

\*\*\*\*\* **DRAFT MINUTES**\*\*\*\*\*

Board of Architectural Review

Parker-Gray District

**Wednesday, July 27, 2016**

7:30pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall  
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present: Theresa del Ninno, Chair  
Purvi Irwin, Vice Chair  
James Spencer  
Bill Conkey  
Matthew Slowick  
Aaron Karty

Members Absent: Robert Duffy

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning  
Al Cox, Historic Preservation Manager  
Amirah Lane, Senior Historic Preservation Planning Tech  
Heather McMahon, Historic Preservation Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by Theresa del Ninno, Chair.

**I. MINUTES**

Consideration of the minutes from the May 25, 2016 public hearing.

**BOARD ACTION: Approved as submitted, 6-0**

On a motion by Mr. Slowick, seconded by Mr. Conkey, the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review approved the minutes of May 25, 2016, as submitted. The motion was approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

**II. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. CASE BAR2016- 00231**

Request for alternations at **211 North West St.**

Applicant: 211 West Street, LLLP

**BOARD ACTION: Approved as submitted, 6-0**

On a motion by Mr. Slowick, seconded by Mr. Conkey, the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review voted to approve BAR2016-00231 as submitted. The motion was carried by a vote of 6 to 0.

## **CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

1. The applicant must work closely with BAR staff on the final design of the proposed exterior wall cladding, especially in regard to eliminating the spandrels between the heads and sills of the windows on the east and west elevations of the existing structure and reconsidering the configuration of the spandrels on the north elevation.
2. All conditions established in prior BAR approvals and BAR policies must be met.
3. Include the following statements on all construction documents involving any ground disturbing activities, so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
  - a. The applicant/contractor shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703.746.4399) 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/contractor shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.

## **SPEAKERS**

Jube Shiver, owner, enumerated the number of times this project had been presented to the BAR to date and commented upon the burden the year-and-a-half long process has caused his architect. He wanted clarification on the BAR staff report, as to whether staff was satisfied with conditions 1, 2, and 3 approved by BAR Case #2015-0164 and #2015-0164 in regards to the height of the fourth-floor addition and whether a translucent film on the north-facing stairwell window would satisfy neighbors' privacy concerns.

Gaver Nichols, architect, presented the materials proposed, including the #201 Modular Red Brush Tex Lee Brick and asserted that he has matched the existing mortar; when asked by Mr. Conkey, he replied he would utilize a flush joint to match the current joint profile. He introduced the Mahogany Trespa Pura siding, stating that the Trespa was a better material choice than the formerly proposed Nichiha; he explained that the fiber cement product would be adhered with aluminum joints. He stated that, as per BAR staff suggestions, he would eliminate Trespa spandrels between the windows on the north, east and west elevations. He stated he would add a brick soldier course between the existing cornice line to separate the new brick used for the parapet. He asked the BAR to clarify its position on using translucent film on the addition's north elevation stairwell window.

Brad Becker, neighbor, asked whether the fourth-floor addition would require exterior excavation. Mr. Nichols responded that he did not believe so, that the addition would rest upon the existing steel superstructure and therefore no exterior work would be necessary

## **BOARD DISCUSSION**

Mr. Spencer commented on the choice of the Mahogany color for the Trespa, as it compared closely to the brick sample's color and stated that he was not convinced the Mahogany was the best choice.

Mr. Conkey thanked the applicants for their patience with the process, and stated that he believed the design had gotten better with each iteration. He stated that the setbacks driven by zoning

improved the design of the fourth-story addition. He stated that the clerestory windows on the addition's north face should be left clear, but that the architect should consider frosted glass for the large stairwell aperture. He liked the Mahogany colored Trespa with the aluminum trim, and stated he was not concerned with its durability. He liked the brick soldier course but suggested changing the mortar joint by using either a different profile or mortar color to slightly differentiate it from the original wall below.

Ms. Irwin liked the simplified design. She thought the color of Trespa was too similar to the brick color and questioned the architect about Trespa's charcoal gray color as an alternative.

Mr. Karty had no comments.

Mr. Slowick was supportive of project and the Trespa. He thought the aluminum trim would reference the contemporary Jefferson-Houston School across the street.

Ms. del Ninno supported the staff recommendations. She also supported the use of Trespa, saying she has used the material before and found that it works well. She supported the Mahogany color, as it would provide a subtle texture change against the brick. She also thought the Mahogany color would have less of a wood appearance than the charcoal gray sample shown.

Mr. Spencer commented that he was still concerned that the colors of the Trespa and the brick were too similar.

