

Docket Item #6
BAR CASE #2004-0275

BAR Meeting
January 26, 2005

ISSUE: After-the-fact shed

APPLICANT: Clinton T. Wair

LOCATION: 404 North Fayette Street

ZONE: RB/Residential

****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

****BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the shed is painted in a neutral palette to minimize its visibility;
2. That the shed be set on grade to reduce its height; and,
3. That the above actions be completed within 3 months of the approval.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the storage shed located in the rear yard of the property. The shed was installed in late Fall 2004 without the approval of the Board of Architectural Review. BAR Staff was notified of the shed by a citizen complaint. The applicant states that they checked with Code Enforcement to determine whether a building permit would be required and that they were informed that a shed under 150 square feet does not require a building permit but were not informed of the need for BAR approval. The applicant therefore assumed that it was appropriate to proceed with installation. The applicant is a long-time resident of Parker-Gray and has owned the subject property for many years.

The new shed replaces a small frame shed which existed for many years just off the rear of the house along the north property line. The location of the new shed is further back in the rear yard than the prior shed. It is 6' from the rear property line, approximately 2' from the north property line and 7' from the south property line. The new shed is 8' wide by 8'21/2" long and 8'61/2" high at the peak. The frame shed has a gambrel roof covered in black asphalt shingles, T-111 siding and wood trim. The shed has not yet been painted. A double door is located in the gable end which faces south toward Princess Street.

The shed is visible from Princess Street over top of the 6' board fence that encloses the yard at 402 North Fayette Street. It is also readily visible from the public alley behind the 404 North Fayette Street, which has a low chain link fence enclosing the rear yard.

II. HISTORY

The house at 404 North Fayette Street is an interior unit in a row of six brick-faced, cinder block rowhouses constructed in 1952, according to Real Estate records. For many years a simple white frame shed with a shed roof was located just behind the house, adjacent to the enclosed rear porch of the house. This shed has been removed.

III. ANALYSIS

The shed complies with the zoning ordinance requirements. Section 3-706(A)(4) of the zoning ordinance states each residential use shall provide a rear yard of 8'. Wherever a lot abuts a rear alley, half of the alley width may be applied to the rear setback.

According to the *Design Guidelines*, accessory buildings should complement the architecture of the main building and pre-fabricated late 20th century storage sheds are not appropriate in the historic districts (Accessory Structures - Page 2 &3). The shed is a pre-fabricated, standard shed type. In materials and form, it seems to bear little relation to the mid-20th century, flat-roofed, brick rowhouse at 404 North Fayette Street or to the buildings in surrounding neighborhood. Its

barn-like form suggests that it would be more appropriate in a rural or a suburban setting. (However, interestingly enough, there is an historic barn located just up the block, behind the circa 1900 brick house at 426 North Fayette Street. This diminutive frame barn or stable has a gambrel roof form not unlike the shed at 404 North Fayette Street.) On the other hand, the simple design of the shed is in its favor. Unlike many of the prefabricated sheds available today, it is not embellished with inappropriately “historic” elements like faux Victorian gingerbread trim and window boxes.

If given an opportunity to review the application prior to installation, Staff would have recommended a lower shed with a flat or shed roof. Staff could more readily accept the existing shed if it were less visible from Princess Street. Unfortunately, it does not appear possible to reduce the height of the actual structure. It may be possible, however, to lower the overall height by about 6" if the shed is placed on an at-grade concrete pad instead of resting on cinderblocks. Staff has considered whether another orientation or location would reduce the visibility of the shed, but is unconvinced that any such change would improve the situation.

Staff notes that the Board recently approved as submitted two after-the-fact sheds at 401 North West Street (BAR Case #2003-00255, 8/25/2004) and at 319 North West Street (BAR Case #2004-00083, 6/23/2004). The shed at 319 North West Street is nearly identical in appearance and size to the shed at 404 North Fayette Street, but is visible only from the end of an interior alley.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the shed is painted in a neutral palette to minimize its visibility;
2. That the shed be set on grade to reduce its height; and,
3. That the above actions be completed within 3 months of the approval.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Code Enforcement:

“No comments.”

Historic Alexandria:

Looks appropriate for a “suburban” home. Not sure what could be done to make it look more appropriate.”