

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE #2006-0123

BAR Meeting
January 3, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition and Capsulation

APPLICANT: Chris & Patsy Randolph by Robert B. Adams & Associates

LOCATION: 5 Potomac Court

ZONE: RM/Residential

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish for a number of different areas of demolition and capsulation at 5 Potomac Court, part of a comprehensive renovation and addition project. The two story brick clad house at 5 Potomac Court rests on a raised basement. The ground slopes down to the south leaving the basement or ground level exposed at the rear of the house. The sections of the house to be demolished and capsulated include:

Front (north) elevation - Demolition of portions of the existing front steps for altered steps.

West side elevation - Demolition of portions of the west wall on the first and second levels for three new window openings. Demolition of portions of the west wall on the first and ground levels for two new door openings. Capsulation of a small portion of the west wall at the south end on the ground level for a new screened porch.

Rear (south) elevation - Demolition of most of rear wall from ground to eaves (approximately 14.5' wide by 30' high) and capsulation with new three story bay window. The rear wall currently has a variety of windows and doors at each level. Demolition of portion of roof approximately 7' wide by 10' deep for a new shed dormer. Demolition of a small section of the south elevation of the frame shed on the west wall of the house to allow for a new window opening.

No demolition or capsulation is proposed for the east side elevation. The house at 5 Potomac Court is visible from Potomac Court, Windmill Hill Park and Union Street.

II. HISTORY:

5 Potomac Court is a two story brick end unit townhouse dating from 1967. The Board approved the development of six attached and semi-attached townhouses on Potomac Court on June 8, 1966. This property is one of several facing on Potomac Court whose rear yards overlook Union Street at the eastern end of the Wilkes Street Railroad Tunnel.

Staff did not locate any BAR reviews for 5 Potomac Court subsequent to the original 1966 approval for the development.

The Board previously has approved demolition/capsulation for a number of other



Figure 1 - North elevation



Figure 2 - South elevation

properties on Potomac Court. In 2004, the Board approved a demolition permit and certificate of appropriateness for an addition at the ground level and a new screened porch at the first floor at the rear of 6 Potomac Court (BAR Case #s 2004-0232 & 0233, 11/3/2004). In the same year, the Board also approved a demolition permit and certificate of appropriateness for a front dormer and three story bay on the south side of 8 Potomac Court (BAR Case #'s 2004-0011 & 0012, 2/18/2004). In 2002, the Board approved a permit to demolish and a certificate of appropriateness for a dormer on the rear of 9 Potomac Court (BAR Case #'s 2002-0222 & 0223, 9/4/2002).

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?

Staff believes none of the above criteria are applicable in this case. The house dates to the last half of the 20th century and possesses no special architectural or historical significance. The most substantial demolition and capsulation will occur at the rear of the house.

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:

Several components of this project should be re-considered:

- 1) The shed dormer with the copper sides, which is discouraged in the guidelines;
- 2) The front porch with the copper roof which interrupts the symmetry of the facade;
- 3) The dominant bay windows on the rear elevation. These, in conjunction with the dormer, drastically alter the appearance of the facade.