

BAR Case#2006-0072
April 19, 2006

Docket Item # 11
BAR CASE #2006-0072

BAR Meeting
April 19, 2006

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation
APPLICANT: Gregory & Pamela Chesterton by Robert Bentley Adams
LOCATION: 515 S. Fairfax Street
ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for partial demolition and capsulation at the back of the two story brick house at 515 South Fairfax Street to allow for the construction of a new one story rear addition. The existing porch at the back of the circa 1960 rear addition will be demolished and the west and north walls of the addition will be capsulated on the first story. In addition, a small area (approximately 106 square feet) of the rear (west) wall of the main block will be capsulated on the first story.

The house backs up to the Safeway building in the 500 block of South Royal Street. The alley behind the house is private and there is a 7' high brick wall at the back of the property. Views to the rear of the house are very limited.

II. HISTORY:

According to Ethelyn Cox in Historic Alexandria Virginia Street by Street, the two story brick house at 515 South Fairfax Street was constructed circa 1817 along with its twin, 517 South Fairfax Street. The modest two bay brick federal townhouses retain a high degree of integrity on the street facade. Historic mapping suggests that these houses were constructed with a story-and-a-half brick service wing extending across the rear wall. Between 1931 and 1941, the story-and-a-half appears to have been raised to a full two stories. In 1960, the Board approved a two story addition at 515 South Fairfax Street (7/13/1960). The existing rear of the house at 515 South Fairfax Street appears to date to this period. Staff could not locate any subsequent record of Board reviews for the property. The Board approved additions to the twin house at 517 South Fairfax Street in 1957 and in 1988 (5/8/1957 and 7/20/1988).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinances requirements.

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?

Staff believes none of the above criteria are applicable in this case. Those portions of the rear of the house that will be affected by the demolition and capsulation appear to have been constructed and/or substantially reworked circa 1936 and 1960.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application 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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

The proposed re-design of the facade, especially the lower elevation, is incompatible with the early 19th century date of the house- too elaborate with railings, lattice, double stoop steps and doors.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 Tax records indicate the presence of free African American households on this street face in the early and mid-19th century, but the exact addresses are unknown. According to *Historic Alexandria, Virginia, Street by Street* by Ethelyn Cox, the house on this property probably dates to around 1817, when the lot was purchased by Levi Pickering. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into domestic activities, perhaps relating to African Americans, 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 so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.

Transportation and Environmental Services:

R-1 City Code Section 8-122 requires that roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation and Environmental Services.

R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity.

- R-3 Any improvements to the city rightof-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design.
- C-1 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T & ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)
- C-2 Roof drains and sub-surface drains shall be connected to the city storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. (Sec. 8-1-22)
- C-3 Change in point of attachment or removal of existing overhead utility services will require undergrounding or a variance. (Sec. 5-3-3)