

Docket Item # 25
BAR CASE #2007-0150

BAR Meeting
August 1, 2007

ISSUE: Demolition/encapsulation

APPLICANT: Joseph Parimucha

LOCATION: 211 Lee Court

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: 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 re-approval of a Permit to Demolish for the demolition of the roof, portions of the eastern and western walls as well as a section of the south wall of the freestanding brick residence at 211 Lee Court in order to permit the construction of a second story addition.



Figure 11 - South elevation



Figure 22 - East elevation



Figure 33 - Site

II. HISTORY:

211 Lee Court is a one story freestanding residential brick building. It sits in the middle of the residential block bounded by Green Street on the north, Jones Point Park on the south, South Lee Street on the east and South Fairfax Street on the west. One of the central visual features of the building is an outsized two story brick chimney at the south end of the building.

The general consensus regarding this brick building has been that it was originally constructed as part of the Alexandria Shipbuilding Corporation in about 1918 and that it was the Commissary for serve the workers. If this is the case, today it is the only surviving above grade building associated with the Shipbuilding Corporation and, indeed, a rare surviving structure of the maritime industry that has existed on the Alexandria waterfront from the mid-18th century. Indeed, the applicant has included a copy of a Sanborn Insurance map from 1921 which depicts the Commissary and Restaurant building in essentially the same location as the present building. However, the building shown on the Sanborn map and this building are not one and the same. First, the building represented on the Sanborn map is depicted as being of frame construction and this is a brick building. Second, the building depicted on the map is quantum times bigger than the building that is the subject of this application. The Commissary building is drawn to be approximately 160' in length x 120' in width while the house here is approximately 19' in width x 44.7' in length. What then is the origin of this building? It bears no relationship to the prevailing street pattern of the surrounding Yates Garden subdivision or, indeed, to the block pattern of the historic City. The size and massing of the existing house are distinctly different than most other residential structures in the historic district. From a 1935 building permit it appears that the existing house was built expressly as a residence (Building Permit #686, 11/16/1935).

From the scanty information on the building permit for the house, it appears likely that portions of an existing building on the site (which could be the Shipbuilding Corporation's Commissary)

were reused and remodeled into this residence. The building permit notes that the house to be erected would be “remodeled.” If portions of the Commissary building previously existing in this general location are included in portions of the existing house they are so well disguised as to appear to be indistinguishable from any other part of the existing house. However, the building permit drawings indicate that the openings for the windows are “existing.” Thus, it would appear that the fenestration voids are part of a previous building existing on the site. It is difficult to equate these voids with those that may have existed on the Commissary building given the disparity of building materials between the two structures.

The house was designed by J. Cushing Daniel, listed on the building permit as the architect, for Christine Waggaman. As designed the house is a simple, one story relatively unadorned brick freestanding residence with a gable roof without stylistic adornment.

The Board originally approved the Permit to Demolish and the additions and alterations to this property last year (BAR Case #2006-0115, 6/21/06). However, construction was not commenced within twelve months and the validity of the Permit to Demolish and the Certificate of Appropriateness expired. This is a request for re-approval.

III. ANALYSIS:

In considering a Permit to Demolish and 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 shrine?
- (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?

Given the fact that this is a mid-20th century residence, Staff does not believe any of the above criteria are met. Its association with remnants of the Alexandria Shipbuilding Corporation are, at best, tenuous. For these reasons, staff recommends approval of the Permit to Demolish.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application a submitted.

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 be taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.

Historic Alexandria:

The scale and mass of the proposed addition and alterations seems too great for the surrounding community.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 In 1910 to 1912, the Army Corps of Engineers dredged the Potomac River and filled Battery Cove. The block containing 211 Lee Court was created at this time. The property became part of the Virginia Shipbuilding Corporation that was established on the landfill in 1917 to increase U.S. ship manufacturing during World War I. The current house on the property, built in the 1930s, stands on the site of the commissary and restaurant for the shipbuilding company. There is potential that some evidence of the activities of this early-nineteenth century manufacturing complex may remain buried on the property.

R-1 Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) two weeks prior to any ground disturbing activity (such as coring, grading, filling, vegetation removal, undergrounding utilities, pile driving, landscaping and other excavations as defined in Section 2-151 of The Zoning Ordinance) on this property. City archaeologists will provide on-site inspections to record significant finds.

R-2 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.

R-3 The above statements in R-1 and R-2 must appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including sheeting and shoring and grading) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirement.