

Docket Item # 6
BAR CASE #2006-0118

BAR Meeting
June 28, 2006

ISSUE: Addition and alterations
APPLICANT: Donald Walsh by John Savage
LOCATION: 323 Buchanan Street
ZONE: RB/Residential

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

1. That the windows have simulated divided lights with fixed exterior muntins and an internal spacer bar and that the window selection be approved by Staff before installation;
2. That the left side window opening in the second floor at the rear not be reduced in size; and,
3. That the fiber cement siding be smooth and that the nails not show in the installation.

****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.

(Insert sketch here)

NOTE: Docket item #5 must be approved before this item can be considered.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a one story rear addition and a number of alterations.

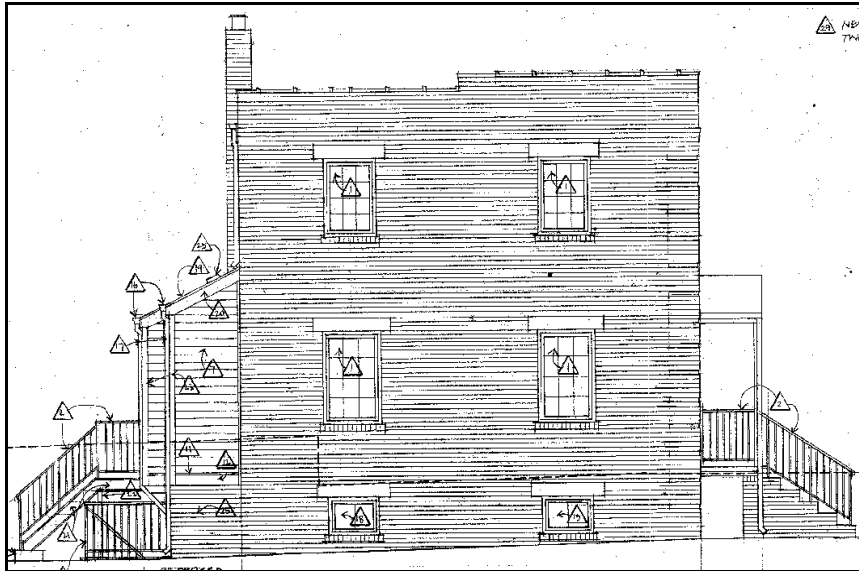


Figure 1 Proposed side elevation

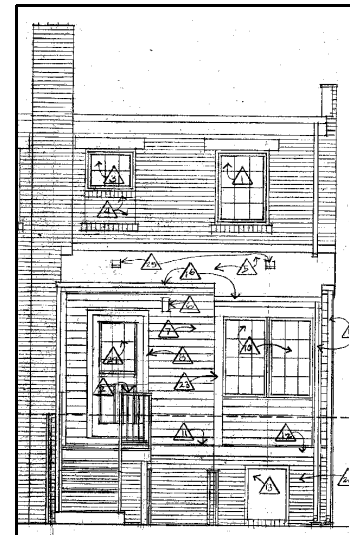


Figure 2 Proposed rear elevation

Addition: The addition will extend the full width of the rear facade on the first story, replacing the existing rear stoop. Because the grade falls away on the property from front to back, the addition will be 4' above grade and will be supported on structural steel columns. The shed-roofed addition will be 3'9" deep by 14'6" wide with a stoop and door on the left side and a shallow projecting bay on the right side. The addition will be clad in fiber cement lap siding with asphalt shingle roofing. The trim, including corner boards, band board at the base and door surround will be of fiber cement. The existing rear two panel metal door with nine lights will be reused at the rear of the new addition with a new simple aluminum storm door. It will be accessed by a set of steel steps with simple steel railings with straight pickets and a lamb's tongue return. The railings, stoop and steps and will be painted black. The rear entrance will be lit by a cannister type light fixture. The bay will project 1'6" beyond the rear (northeast) facade of the addition and will have a pair of multi-light, aluminum-clad casement windows. A pre-finished aluminum gutter will extend across the rear elevation at the eave. There will be a pre-finished aluminum downspout at the right corner.

Alterations: The existing one-over-one vinyl windows on all elevations on the first and second stories will be replaced with new aluminum-clad wood windows. The windows on the front

elevation will be six over six light, double hung windows. The windows on the side and rear will be triple-glazed single casements with multiple lights. The basement windows on the southeast elevation will be replaced with awning type aluminum-clad wood windows.

Front - The deteriorated metal railings on the front steps will be replaced with new steel railings. The simple railings will have straight pickets and a lambs tongue return and will be painted black.

Rear - New steps leading to the rear basement entrance will have simple steel railings painted black. On the second story, the left side window opening will be reduced in height by one-half. It will be closed down with brick infill and will have a new aluminum clad awning window.

Lastly, the applicant proposes to replace the existing 6' high wood stockade fencing which encloses the rear yard with a new dog eared wood fence.

The front and side elevations are visible from Buchanan Street. The rear elevation is visible in through the block views, particularly from Boyle Street. The lower portion of the rear elevation is screened by a 6' high fence.

II. HISTORY:

As discussed in docket item #5, the semi-detached townhouse at 323 Buchanan Street was constructed circa 1944 as part of a development by Rayley Construction Corporation on Boyle, Buchanan and Princess Streets designed by the well-known Washington architect George Santmyers. The only major exterior alteration to the house since its construction is the replacement of the original double hung, multi-light steel windows with one-over-one vinyl windows. All five houses in the row appear to have one-over-one vinyl windows.