Mr. Slowick made a motion to approve the staff conditions provided that the applicant would be able to use the Mahogany Trespa and to use translucent film on the addition's north-facing window.

## **REASON**

The BAR found that the proposed minor amendments complied with the *Design Guidelines* and policies and improved the previously approved design.

## **2. CASE BAR2016- 00232**

Request for alternations at **1301 Queen St.**

Applicant: Heath Wells

### **BOARD ACTION: Approved, as amended, 5-1**

On a motion by Mr. Conkey, seconded by Mr. Slowick, the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review voted to approve BAR2016-00232, as amended. The motion was carried in a vote of 5 to 1, Ms. del Ninno was opposed.

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. That the south ~~and east~~ elevations of the main block of the house be clad with wood siding salvaged from this dwelling, if reasonably possible, or with new wood matching the profile of the original material, as confirmed by staff in the field;
2. The north *and east* elevations of the main block, as well as the rear ell, may be clad with smooth fiber cement siding *with the exposure to match and align with the original siding on the front (south) elevation*;
3. The existing front (south) windows be repaired and restored in consultation with BAR staff. *If the existing windows cannot be reasonably restored, then all five front windows must be replaced with new windows complying with the BAR's window policy*;
4. The replacement windows on all elevations but the front façade must meet the Alexandria Replacement Window Performance Specifications contained in the BAR's adopted window policy and the new exterior trim must match the original.

## SPEAKERS

Heath Wells, owner, submitted comments and began by asserting that BAR staff liked 90% of the proposed project. In regards to BAR staff's recommendations for the siding, Wells felt that covering the east elevation, which constitutes half the house's surface area, as well as the façade with real or recovered wood was cost prohibitive; he proposed, instead, cladding the east elevation with HardiePlank brand fiber cement clapboard. Wells stated that his property was in a unique position and without precedent in that, although it was a corner lot, he had a fenced secondary front yard which acted as a ten-foot buffer from the street. He argued there was an environmental and sustainable position for using synthetic material, and that the BAR staff report's history section led one to doubt whether there was any salvageable original material beneath the aluminum siding added in 1971. Wells also stated that he would keep the two wood windows on the lower half of the façade, but maintained that the upper three windows would not be easily seen and he should, therefore, be allowed to replace them with a synthetic material. He stated that replacing 16 windows was costly, but replacing five windows with wooden windows was costlier. He proposed repairing two of the original wooden windows and replacing 14. He stated that the new Marvin windows were \$1,400 each, plus installation, versus \$5,000 to \$6,000 each to restore the existing windows. Mr. Wells also noted that the thin glazing of the original windows allowed for street noise, were easily broken, and limited visibility.

## BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Conkey began by stating that the fact that corner houses are considered by PG BAR policy to have two fronts is good and provides continuity with the definition in the City zoning ordinance. He did agree that the applicant's position was unique, and that the side yard could be vegetated (against the porous chain-link fence) to screen the east elevation. Therefore, he stated that he supported the use of HardiePlank on the side. However, he stated that all of the original windows on the south façade should be maintained, while the composite materials were suitable for the other elevations. He suggested the applicant consider interior storm windows to reduce noise and thermal issues.

Ms. Irwin inquired of Mr. Cox whether, historically, a side elevation on a corner lot would have had a more formal clapboard? Mr. Cox responded that it was typical of approximately 50% of the houses in Parker-Gray that staff had observed. Ms. Irwin commented that a side is a side,

and she supported the use of fiber cement as long as the clapboard aligned with the exposure of siding on the front. She agreed that with the setback and landscaping, using fiber cement was appropriate in this particular case. She asserted that all of the front windows should be maintained, especially as it would be difficult to match the geometry if only the upper three were changed.

Mr. Spencer supported the use of HardiePlank on the east elevation and encouraged additional landscaping the side yard. He stated that the BAR's primary directive is to *preserve* and encouraged the applicant to restore all of the front windows.

Mr. Cox noted that recent professional wood window restoration services in Old Town in the past have only cost \$375-500 per window, which is commensurate with the cost of new Marvin composite windows. Also, he stated that the windows on the side appeared to be the same size as those on the front, in which case any irreparable front windows could be replaced by those salvaged from the side.

Mr. Karty asked whether the applicant had priced wood siding. After the applicant explained the complexity of pricing a job when the amount of restorable siding was not yet known, Mr. Karty okayed the use of HardiePlank on the side.

