

Docket Item # 10  
BAR CASE # 2008-0058

BAR Meeting  
May 7, 2008

**ISSUE:** Alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Virginia Theological Seminary  
**LOCATION:** 3737 Seminary Road  
**ZONE:** R-20/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall consult with Staff for final approval of the door to determine if the existing door is original and able to be repaired, if the existing door is not original but appropriate for reuse, or for approval of an appropriate replacement door. Applicant will work with and provide necessary materials, including specifications, for Staff's final approval.
2. The applicant/developer shall coordinate with Alexandria Archaeology to allow City archaeologists to conduct an investigation prior to any ground disturbing activities in the areas to be developed. Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) to set up a schedule for this work.
3. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
  - a. The applicant/developer shall 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.
  - b. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology (703/838-4399) two weeks before the starting date of any ground disturbance so that an inspection schedule for city archaeologists can be arranged.
  - c. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be

conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

(Insert sketch map here)

Note: The applicant concurrently applied for a Permit to Demolish/Capsulate to demolish and capsulate a portion of Key Hall to accommodate a handicap-accessible restroom. Staff has met with the applicant regarding alternatives for this proposal. The case before you is for accessibility ramp and related alterations at Francis Scott Key Hall. The applicant is restudying the proposal for the handicap-accessible restroom.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for an addition and alterations to Francis Scott Key Hall. The proposal includes:

The addition of an accessibility ramp, new steps and a platform on the west elevation. The proposed ramp will be brick and have a simple metal railing, matching the railings at the adjacent Bohlen Hall and Meade Hall. The masonry bond pattern will match the existing building. The fixed doorway will also be replaced with a new exterior door and frame.

**II. HISTORY:**

Francis Scott Key Hall is individually listed as a 100 Year Old Building under Ordinance 2180. It is part of the Virginia Theological Seminary, established 1823, on a site purchased in 1827. Key Hall is located north of Aspinwall and Bohlen Halls, both also listed individually listed as 100 Year Old Buildings. These buildings are located in a park-like setting atop a hill.

Key Hall was constructed circa 1856 and was first known as Wilmer Hall. Key Hall exhibits “characteristics of the Gothic Revival period, popular style for religious architecture at this time. Characteristic features include: steeply pitched roof, prominent corner buttresses with weathering, tudor-arched ‘carriage’ entrance, and ‘label’ molds. Large main windows suggest gothic tracery, and the brickwork presents a smooth planar finish.” (100 Year Old Building Nomination Form, 1984).

The Board has approved a number of projects at Virginia Theological Seminary to improve accessibility to historic buildings.

- In 2005, the Board approved accessibility alterations for the installation of new entry steps and an accessibility ramp at the front of Seminary Chapel (BAR Case #2005-0131, 7/6/05).
- In 2004, the Board approved an accessibility ramp with metal railing for Meade Hall (BAR Case #2004-0032, 3/17/04).
- In 2003, the Board approved the addition of a walkway with metal railing for Meade Hall to facilitate handicap access (BAR Case #2003-0068, 4/23/03).
- In 1994, the Board approved alterations to the plans approved in 1991 to add balusters and handrails (BAR Case #94-073, 5/18/94).
- In 1991, the Board approved an elevator tower design and ramp for accessibility for the adjacent Aspinwall Hall and Bohlen Hall (BAR Case #91-225, 10/16/91).

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The proposed addition and alterations comply with zoning ordinance regulations.

The applicant has appeared before the Board several times for alterations and additions related to improving handicap accessibility to historic buildings at the Virginia Theological Seminary. The proposal for changes at Key Hall will conform to previous BAR approvals for brick accessibility ramps with simple gray metal railings.

The proposed alteration includes reopening the door on this elevation that was previously filled. It is unclear whether the existing multi-paneled wood door and arched wood frame are original. If it is determined that the door and opening are original it should be repaired and retained rather than replaced. If this is not the case, the applicant should work with staff to find a historically-appropriate replacement door. The existing concrete steps on the west elevation are not original. These alterations will return this elevation to use as an entrance to Key Hall.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall repair and retain the existing door if it is original (to be determined in conjunction with staff). If not original, the applicant shall propose to staff a historically-appropriate wood, multi-paneled door and frame.
2. The applicant/developer shall coordinate with Alexandria Archaeology to allow City archaeologists to conduct an investigation prior to any ground disturbing activities in the areas to be developed. Contact Alexandria Archaeology (703-838-4399) to set up a schedule for this work.
3. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Utilities and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
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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.
- C-2 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully details the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-4 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 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-6 Required exits, parking, and accessibility within the building for persons with disabilities must comply with USBC Chapter 11
- C-7 Toilet Rooms for Persons with Disabilities:  
(a) Water closet heights must comply with USBC 1109.2.2  
(b) Door hardware must comply with USBC 1109.13
- C-8 Toilet Facilities for Persons with Disabilities: Larger, detailed, dimensioned drawings are required to clarify space layout and mounting heights of affected accessories. Information on door hardware for the toilet stall is required (USBC 1109.2.2).
- C-9 The new handrails must comply with USBC for a minimum/maximum height of 30 to 34 inches. The ends must extend 12" beyond the top and bottom risers. The handgrip position must not be more than 2-1/4" in cross-sectional dimension, or the shape must provide an equivalent gripping surface. The handgrip portion must have a smooth surface with no sharp corners. The space between the wall and handrail must not be less than 1-1/2".

Historic Alexandria:

R-1 Approve provided ramp meets ADA (slope) requirements for historic building.

Alexandria Archaeology:

F-1 The Virginia Theological Seminary is a significant historic property and is registered as an archaeological site with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources as 44AX173. The Seminary was established in 1823, and was originally located at St. Paul's Church in Alexandria. In 1827, the campus was moved three miles west to 59 acres of land purchased from Jonah Thompson on Quaker Lane. There were two houses on the property, as well as outbuildings. The first Seminary buildings were constructed between 1827 and 1835, and in the 1850s, five new buildings were added. The Seminary was occupied by Union soldiers during the Civil War and served as the Fairfax Seminary Hospital. There were numerous military encampments in the vicinity, and the area to be developed is adjacent to one of the historic Seminary buildings. The property therefore has the potential to yield archaeological resources that could provide insight into Alexandria's past.