

Docket Item # 16  
BAR CASE # 2007-0008

BAR Meeting  
March 21, 2007

**ISSUE:** Alterations

**APPLICANT:** Wolfe Alley Condominium Association

**LOCATION:** 411 South Columbus Street

**ZONE:** RB/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION, MARCH 21, 2007:** Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy.

**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.

**SPEAKER:** David Gallagher, project architect, spoke in support

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

(Insert sketch here)

Update: Since the public hearing of February 7<sup>th</sup> the applicant has modified the proposal in an attempt to address the Board's concerns about the visual prominence of rooftop access structures. The current proposal is to raise the height of the existing Mansard roof approximately 3' in order to visually screen the altered rooftop structures.

NOTE: Docket item # 15 must be approved before this docket item can be considered.

#### **I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the multi-family building at 411 South Columbus Street. These alterations include:

- raising the height of the Mansard roof by 3' and installing new slate shingles on both the existing and raised portions of the roof;
- raising the height of three existing roof access structures. These new roof structures will match the profile and slate surface of the new Mansard roof;
- installing a replacement metal railing around the perimeter of the new raised height Mansard roof;
- raising the height of the chimneys to compensate for the increased height of the roof and re-surfacing it with a stucco finish to match the other existing chimneys; and,

#### **II. HISTORY:**

The building at 411 South Columbus Street is freestanding brick two and half story Second Empire style building that was constructed in 1870 and converted in 1985 into a residential condominium building. The Board approved alterations to the building in 1985.

The building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places as one of the most significant African American structures in Alexandria.

#### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

At the public hearing of February 7<sup>th</sup>, staff had no objection to the design for the increased height of the roof access structures that mimics the Mansard motif of the roof and believed it is appropriate for the roof area that has previously been greatly altered. Likewise, Staff had no objections to the other alterations which repeat the design vocabulary of the existing rooftop elements. Staff continues to have no objections to the alterations which were made to the building in 1985.

However, staff has serious reservations regarding altering the original height of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mansard roof. The existing roof serves to define the original architecture of the structure and was built by the most prominent African American builder in Alexandria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the additional height proposed will significantly alter the proportions of the roof form and, therefore, the overall architectural character of the building. Because of these factors staff cannot support the increased roof height proposed.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy.

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 received.