Mr. Slowick supported the use of HardiePlank on the side elevation and supported the second floor compromise regarding the windows on the south façade. He asked the BAR members whether they would condition the approval so that, if the five wooden windows on the façade couldn't be retained after BAR staff evaluated their condition in the field, the applicant would be allowed to replace the upper three windows with composite materials.

Ms. del Ninno stated that this 1905 house with a prominent corner location on Queen, in which the side elevation was close to the public right-of-way, shouldn't have its side elevation clad in a fiber cement. She maintained that the side elevation faced the street and constituted a front and that the two façades should be unified as a whole. She maintained that all five front windows should be restored.

Mr. Conkey made a motion to support the staff recommendation, provided that fiber cement be permitted for the eastern elevation and that the applicant work with BAR staff to restore all five windows on the front (south) façade.

Mr. Cox asked to clarify whether the motion also included that the exposure of the new and historic siding must align and that the preference for the windows be to replace either all of the five or none but not to have both new and old windows on the front façade.

Mr. Conkey agreed that the siding must align and confirmed that, if the windows on the south façade cannot be reasonably restored, then the applicant must replace all five. Furthermore, BAR supported the applicant's proposed front door hood.

## REASON

The BAR found that the original wood siding and all of the windows on the front (south) elevation should be restored in accordance with the siding and window policies and the PG Residential Reference Guide. However, the BAR found that the 10' fenced yard on the east side prevented close inspection of the siding or windows and that the use of modern materials on a secondary front was appropriate in this particular case.

### 3. CASE BAR2016- 00233

Request for partial demolition and capsulation at **530 N. Columbus St.**

Applicant: William Cromley

*Item #3 and #4 were combined for discussion purposes.*

### 4. CASE BAR2016- 00234

Request for alterations and an addition at **530 N. Columbus St.**

Applicant: William Cromley

*Item #3 and #4 were combined for discussion purposes.*

## **BOARD ACTION: Approved, as amended, 6-0**

On a motion by Mr. Slowick, seconded by Ms. Irwin, the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review voted to approve BAR2016- 00233 and BAR2016-00234, as amended. The motion was carried in a vote of 6-0.

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. All new and replacement windows, doors, and shutters must comply with BAR regulations.
2. All exterior finishes and materials must comply with BAR regulations. *The applicant may remove the decorative window trim on the front façade and install 1x6 trim.*
3. The statements in the archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all construction documents that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including basement/Foundation Plans, Demolition, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
  - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-746-4399) 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 not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
4. *Gutters on the addition must be half round and not an ogee shape.*

**SPEAKERS**

William Cromley, owner, presented his application to the BAR. He stated that he would like to remove the decorative trim on the façade and install 1x6 trim.

**BOARD DISCUSSION**

Mr. Spencer stated he was in support of the project.

Mr. Karty had no comments.

Mr. Slowick fully supported the project. He asked whether an alley abutted the rear property line, and the applicant responded no.

Mr. Conkey stated that he liked the design of the addition but thought it could have more whimsical details that would allude to the Italianate Victorian trim on the historic core's façade. The applicant replied that he considered making the addition's square engaged pilasters into rounded columns, which Mr. Conkey supported. Mr. Conkey recommended scupper drains and stipulated no ogee gutters.

Ms. Irwin was in support of rounded columns for the addition and supported the design in general.

Ms. del Ninno asked whether the rear addition had a flat roof, to which the applicant responded in the affirmative. She asked whether the drainage would be directed to the side yard, and stated that setting the addition back approximately three inches from the side façade would create a visual break between the historic core and the addition. The applicant responded that although the pilasters would be flush with the existing exterior wall, the addition's walls were already recessed three inches to accommodate the projection of the pilasters.

The applicant asked the BAR to amend the approval to reflect the option of changing the square pilasters to round columns as well as allow for the removal of the trim from the façade, at the applicant's option.

Mr. Slowick made a motion to support the staff recommendation, allowing for rounded columns in lieu of squared pilasters, no ogee gutters, and the applicant's option to change the trim on the front elevation.

**REASON**

The BAR found the addition complied with the Design Guidelines and would be minimally visible from a public way but asked that the addition reflect some of the architectural details of the front façade and incorporate more "whimsy."

### **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **1. Capital Bikeshare**

The BAR received an informational presentation on the status of the Capital Bikeshare program from Hillary Orr, transportation planner with T&ES. She stated that the program had been very successful and that stations had been installed in the Old and Historic Alexandria District for several years and that a few stations may also be located in Parker-Gray in the next phase. She clarified that the bike stations were owned by the City of Alexandria and funded with grants and that sites in OHAD were specifically chosen to have the least visual intrusion on nearby historic resources, in consultation with BAR staff.

