

Docket Item # 10
BAR CASE #2006-0084

BAR Meeting
June 21, 2006

ISSUE: Alterations and accessibility modifications

APPLICANT: Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association by Ray Lewis, agent

LOCATION: 201 Prince Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the accessibility ramp;
2. Approval of the replacement transom with the conditions that the new muntin profile match that of the first floor windows flanking the front entryway and that, the existing glass in the transom be retained and maintained on site; and,
3. Approval of replacement stone pavers in the portico with the condition that the replacement stone is determined appropriate by an architectural conservator meeting the Secretary of the Interior's standards and that the stone be approved by the Historic Alexandria Restoration and Historic Preservation Commission prior to installation.

BOARD ACTION, MAY 17, 2006: Deferred by Staff prior to the public hearing pending approval of the Alexandria Historic Restoration and Preservation Commission.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the Athenaeum at 201 Prince Street. The alterations include:

- Accessibility ramp. A ramp is proposed to be installed along the west side of the building sloping upward from the Prince Street sidewalk with a rise of 1/8" per 1' to a landing at a door in the west side of the building terminating with two steps down on the north side of the entrance door. The ramp will be approximately 6' 10" in width and will be covered with brick pavers in a herringbone pattern to match the adjacent sidewalk. A metal handrail will be installed on the garden wall on the west side of the proposed ramp.
- Replacement of concrete slabs. Existing concrete slabs currently installed in the portico will be replaced with new stone slabs.
- Replace the existing single light transom above the front entry door with a new multi-light wood transom with new muntins to match the profile of the existing widows on the east side of the windows.

II. HISTORY:

The Athenaeum was built c. 1851-52, and originally housed the Old Dominion Bank. The building is architecturally significant, as one of the few examples of the Greek Revival style in this district. The building was acquired by the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Commission in 1964.

The Board has approved numerous alterations for the building in the last 50 years from the time it was the Free Methodist Church in 1959 including an addition in 1982 as well as numerous signs. The accessibility modifications proposed in this application were originally approved by the Board in 1988 (BAR Case #88-0062, 5/4/82) but were not implemented.

The Historic Alexandria Restoration and Historic Preservation Commission (HARHPC) holds an open space and facade easement on this property.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed service ramp complies with zoning ordinance requirements.

Based upon the Board's 1988 approval of the accessibility ramp, staff has no objections.

Staff also has no objections to the replacement wood and multi-light transom which is more historically appropriate than the existing single light transom. However, because of the historic architectural importance of the building the new muntin profile should match that of the first floor windows flanking the front entryway. In addition, the exiting glass in the transom appears to be old. Because of this the Commission believes that the glass should be retained and maintained on site. Staff has therefore included a condition reflecting this.

Staff, however, believes that the replacement paving material in the portico should match the

existing Aquia sandstone pavers. The Athenaeum is one of the touchstone properties in the historic district and care needs to be taken to ensure that alterations are appropriate. Therefore, Staff recommends that the applicant employ an architectural conservator who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards to determine the appropriate stone to be installed as replacement pavers in the portico and that the stone be approved by the Historic Alexandria Restoration and Historic Preservation Commission prior to installation.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Approval of the accessibility ramp;
2. Approval of the replacement transom with the conditions that the new muntin profile match that of the first floor windows flanking the front entryway and that, the existing glass in the transom be retained and maintained on site; and,
3. Approval of replacement stone pavers in the portico with the condition that the replacement stone is determined appropriate by an architectural conservator meeting the Secretary of the Interior's standards and that the stone be approved by the Historic Alexandria Restoration and Historic Preservation Commission prior to installation.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 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-4 Required exits and facilities shall be accessible for persons with disabilities.

Historic Alexandria

Originally the Old Dominion Bank built 1851-1852. Proposed plans for ADA accessibility seem appropriate. Consult with Archaeology as this is a site with potential to yield significant historical information.