

Docket Item # 15
BAR CASE # 2007-0007

BAR Meeting
March 21, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation
APPLICANT: Wolfe Alley Condominium Association
LOCATION: 411 South Columbus Street
ZONE: RB/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, MARCH 21, 2007: Staff recommends:

1. Denial of the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate any portion of the Mansard roof; and,
2. Approval of the removal of the existing skylights and rooftop access structures.

BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 7, 2007: The Board combined the discussion of docket item #'s 15 & 16. On a motion by Mr. Smeallie, seconded by Mr. Wheeler, the Board voted to defer the application for restudy, on a vote of 7-0.

REASON: The Board expressed concern with the proposal to increase the height of the existing roof top structures and recommended that other options be explored to allow access to the roof.

SPEAKERS: David Gallagher, project architect, spoke in support

STAFF RECOMMENDATION, FEBRUARY 7, 2007: Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: This docket item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish portions of the multi-family residential building at 411 South Columbus Street. The areas to be demolished and capsulated include: removing existing skylights, enlarging existing rooftop access structures and the topmost section of the existing Mansard roof.

II. HISTORY:

The building at 411 South Columbus Street is freestanding brick two and half story Second Empire building that was constructed in 1870 as the Colored Odd Fellows Hall with funds supplied by the Freedmen's Bureau. It was built by George Seaton, a master carpenter and builder. It is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is only surviving buildings in Alexandria associated with African American communal organizations in the period 1790 to 1953.

In 1985, the building was converted to a residential condominium building. The inappropriate alterations to the roof which are visible today were approved by the Board in 1985 (BAR Case #'s 85-141, 7/10/85 and 85-63, 5/1/85).

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate, 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 house?
- (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?

The demolition of the top edge of the Mansard roof involves the substantial alteration of a character defining feature of this building and, indeed, the defining visual component of the Mansard style. The demolition of this part of the roof will alter a significant building associated

with African American history in Alexandria. As such, it is the opinion of staff that criteria #'s 1, 5 and 6 are met in this instance and this part of the Permit to Demolish should not be granted.

Staff has no objection to removing existing skylights and enlarging the rooftop access structures which were constructed in the late 20th century. It is the opinion of Staff that none of the criteria for demolition and encapsulation are met for these building elements.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Denial of the Permit to Demolish and Capsulate any portion of the Mansard roof; and,
2. Approval of the removal of the existing skylights and rooftop access structures.

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.

Historic Alexandria:

No comments received.