

Docket Item # 8
BAR CASE # 2007-0207

BAR Meeting
October 17, 2007

ISSUE: Alterations
APPLICANT: Gordon Barnes
LOCATION: 516 Queen Street
ZONE: RM/residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the application be deferred to allow the applicant to explore repair and retention of the existing siding and window and, if necessary, to select historically appropriate replacement materials.

(Insert sketch here)

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a certificate of appropriateness for alterations to the mid-19th century building. The applicant seeks to replace the wood siding on the west side of the house with Hardiplank lap siding with a 7” reveal and a smooth finish. The Hardiplank siding will be “Boothbay Blue” to match the current building color. The west wall is 32.3’ long. Approximately half of that length is the gable end of the two story main block, while the other half is the single story addition. The siding on the main block is German siding with a reveal of approximately 5” while that on the addition is a wider bevel siding. The siding is badly in need of painting and shows evidence of prior repair.

In addition, the applicant is requesting approval to replace a window in the center of the second story on the west side. The existing window is a four-over-four, single-glazed wood window that probably dates to the 19th century. There are no other windows on this elevation. The applicant proposes to replace the window with a Kolbe and Kolbe wood, double-hung window with the same four-over-four configuration. According to the applicant, the new window will be the “closest sized” window available to the existing. It will have “performance divided lights” a simulated divided light system using a permanently affixed aluminum grille bar on the exterior. The muntin width is not provided.

The west side of the house is readily visible from the public right-of-way.

II. HISTORY:

The two story frame house at 516 Queen Street appears to have been constructed with 514 Queen Street as a single house. According to Ethelyn Cox in Alexandria Street by Street, the building may have been constructed by 1851 (p. 145). It is unclear whether the building was later divided or always intended as a duplex sharing one roof and lot. It is not until 1891 that the Sanborn mapping shows two address numbers for the building. That is the date when a single story addition is first shown on the 516 side of the property. The 514 side had had a longer two story rear ell from at least 1877. It is not until 1902 that the houses are shown as two separate properties with a divided lot. The gable-roofed, mirror pair are detached on the east and west sides. The houses retain a high degree of integrity.

According to BAR records, the only prior case for 516 Queen Street was heard on October 11, 1967. On that date, the Board denied the applicant’s request to install “aluminum siding and aluminum window.” Staff could not locate any record of reviews for 514 Queen Street. However, the siding on the long east side of that property appears to have been replaced at some point with wide masonite siding.

On August 27, 2007 Code Enforcement cited the property for peeling paint and rotten wood. The current application appears to be in response to this citation.

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed window and siding alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

Staff does not believe the proposed siding replacement is appropriate. The *Design Guidelines* note that siding is one of the principal character defining elements of a building. The central

tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation is that historic materials should be retained and repaired rather than replaced (Siding – Page 1). Staff acknowledges that the siding is currently in poor condition, but is not convinced that replacement is warranted. If at all possible, the existing siding should be repaired and repainted. If retention is not possible, then the siding should be replaced with wood siding to match the existing in profile and dimension. Staff does not believe that replacement with fiber cement is appropriate. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to the use of 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; and,
5. That smooth siding be installed.
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Clearly, criteria 1, 2, and 3 are not met in this case. The house and addition are historic, dating to circa 1851 and circa 1891 respectively. In addition they are clad in historic wood siding which would be removed with the application of the fiber cement. Lastly, the fiber cement would not be replacing artificial or composite siding in this case, but rather wood.

With respect to the proposed window replacement, Staff strongly recommends that the applicant explore repair and retention of the existing window. Again, windows are a principal character defining feature of a building and retention is a central tenet of the philosophy of historic preservation (Windows – Page 1 & 2). The wood, true-divided light window appears to be a 19th century window. If possible, it should be reglazed and repainted. If desired, a storm window, either exterior or interior, could be installed to increase the insulation value of the window. If the existing window is truly irreparable, the replacement window should fit the existing opening and should be a wood window with true divided lights and wood muntin bars. The proposed replacement window is not acceptable.

Therefore, Staff believes that the application should be deferred to allow the applicant to further explore repair and retention of the existing siding and window. The applicant is encouraged to work with Staff in this process. If the applicant remains convinced that replacement is necessary, that condition must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of Staff and more historically appropriate replacement siding and window should be selected. The replacement siding should be wood siding matching the existing in profiles and dimensions and the replacement window should be a wood window matching the existing window in size and configuration and having true-divided light wood muntins no greater than 7/8" in width. Staff recognizes that the condition of the west side of the house needs to be addressed in a timely manner and hopes to work with the owner to find an historically appropriate solution as quickly as possible.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the application be deferred to allow the applicant to explore repair and retention of the existing siding and window and, if necessary, to select historically appropriate replacement materials.

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 Alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit. Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application. The plans must include all dimensions, construction alterations details, kitchen equipment, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical layouts and schematics.
- C-3 Sheeting and shoring shall not extend beyond the property line; except when the developer has obtained a written release from adjacent property owners which has been recorded in the land records; or through an approved encroachment process.
- C-4 Permission from adjacent property owners is required if access to the adjacent properties is required to complete the proposed construction. Otherwise, a plan shall be submitted to demonstrate the construction techniques utilized to keep construction solely on the referenced property.

Historic Alexandria:

- R- Deny.
- S- Restore and repaint the existing wood siding and window.