II. HISTORY:

The street facade and front section of 511 Cameron Street is a Greek Revival style freestanding two story, three bay brick residential townhouse that was constructed in ca. 1850 according to Ethelyn Cox in *Alexandria Street by Street* (p.8). The rear of the building is a brick flounder style section in six-course American bond likely dating from the early 19th century. The rear elevation has a four part bay window on the first level. This window was approved by the Board and installed in 1976 (9/29/76). At the rear of the property is a freestanding brick smokehouse dating from the early 19th century. The brick wall around the property was approved by the Board and installed in 1977 (6/15/77). The side porch, stairway and door on the east side of the house at the rear of the flounder appear to be late 20th century additions.

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?

In the opinion of Staff, Criteria 1,3, 5 & 6 are met in this case. The rear flounder section clearly pre-dates the Greek Revival styled facade and reflects the Alexandria architectural belief that flounder style house were built at the rear of a lot until a family could afford to construct a fashionable front section. The rear flounder is six course American bond indicating an early 19th century date of construction. The extant smoke house at the rear further evidences an earlier date of construction on the property than the ca. 1850 Greek Revival style facade.

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.

The flounder is little altered from its original form, the two relatively minor exceptions are the door on the east side which is obviously an enlarged window and the bay window on the north elevation. Thus, when viewed from across the surface parking lot on North St. Asaph Street the whole of the rear flounder is readily understandable as a form distinct from the front portion of the house.

However, having said that Staff is cognizant that raising the brick wall on the west side of the property will fully obscure views of a one story addition. Further, given the fact that the first floor rear has already been substantially altered when the bay window was installed in 1976, the extent of additional demolition and capsulation is relatively minor. Because of these factors, Staff can support the proposed demolition and capsulation of the first floor of the flounder section.



Figure 3 View from parking lot

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish.

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:

Addition seems appropriate, but is door stoop and railing to be removed original to the house or a slightly later date, making them preferable to retain?

Alexandria Archaeology:

- F-1 According to Ethelyn Cox's *Historic Alexandria Street by Street*, the house on this lot was probably constructed about 1850 by James McVeigh. Alexandria Archaeology records indicate that there is a brick shaft in the basement of the house and a smoke house in the rear of the yard.. The property has the potential to yield significant archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities in 19th century Alexandria.
- 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 all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.