

Docket Item # 10
BAR CASE # 2006-
0273/274/275/276

BAR Meeting
January 17, 2006

ISSUE: After-the-fact approval of alterations to previously approved plans

APPLICANT: Ellis Denning LLC by Mary Catherine Gibbs

LOCATION: 711, 713, 715 & 717 Gibbon Street

ZONE: CL/Commercial

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

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of electric meters and gas meters that have been installed on the façades of new residential townhouses currently under construction at 711, 713, 715 & 717 Gibbon Street.

Electric Meters

While the electric meters and associated conduit are currently installed on the front façades of the townhouses, the revised proposal by the applicant proposes to bury the conduit within the walls of the townhouses and to recess the meters themselves into the brick walls and then to place a hinged cover over the recessed meter globes. The height of the meters will continue to be at 4' above grade. The cover over the meter globes will be similar to that found on some residential mailboxes. The bricks and mortar around the new recessed meters and covering will be re-worked to match that existing.

Gas Meters

The applicant's proposal is to leave the gas meters *in situ* and to screen them with low lying vegetation.

II. HISTORY:

711, 713, 715 & 717 Gibbon Street are new residential townhouses currently under construction. The Board approved the new development in 2005 (BAR Case #2005-00010). The site plan for the new townhouses was approved by the Planning Commission in late 2004 (DSP 2004-0011, 12/7/04).

III. ANALYSIS:

The meters project into the public right-of-way and an encroachment ordinance must be approved by City Council.

At the time of approval by the Board the electrical meters were proposed to be installed in a ganged bank on the side of the westernmost townhouse at 717 Gibbon Street. The meters were not installed at this location because, according to Dominion Power, there was not sufficient clearance for installation between the wall of the proposed new townhouse at 717 Gibbon and the adjacent historic townhouse at 719 Gibbon. Therefore, the electric meters were installed on the façades. At the time that the electric meters were installed there was no consultation with the Code Enforcement Bureau regarding revisions to the electrical permit for the project, the Department of Planning and Zoning concerning an amendment to the Development Site Plan for the project approved by the Planning Commission and City Council nor an amendment to the Certificate of Appropriateness for the project approved by the Board or with the Department of Transportation and Environmental Services regarding an encroachment into the public right-of-way since both the electric meters and the gas meters project into public space. The Department of Planning and Zoning received numerous complaints regarding the installation of the unapproved meters. Subsequently a number of meetings were held between the developer of the property and city representatives at the behest of the Director of Code Enforcement. The current proposal is the outcome from these meetings.

Staff believes that the proposal to bury the electrical conduit and recess the meters and disguise the globes with a mailbox-like covering is acceptable. It will remove an extremely disruptive visual element from the front of the townhouses with minimal impact to the on-going construction activity of the houses. As a matter of policy, however, staff believes that electrical and gas meters should be located behind or to the side of townhouses as has been approved by the Board in the case of all other townhouses approved since 1990.

Staff has no objection to screening the gas meters with plantings. Staff believes that such vegetation can be effective in visually hiding these low meters.

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:

No comments.

Historic Alexandria:

“Request seems appropriate.”