

Docket Item # 18
BAR CASE # 2007-0010

BAR Meeting
February 7, 2007

ISSUE: After-the-fact approval of a shed

APPLICANT: Kevin Kuntz

LOCATION: 724 South Alfred Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends deferral for restudy with the applicant to work with Staff to find an acceptable alternative and to return to the Board, if necessary, within three months from this date.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting after-the-fact approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a storage shed. The shed is located in the northeast corner of the property, at the rear property line. It is a manufactured shed constructed out of a resin material. It is two shades of gray. It has a low pitched gable roof and double doors at the front (west) side. It measures 8' wide by 5.5' deep and is 7' high at the peak of the gable.

The topmost portion of the shed is visible from the public alley at the rear of the property. It is not visible from Alfred Street.

Staff learned of the shed through a citizen complaint and wrote the property owner in October 2006, requesting that either the shed be removed or that the property owner apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

II. HISTORY:

The end unit townhouse at 724 South Alfred Street was constructed in 1941, according to the City's Real Estate records. The brick clad cinderblock rowhouses with steel casement windows were built in a minimalist modern style as part of a development known as the Patrick Henry Homes, consisting of approximately 53 homes on the 700 block of South Patrick, South Alfred, and South Columbus and the 800 and 900 blocks of Jefferson Street. The "new brick homes" were advertised for sale in the Alexandria Gazette on June 16, 1942 and were part of a massive expansion of Alexandria's housing stock in the years leading up to and during World War II.

The Board recently reviewed a case of after-the-fact alteration at the neighboring property, 726 South Alfred Street (BAR Case #2006-00253, 12/6/2006). The case involved reconfiguration of the brickwork on the façade to create jack arches above the previously plain window openings. The Board expressed concern over the alterations but deferred the case to be reheard before a full Board. The case has not yet been reheard because the applicant has been working with Staff on plans to reverse the alterations.

III. ANALYSIS:

The shed complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Unfortunately, the shed does not comply with the *Design Guidelines* which state that "[p]re-fabricated late 20th century storage sheds and greenhouses are generally not appropriate in the historic districts," that "exterior finishes for accessory structures should be selected to complement the main building," and "[t]he materials of accessory structures should follow the historic usage of materials" (Accessory Structures, pages 2 & 3). Sheds should be constructed of traditional materials that complement the main building. The resin material of the shed is similar to that used for trash cans and storage bins; it is only within the last decade or so that it has been used for buildings, generally molded storage sheds of this type. While inexpensive and rugged, this type of material is not at all within the realm of traditional building materials or construction methods. The late-20th century, suburban, pre-fabricated appearance of the shed does not relate to the mid-20th century brick house at 724 South Alfred and the neighboring properties.

Staff regrets that the applicant did not seek guidance prior to installing the shed and is prepared to assist in finding an acceptable solution. One solution would be to reduce the height so that the shed is not visible over the fence. Unfortunately, this type of shed appears to be unalterable. A second alternative would be to design or select a new pre-fabricated shed which would not extend above the fence and thus would not fall within the BAR purview. If the applicant still desires a higher shed, Staff would be happy to assist in the design or selection process to ensure that the new shed would conform to the *Design Guidelines*. A final alternative may be to replace the existing fence with a 7' high fence in those areas necessary to screen the shed from view. The fence could then step down to the more typical 6' height beyond these sections. Staff notes that the existing stockade fence appears to have been constructed a number of years ago and does not meet the *Design Guidelines*, which expressly state that “[m]odern, mass-produced wood stockade fencing...[is] not appropriate in the historic districts (Fences- Page 2). It would be an improvement to replace the fence. Under section 7-202(C) of the zoning ordinance, in the Old and Historic Alexandria and the Parker-Gray Districts, the requirement of section 7-202(B)(3) that fences may be no more than 6' in height may be waived or modified by the Board of Architectural review where the Board finds that a proposed fence would be architecturally appropriate and consistent with the character of the district. Staff could help the applicant chose an appropriate replacement fence type.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral for restudy with the applicant to work with Staff to find an acceptable alternative and to return to the Board, if necessary, within three months from this date.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

F-1 Applicant shall adhere to all applicable Planning and Zoning requirements.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments were received.