

Docket Item # 5  
BAR CASE # 2007-0215

BAR Meeting  
October 24, 2007

**ISSUE:** Alterations  
**APPLICANT:** Church of God and Saints of Christ  
**LOCATION:** 634 N. Patrick Street  
**ZONE:** RB/residential

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

1. The screen wall should be no higher than the HVAC units;
2. Staff must provide final approval of either the metal louver or wood siding screen material, as selected by the applicant;
3. Staff must approve the paint or finish to be used on the screen wall; and,
4. Any visible ductwork must be painted to match the adjacent surface with the paint or finish to be approved by Staff.

**\*\*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)

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting approval of a certificate of appropriateness to install rooftop HVAC equipment and screening. The existing church building is currently undergoing an extensive interior and more modest exterior renovation and is in the planning phase for a new fellowship hall to be located on the property to the south of the existing building. This addition will soon be presented to the Board for approval as a conceptual plan and will require Development Special Use Permit approval from the Planning Commission and City Council. Although the addition is shown on the plans provided with the current application, it is not before the Board at this time.

The HVAC equipment is required to service both the existing building and the proposed addition. The units are shown as having a 6'6" by 6'6" square footprint and being approximately 3'9" above the roof level. They will be located behind the gable of the existing main block, resting on the flat roof of the one-story concrete block rear addition. The applicant is proposing to screen the equipment with a screen wall approximately 5' high. The screen wall will be 1'6" higher than the top of the equipment. It will extend out from the rear of the existing gable end wall by 8'10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" and will be 22'8 1/2" wide. It is to be clad in a metal louver system by Architectural Louvers, Inc. The louvers will be horizontally aligned and will be finished in a color to match the existing building color as closely as possible. In addition, two metal ducts will exit the rear wall of the existing building in the gable end and extend down to the equipment on the flat roof. The openings for the ducts have already been cut and are visible in the wall.

Additional ductwork will be required to connect the HVAC units to the new addition. These will run along the existing flat roofed rear addition. The additional ductwork will be part of the certificate of appropriateness application for the new addition.

**II. HISTORY:**

The two story, gable roofed, frame church building at the southwest corner of North Patrick and Wythe streets is believed to have been constructed circa 1926 for Bethel Church or Bethel Presbyterian Mission. The African American congregation was established in 1921 and existed as a mission church affiliated with Alexandria's Second Presbyterian Church. For a time, it met in the building now known as the Old Presbyterian Meeting House while raising funds to erect a building on the lot at N. Patrick and Wythe Streets. In 1926, the congregation was formally organized as Bethel Presbyterian Church, the first black Presbyterian congregation in the Presbytery of the Potomac, Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (Southern Presbyterian Church; now reunited with former Northern Presbyterian Church as Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.). On January 21, 1971, the relationship with the Presbyterian Church was dissolved and the name appears to have been changed to Bethel Community Mission Church. The building was purchased by the current Church of God and Saints on November 24, 1976. [2<sup>nd</sup> Presbyterian Church Session Minutes, April 13, 1922; 2<sup>nd</sup> Presbyterian Church History 52, 91, William E. Thompson, 1989. 'A Set of Rebellious Scoundrels': Three Centuries of Presbyterians Along the Potomac, 229, 278, 318; Old Presbyterian Meeting House Session Minutes, January 12, & February 9, 1971].

Staff could not locate a building permit for the construction of the church building, but did find a 1927 permit for roofing the church (Building Permit #947, 10/6/1927). Thus, the building was

constructed between 1921, when the lot is shown as vacant in the 1921 Sanborn Atlas, and 1927. The frame main block remains much as constructed. The 1931 Sanborn map shows the footprint of the main block with a small frame addition extending off from the southwest corner. Building permit records indicate that the gabled front vestibule was constructed in 1964 (BLD#20275, 2/7/1964). However, the drawings show it as an open porch supported by columns. It is not known whether the enclosed vestibule is what was actually constructed at that time or represents a further alteration. The same 1964 drawing shows that the steeple was to be raised by several feet and the accompanying permit form indicates that all window sash was to be replaced. It is not known precisely when the present concrete block rear addition was constructed, but it clearly dates to after 1941, as it is not shown on the Sanborn map of that date.

### **III. ANALYSIS:**

The property is zoned RB, residential and the proposed HVAC equipment and screen complies with Zoning Ordinance requirements.

Staff believes the proposed rooftop HVAC units with screening will be acceptable. It is well located, being at the rear of the building and tucked behind the gable end wall. However, Staff does have some recommendations to improve or clarify the proposal. First, the screen wall need be no higher than the units being screened. Keeping the height as low as possible will help to reduce the bulk. Staff likes the concept of screening with a louver system that will look very similar to the wood siding on the main block. As shown, the louvers will have a reveal of approximately 5". This is similar to that of the wood siding. Anything wider could look chunky and inappropriate. The architect has stated that the selected louver color will match the color of the church (white) as closely as possible. This will help the screening to recede visually. The finish should not be glossy. Staff would appreciate an opportunity to review and actual sample with the selected finish prior to selection.

Alternatively, there has been some discussion of constructing the screen wall of the same German lap wood siding that is on the existing main block. Staff would have no objection to this plan.

Staff is concerned about the metal ducts exiting the rear gable end wall. Staff recommends that the ducts be painted white to minimize their visibility to the greatest extent possible.

### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. The screen wall should be no higher than the HVAC units;
2. Staff must provide final approval of either the metal louver or wood siding screen material, as selected by the applicant;
3. Staff must approve the paint or finish to be used on the screen wall; and,
4. Any visible ductwork must be painted to match the adjacent surface with the paint or finish to be approved by Staff.

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 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.

Historic Alexandria:

R- Approval