

Docket Item # 10  
BAR CASE # 2007-0020

BAR Meeting  
February 21, 2007

**ISSUE:** Dormer

**APPLICANT:** David and Phillipa Wilcox by Patrick Tomlinson

**LOCATION:** 413 North Fairfax Street

**ZONE:** RM/residential

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends restudy of the proposed dormer addition. However, should the Board approve the present application, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
2. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed.

(Insert sketch here)

**Note:** Docket item #9 must be approved before this item may be considered.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the construction of a new shed dormer addition on the rear slope of the gable roof. This addition will allow the attic area under the roof to be converted into a third story master bedroom suite. The proposed dormer will be located on the rear slope of the roof, facing east onto the development's common area in the center of the block. It will be visible to the public only through a gap in the building wall along North Lee Street, between 410 and 412 North Lee Street.

The dormer will be 18' 7 ½" wide and 6' 8 ½" high. The walls of the dormer will be clad in Hardiplank brand fiber cement lap siding with a 6" exposure. The roof will be clad in fiberglass shingles by CertainTeed in a "Slatestone" color similar to the gray of the existing roof shingles. There will be two windows in the long east face of the dormer. The windows will be located to either end of the dormer. They will be double hung wood windows with simulated divided lights. The trim will be Azek, cellular PVC. The trim and siding will be painted.

The applicant has provided a letter from the Princess Street Homeowners Association approving the proposed project.

**II. HISTORY:**

The house at 413 North Fairfax Street was constructed in 1977 as part of the Princess Street Townhouses development project in a Federal Revival design style. There is no record of prior Board reviews for this property. While the Board has approved skylights for at least two other houses in the Princess Street Townhouses development, there do not appear to have been any previous dormer additions.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The subject property is zoned RM/residential. Per the residential cluster plan for the development (SUP#1044), the subject property has no rear yard requirements. The subject property meets the FAR requirements per the submitted FAR calculations and RM zoning. Therefore, the proposed rear dormer addition complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the proposed shed dormer addition is inappropriate. The *Design Guidelines* note that "[s]hed dormers are strongly discouraged" (Dormers – Page 1). The shed dormer form was not generally used for domestic buildings until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was used to light the second stories of Bungalows and Dutch Colonial Revival Cottages. The shed dormer is inappropriate in architectural character for this Federal Revival style building. Federal and Federal Revival buildings frequently have dormers, but these tend to be delicately scaled and to have gable roofs. The proposed dormer consumes nearly the entire east face of the roof. It is inappropriate in scale for the modest building. Staff strongly recommends that the design be restudied to reduce the bulk of the dormer addition, perhaps using a series of smaller dormers. The *Design Guidelines* provide useful guidance on the appropriate design of dormers.

Staff does note however, that the dormer will be only minimally visible from the public right-of-way. If for this reason, the Board does decide to approve the shed dormer concept, Staff still

believes the design could be improved. The window proportions and relationship between solid and void are among the details that might be reconsidered.

The applicant proposes to use Hardiplank for the walls of the dormer. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to fiber cement siding:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
5. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed; and,
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Based on this policy, the proposed use of Hardiplank siding is acceptable as long as the nails not show in the installation of the siding and smooth siding is installed. The applicant is also proposing to use Azek trim, a synthetic trim material that has previously been proposed for a number of other projects in the Old and Historic District. As the material is being used on a new addition and the house itself dates to the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Staff has no objection to the use of Azek trim.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends restudy of the proposed dormer addition. However, should the Board approve the present application, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
2. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Additions and alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit (USBC 108.1). Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application (USBC 109.1).
- C-3 A Construction permit will be required for the proposed project.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Historic Alexandria:

No comments were received.