Staff could not locate any record of Board review for alterations at 323 Buchanan Street. However, the Board has reviewed a number of projects on Buchanan, Boyle and Princess streets in this development. Recent projects include: replacement windows at 245 Buchanan Street (BAR Case #2004-0069, April 28, 2004); alterations to the deck and rear facade at 1618 Boyle Street (BAR Case #s 2003-0166 & 167, July 23, 2003); alterations to the deck and rear facade at 321 Buchanan Street (BAR Case #s 2002-0018 & 0017, 2/27/2002); and, a new two-story addition at 1610 Boyle Street (BAR Case #s 2002-0259 & 0260, 10/23/2002).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed addition and alterations comply with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In general, Staff does not have any major objection to the proposed addition and alterations. Staff does have a number of suggestions to improve the project from a preservation standpoint. While the building dates to the mid-20th century and is of a ubiquitous type, 323 Buchanan

Street and its surrounding neighborhood are significant. They are representative of the economic boom and intense housing pressures that Alexandria experienced leading up to and during World War I. To the extent possible, the original design and materials of these buildings should be respected and alterations should be carefully considered.

Staff has no objection to the proposed rear addition and believes it complies with the *Design Guidelines* in all respects. The addition is quite modest in size. It is compatible with the house and neighborhood. The design is simple and utilizes traditional looking materials and architectural features. Staff notes that addition will be clad in fiber cement siding. The Board has reviewed a number of applications for the use of fiber cement siding and has adopted the following policy with respect to the product:

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).

Staff believes the proposed use of fiber cement on the addition is appropriate with the condition that the nails not show in the installation and that smooth siding be installed.

Staff has no objection to the proposed replacement of the non-original one-over-one vinyl windows but does have some concerns regarding the proposed replacement sash. As explained above, the original double hung, multi-light steel windows were replaced with one-over-one vinyl windows at some unknown date. The *Design Guidelines* note that windows are the principal character defining feature of a building and that changes to windows can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of a structure (Windows - Page 1). In this case, the six-over-six configuration of the original windows reflected the Colonial Revival design influence. Metal windows are a product of technological innovations of the early 20th century but were not widely adopted in Alexandria until the housing boom of the late 1930s and 1940s when hundreds of inexpensive rowhouses were erected to accommodate the growing population of government and defense workers. More typically, these metal windows were casement rather than double hung.

Recognizing the expense of replicating steel windows, the Boards have favored aluminum-clad wood windows as an appropriate replacement window type for steel windows. Aluminum-clad wood windows suggest the original material and are stronger than aluminum only windows. Thus, staff has no objection to the use of aluminum-clad wood windows. Staff would prefer that the windows be double hung like the original windows, but understands that a double-hung window fitting within the existing openings would not meet code requirements which call for every sleeping room to have one emergency escape and rescue opening with a net clear opening

of 5.7 square feet. Casement windows in the existing openings would meet this requirement. The applicant originally proposed to replace all of the existing windows (except for the awning windows proposed for the basement and the left side window on the second story rear) with casements to maintain a single consistent window type on this simple building. In response to staff concerns about the change from double-hung windows to casements the applicant has agreed to use double-hung windows on the front elevation. Aluminum clad casement windows were approved by the Board and installed at 243 Buchanan Street (Case #95-22PG, 7/26/1995).

On the other hand, staff does not concur with the proposed triple glazed window type as it will have muntins contained between the glass, rather than exterior muntins. The *Design Guidelines* discourage the use of flat muntins (Windows - Page 2). Flat muntins do not cast shadows or convey the full three-dimensional appearance of a window with divided exterior lights. Staff believes the replacement windows should have simulated divided lights with fixed exterior muntins and spacer bars to provide a more authentic appearance. These windows could be double-glazed for thermal efficiency.

Staff objects to the proposed reduction in size of the window on the left side of the second story in the rear. The architect has explained that the reason for requested alteration is that this window is over a tub and the homeowner is seeking improved privacy. However, staff notes that none of the other windows in the row, which presumably are similarly located, have been altered. With only six windows on the second floor, it would seem desirable to retain as much window area as possible to optimize natural light and ventilation. Staff recommends that a less permanent solution be utilized to increase privacy and that the full window size be maintained.

Lastly, Staff notes that the *Design Guidelines* discourage the use of stockade fencing (Fences - Page 2). The existing modern, mass-produced fence type is not considered to be appropriate in the historic districts. Staff finds the proposed replacement dog eared flat board fence acceptable.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the windows have simulated divided lights with fixed exterior muntins and an internal spacer bar and that the window selection be approved by Staff before installation;
2. That the left side window opening in the second floor at the rear not be reduced in size; and,
3. That the fiber cement siding be smooth and that the nails not show in the installation.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

- C C-1 All exterior walls within 5 feet from an interior property line shall have a fire resistance rating of 1 hour, from both sides of the wall. As alternative, a 2 hour fire wall may be provided. This condition is also applicable to skylights within setback distance. Openings in exterior walls between 3 and 5 feet shall not exceed 25% of the area of the entire wall surface (This shall include bay windows). Openings shall not be permitted in exterior walls within 3 feet of an interior lot line.
- C-2 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 taken to prevent the spread of rodents from the construction site to the surrounding community and sewers.
- C-3 Roof drainage systems must be installed so as neither to impact upon, nor cause erosion/damage to adjacent property.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-6 Construction permits are required for this project. Plans shall accompany the permit application that fully detail the construction as well as layouts and schematics of the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- C-7 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.
- C-8 A wall location plat prepared by a land surveyor is required to be submitted to this office prior to requesting any framing inspection.

Historic Alexandria:

Proposed plans seem appropriate, except for reduction of the second-story window on the rear facade which would alter the second-story fenestration of the entire row-house complex. It

would be preferable to retain the original size window.

Alexandria Archaeology:

There is low potential for this project to disturb significant archaeological resources. No archaeological action is required.