

Docket Item #20  
BAR CASE 2006-0031

BAR Meeting  
March 15, 2006

**ISSUE:** Demolition/encapsulation

**APPLICANT:** B.J. Anderson

**LOCATION:** 412 Gibbon Street

**ZONE:** RM Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the permit to demolish 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 addition at the rear of the house. The proposed demolition and capsulation consists of the following:

- Demolition or removal of the existing small prefabricated shed at the rear of the yard;
- Demolition of the existing one story masonry rear ell with a footprint of approximately 122 square feet;
- Partial demolition and full capsulation of the entire rear facade of the house on the first and second stories, an area of approximately 281 square feet.



**Figure 1 - One story rear ell to be demolished**



**Figure 2 - Shed to be removed**

The rear of the house is not visible from the public right-of-way now. The end of the proposed new addition will be visible in views from Royal Street.

**II. HISTORY:**

412 Gibbon Street is a two-story, flat front, brick residential rowhouse that was constructed in 1954 (Building Permit #6153, 7/2/1954). It is one of a group of three rowhouses at 406, 408 and 412 Gibbon Street that was built for Michael M. Abrams and designed by Joseph Saunders, AIA. The original drawings indicate that all three houses were constructed with a single story rear ell. This group of three houses was approved by the Board of Architectural Review on July 8, 1954. It is also similar to a number of other brick rowhouses on the north side of this block of Gibbon Street.

From the late 1940s through the late 1960s, Joseph Saunders was a prolific architect working in Alexandria. The work of his firm included churches, office buildings, shopping centers, schools, motels (such as the Old Colony Motor Lodge) as well as residential buildings. Joseph Saunders also served as an architect member of the Alexandria Board of Architectural Review.

In 1999, the Board approved window replacement and a number of other facade alterations for 412 Gibbon Street (BAR Case #99-0172, 11/17/1999). The approved alterations were not undertaken. However, in 2001, Staff became aware that vinyl windows had been installed in lieu of the approved wood windows. As these windows had been installed by a previous owner, the Board approved the after-the-fact vinyl windows (BAR Case #2001-0254, 3/6/2002).

In recent years, the Board has approved demolition/capsulation for a number of additions on both sides of the 400 block of Gibbon Street. In 2002, the Board approved a similar two story addition at 406 Gibbon Street, the first in the group of three identical rowhouses that includes 412 Gibbon Street (BAR Case #s 2002-0172 & 173, 7/17/2002). On April 17, 2002, the Board approved a two story rear addition at 400 Gibbon Street (BAR Case #2001-309 & #2002-048) and on April 7, 1999, the Board approved a two story rear addition at 404 Gibbon Street (BAR Case #99-0029 & 0030).

### 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 Staff's opinion, the proposed demolition and capsulation does not meet any of the above criteria due to the recent construction date of the building, the ubiquity of the type and the common construction techniques utilized. Although the one story rear ell and rear wall of the 1954 house at 412 Gibbon Street appear to be original and basically unaltered, the rear of the house has no significant architectural features and is not visible from any public right-of-way. The garden shed is a modern mass-produced structure with no architectural merit. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the permit to allow the requested demolition and capsulation.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the permit to demolish 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.

### Office of Historic Alexandria:

“No Comment.”

### Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Tax records indicate that the block bounded by Gibbon, Royal, Franklin and Pitt streets was owned by Stephen Shinn in 1850 and contained a stable. Houses were present on the 400 block of Gibbon by 1877 according to the G.M. Hopkins insurance map. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into life in 19<sup>th</sup>-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.