

Docket Item # 4
BAR CASE # 2007-0008

BAR Meeting
October 17, 2007

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

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends:

1. Deferral for restudy of the replacement railing; and
2. Approval of the other proposed alterations.

BOARD ACTION, MARCH 21, 2007: The Board combined the discussion of docket item #'s 11 & 12. The Chairman called the question on the staff recommendations which were:

For the Permit to Demolish:

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.

For the Certificate of Appropriateness for the alterations: deferral of the application for restudy.
The vote on the motion was 6-0.

REASON: The Board agreed with the staff concerning demolition of the Mansard roof and believed that demolition of this section of the historic property was inappropriate. The Board deferred the alterations for restudy because the Permit to Demolish was not approved.

SPEAKER: David Gallagher, project architect, spoke in support

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 March 21st the applicant has modified the proposal to address the Board's concerns and the comments at the public hearing. The scope of the overall proposal has been reduced.

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:

- Installing a replacement metal railing around the perimeter of the Mansard roof. This railing will be 36" in height with 1/2" square pickets at 3 1/2 " o.c. and painted a dark gray and extend around the entire perimeter of the roof.
- Re-surfacing the chimneys with a stucco finish, to replace the existing brick veneer;
- Replacing in kind the metal drainage materials; and,
- Replacing in kind the slate roof.

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 structures in Alexandria associated with African Americans in the 19th century. It was built 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 the 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:

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

While the proposed replacement railing essentially mimics the design of the railing from the 1985 conversion, staff believes that a railing that is more aesthetically compatible with the overall design motif is warranted for this historic building. Therefore, staff recommends that the railing be deferred for restudy of a different design for the railing.

Staff has no objections to the roof drainage change out or the roof covering materials. Likewise, staff has no objection to the replacement of brick veneer on the chimneys with stucco. These veneered chimneys were not part of the original structure and were included as part of the 1985 renovations.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends:

1. Deferral for restudy of the replacement railing; and
2. Approval of the other proposed alterations.

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).
- C-5 Guardrail height and openings must comply with USBC 1012.2 and 1012.3.
- C-6 Roof drainage system must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property

Historic Alexandria:

- R-1 Although application indicates railing is being returned to original design configuration, no evidence has been submitted to confirm the actual “original” design. Proposed steel railing and method of installation appear to be a contemporary adaptation not appropriate to the period of initial construction. Rail looks applied as if attaching a fence to the roof. A more appropriately designed railing should be installed.