

Docket Item #s 7 & 8

BAR CASE #s 2006-0257  
2006-0258

BAR Meeting  
December 20, 2006

**ISSUE:** Re-approval of alterations & Re-approval of waiver of rooftop HVAC screening requirement

**APPLICANT:** Jane Slatter by Eleanor Krause

**LOCATION:** 811 Prince Street

**ZONE:** RM/residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That no HVAC units be placed on the east side porch roof and that the applicant work with Staff to find the best possible location and method of screening, if necessary, for the units on the ground;
2. That the existing historic window in the north (rear) wall of the addition be re-used in the new north wall of the addition in accordance with the guidance from VDHR;
3. That the wood fence be appropriate in appearance and quality to the historic district, with the selection to be approved by Staff prior to installation, and that it be painted or stained;
4. That there may be no additional parking areas added in the rear yard; and,
5. The requirements stated below must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on every site plan sheet that refers to any ground disturbing action. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology:

Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.

Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record the finds.

(Insert sketch here)

**NOTE:** Docket item # 6 must be approved before this item may be considered.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is seeking approval of a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alterations and a waiver of rooftop HVAC screening requirement. Over one year ago, on October 5, 2005, the Board approved a permit to demolish, certificate of appropriateness and waiver of screening for a renovation project at 811 Prince Street (BAR Case #s 2005-0199, 2005-0200 & 2005-0201). The project was delayed. Staff recently approved a permit to allow the interior work to proceed but the approval for the exterior work has expired. The exterior project that is now before the Board differs from that previously approved. It has been reduced in scope in some areas and expanded in others.

An architectural and open space easement on 811 Prince Street is jointly held by Virginia Department of Historic Resources Board (VDHR) and Historic Alexandria Foundation (HAF). The property is visible from Prince Street and in views from South Columbus Street looking down the private alley that runs east-west from South Columbus Street to South Alfred Street.

Previously Approved Alterations

At the front of the house, the features proposed for alteration include the construction of a short section of new brick wall perpendicular to the existing wall. The new section will abut the wood framed east wing at the corner. This arrangement will permit the decorative panels below the sill of the east wing to become once again visually accessible from the street as they were historically, until enclosed in the 1960's. The wood trim on the decorative panels will be repaired and repainted. A "new" iron gate installed in the existing masonry garden wall that runs along the front property line. The "new" gate is an antique, comprised of two leaves, with a solid decorative panel below and an open rail section above. It will replace an existing solid wood door and will be hung from new masonry piers in approximately the same location as the existing gate. The new gate will align with a new metal stair structure which will provide access to the east wing of the house from the garden. This light stair structure will be painted and is intended to replace the heavy masonry stair which currently obscures the architecture of the east wing porch or galleria. The shutters on the front of the house will be removed. These were determined to be non-original by Calder Loth, noted architectural historian with VDHR. The electric lamps at the front of the house will be replaced by gas lamps similar in style. These alterations were previously reviewed and approved by VDHR and HAF.

Alterations to Previously Approved Alterations

The house will be retrofitted with a new central HVAC system, eliminating the unsightly window units, but necessitating four condenser units to be located outside the house. The previously approved plans called for two units to be placed on the roof of the rear addition and two units to be placed on the roof of the garage. As before, the current plans include the two units on the rear addition. However, the units will be placed closer to the main block than previously shown as the length of the addition is to be shortened. Since the previous approval, the garage has been determined to be unstable and unable to support the weight of the HVAC units. (The garage will be used for materials storage through the construction process after which the applicants anticipate seeking approval for its demolition). Thus, the two units that were to be placed on the garage are proposed to be located on the roof of the northern wing of

the enclosed wooden porch on the east side of the house. As there is no screening proposed for these units, the applicant is requesting a waiver of the rooftop screening requirement.

Items included in the approval of a year ago but omitted from the present proposal include the proposed addition of a breezeway connection to the garage and alterations to the garage.

#### New Alterations

The applicant is requesting approval of alterations to the rear addition. The removal of the rearmost portion of the rear addition as requested in docket item #6, will entail the need for a new rear (north) wall. The proposed north wall will be frame on a block and brick foundation. The brick clad foundation will extend approximately 3 ½ above grade at the rear. The wall above this, on the first and second stories will be clad in wood siding to match the existing wood siding on the second story. According to the plans, there will be a simulated divided light, two-over-two wood window in the second story. However, the emailed comments of the VDHR easement review committee, dated December 6, 2006, require that “an existing, historic window be re-used in the new rear elevation of the building.” According to the architect, the intent is to reuse the arched, two-over-two window from the north wall of the section to be demolished. The ends of the existing brick first story side walls will return and remain exposed on the north façade to make visible the current alteration. The new frame wall on the first story at the north end will be inset slightly and will be clad in a narrower, 5” wood clapboard.

The brick garden wall which currently extends between the east side of the rear addition to the west wall of the garage at the back of the property will be removed. A new 6’ high, temporary wood privacy fence will be erected for the duration of the construction. As drawn, the proposed fence appears to be a stockade type fence. In addition, the plans show a new parking area to be located on the site of the portion of the rear addition to be demolished and on a small area immediately to the east of this that is currently part of the rear yard.

#### **II. HISTORY:**

As discussed in docket item #6, the house at 811 Prince Street was constructed between 1849 and 1855 by William Bayne. It consists of a three bay wide 3-1/2 story masonry block on the west side of the property which is topped by a strongly bracketed and deeply projecting cornice. The east side of the house faces a large garden and consists at the first level of a one story glazed wooden porch or galleria which has been converted to year round use. The small, two story, frame and brick rear addition appears to incorporate elements from a mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century brick outbuilding, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century single story connector and a 1936 frame addition to the second story. The house is one of the more notable Italianate examples in Alexandria and is distinguished by a very high degree of architectural and historical integrity.

#### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The subject property is zoned RM, residential. No additional parking may be added to the rear of the property. In accordance with Section 7-1005 of the zoning ordinance, not more than 50 percent of the rear yard may be used for parking. The request for approval of the HVAC unit screening complies with the zoning ordinance requirements which require that rooftop HVAC equipment must be screened with architectural materials or features of the same type and quality

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used on the exterior walls of the building but allow this requirement to be waived by the Board when appropriate (Section 6-403(B)(1) of the zoning ordinance).

Staff recommends re-approval of all those elements of the project that were previously approved. However, Staff believes several of the new elements present some concerns:

HVAC – The previously approved plans included two HVAC condensing units on the roof of the rear ell. The Board approved the installation of the units and waiver of screening. Staff sees no reason to object to the installation of the units on this utilitarian 20<sup>th</sup> century wing at the rear of the house and notes that although the location of the units as currently proposed is slightly changed from that which was previously approved, it is not likely to be any more obtrusive than the previous location. Staff does object to the proposed installation of two HVAC condensing units on the roof of the one story glazed wooden porch or galleria. The one story porch with its Italianate woodwork, large glazed areas and ornate rooftop cresting is a highly significant and visible element of the house. Although the HVAC units will be tucked away toward the back (north end) of the porch and will be partially screened by the higher central projecting section of the porch, Staff believes they will be visible from some angles. There is no parapet to hide them and they will have to be placed on a pad of some sort which will further raise their profile. Staff strongly recommends that these units be placed on the ground at the back of the house. Screening may be necessary depending on the visibility of the location on the ground.

Addition – Staff has no objection to the proposed alterations to the rear wing. The new north wall will appear much like the existing utilitarian back wall. Staff notes that the emailed comments of the VDHR easement review committee, dated December 6, 2006, require that “an existing, historic window be re-used in the new rear elevation of the building.” Until the drawings are amended to comply with this comment, Staff recommends that this be included as a condition of the Board’s approval.

Fence – Staff has no objection to the use of wood fencing at the rear of the property after the brick wall between the addition and garage is removed. However, Staff believes the fence should be of good quality, even if it is temporary and the intended to be eventually replaced by a masonry wall. The drawings appear to show a stockade fence. The fence should be an appropriate Board fence and should be painted or stained, as recommended in the Design Guidelines (Fences – Page 3).

Paving – In accordance with the zoning regulations, there can be no additional parking in the rear yard beyond that which already exists.

Lastly, Staff notes the comments of Alexandria Archeology and recommends that they be incorporated as a condition of the approval.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

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1. That no HVAC units be placed on the east side porch roof and that the applicant work with Staff to find the best possible location and method of screening, if necessary, for the units on the ground;
2. That the existing historic window in the north (rear) wall of the addition be re-used in the new north wall of the addition in accordance with the guidance from VDHR;
3. That the wood fence be appropriate in appearance and quality to the historic district, with the selection to be approved by Staff prior to installation, and that it be painted or stained;
4. That there may be no additional parking areas added in the rear yard; and,
5. The requirements stated below must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on every site plan sheet that refers to any ground disturbing action. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology:

Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.

Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record the finds.

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.
- C-2 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-3 A soils report must be submitted with the building permit application.
- 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.
- C-8 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments.

Alexandria Archeology:

- F-1 This property was occupied by at least the mid 19th-century and was used as the Powell Hospital by Union troops during the Civil War. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into 19<sup>th</sup>-century residential and Civil War-period hospital life.
- C-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.

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- C-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) immediately if any buried historic structural remains (wall foundations, cisterns, wells, privies, 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 to record the finds..
  
- C-3 The requirements stated in C-1 and C2 above, must be included in the General Notes of all site plans, as well as on every site plan sheet that refers to any ground disturbing action. Additional statements may be required to be included on the Final Site Plans by Alexandria Archaeology.