

Docket Item # 6  
BAR CASE # 2007-0008

BAR Meeting  
November 14, 2007

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

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval with the condition that a final shop drawing with details be submitted for Staff review and approval prior to applying for a building permit.

**BOARD ACTION, OCTOBER 17, 2007:** On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Ms. Neihardt, the Board voted to approve the alterations consisting of the roof drainage change out, the roof replacement materials, and the replacement of the brick veneer on the chimneys with stucco, but deferred for restudy the design of the replacement railing. The vote was 5-1, with Mr. Keleher voting against and Mr. Neale abstaining.

**REASON:** The Board agreed with the staff analysis and concurred that the design of the replacement railing needed additional restudy.

**SPEAKERS:** David Gallagher, project architect representing the applicant, spoke in support John Hynan, representing Historic Alexandria Foundation, spoke with concerns Richard Bonan, applicant's structural engineer, spoke in support.

**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 October 17th the applicant has revised the design of the replacement railing around the perimeter of the Mansard roof in response to comments from the Board and members of the public. The applicant has provided a sketch with dimensions of the revised railing.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for 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 4" o.c. and painted a dark gray and extend around the entire perimeter of the roof. The revised railing is more ornamental than the previous version, with fleur-di-lis finials located at the top of a vertical bar centered on a half-round component. Above the half-round sections will be a flat-bar railing.

**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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 one of the few surviving building 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).

At the October 17, 2007 hearing, the Board approved alterations consisting of the roof drainage change out, the roof replacement materials, and the replacement of the brick veneer on the chimneys with stucco, but deferred for restudy the design of the railing.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed alterations comply with zoning ordinance requirements.

In Staff's opinion, the current revised proposal for the replacement railing addresses the concerns of the Board by incorporating a more finished and aesthetically compatible design for the replacement railing. While Staff supports this design, Staff would recommend that a final shop drawing with details be submitted for Staff review and approval prior to applying for a building permit.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval with the condition that a final shop drawing with details be submitted for Staff review and approval prior to applying for a building permit.

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:

Prior Comments for October hearing: 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.