Following the presentation, Mr. Conkey thanked Ms. Orr for her time and expressed support for the program. He asked staff to clarify why the Capital Bikeshare program didn't fall under BAR purview. Mr. Cox responded that, as described in the staff memo on this item, the longstanding practice of the BAR was to review only permanent structures and that permanence in this context was defined by a structure's fixed (or movable) nature rather than the amount of time it may be in place. Mr. Cox continued that because the bike stands were modular, held in place only by gravity and solar powered (hence, not hardwired), they were not considered permanent. In addition, because this is a government transportation system, the zoning ordinance specifically exempts the associated sign from BAR review.

#### **2. Ramsey Homes**

The BAR held an informal BAR Concept Review work session to discuss the redevelopment design for 699 North Patrick St (Ramsey Homes).

### **SPEAKERS**

Al Cox, BAR staff, provided background on the one-and-a-half year-long BAR process for this affordable housing project. He noted that City Council had reviewed many alternatives generated by City and ARHA for this site and recently selected the scale, mass and general location on the site shown in the application now before the Board. Mr. Cox noted that the primary purpose of the present concept review work session was for the BAR to provide staff and the applicant comments on the architectural character.

Duncan Blair, land use attorney for the applicant, ARHA, introduced the project and the design process. He stated that ARHA was committed to excellent architecture and affordability. He explained that rules set by the Virginia Housing Finance Committee resulted in the need for cost containment, and that the present design of 52 units was the lowest number that ARHA could go.

Patricia Booker, project architect with KTGy, gave a presentation and explained how they addressed concerns about the height, scale and mass. She said that the current design included 52 units in a W-shaped plan and 2 courtyards, each encompassing 1,300 square feet, as well as an open space measuring over 7,000 square feet at the south end of the site. The design utilized four basic colors in a muted palette expressed by two different brick and two different siding

materials. She called the design “transitional,” and compared it to early townhouse concept designs. The new, multifamily building would have a 3-4-story split with underground parking, and she maintained that the size and scale was accountable to the immediate urban context.

Al Cox gave a presentation on Alexandria’s historic multifamily buildings and the city’s tradition of brick Art Deco and Streamline Moderne architectural styles, citing the Jefferson-Houston school as a successful example of contemporary, compatible architecture which was contextually sensitive without mimicry. He stated that City Planning staff had suggested a multifamily garden apartment massing, as opposed to simulated townhouses, because the proposed structure’s 3-4 stories were not in keeping with historic townhouse heights in the PG district. In addition, while townhomes stress verticality, garden apartments and apartment blocks utilized horizontal elements (such as trim and window configurations) which honestly represented the multifamily interior plan. He observed that, while the composition of the district is perceived as being primarily townhouses, Parker-Gray and nearby areas on Washington Street and Mt. Vernon Ave. also have a rich history of commercial buildings and garden apartments from the 1930s and 1940s, many of which were constructed of red and tan brick in the Art Deco or Moderne styles popular during that period.

Boyd Sipe, project archaeologist, gave mid-September as the next milestone date for the Section 106 review.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION**

Mr. Karty asked whether the entrance could be moved from the corner to the center of the courtyard. The architect replied that design is currently under study.

Mr. Spencer corroborated that he found it hard to locate the entrance on the plans and elevations, that it seemed tucked away and underwhelming. He asked whether the designers could make it more inviting and enhance it visually. He commented that the color band at the base of the building made the building look ‘pancaked.’ He liked the corner elements more than the rest of the building, but did not like the canopy supports, which seemed too spindly.

Mr. Conkey stated that, in his experience, good architecture doesn’t have to be expensive. He found the current design underdeveloped and one-dimensional, as if the exterior elevations were designed from the floorplans rather than being conceived as one element. He stated that the design lacks composition, especially the fenestration. He stated again that good design doesn’t have to be expensive but it should be well conceived and surfaces should have visual interest with patterns, texture and complexity. He stated that the details, such as the eyebrow shades at the top, did not make sense, as they did not function as sun shades. He stated that the lack of a visible entrance is fundamental: an entrance is not just a door, but is the focal point of the entire building, and he had to refer to the plan just to find it. He stated that the design needed added depth, and suggested recessing the Juliette balconies – a minor change which wouldn’t add a lot to the overall cost. He suggested enhancing the balcony railings to further add texture.

Ms. Irwin stated that the design has evolved nicely over time and complimented the applicants for integrating previous BAR suggestions. She stated that the project was a civic building in a historic district and, as such, should be held to a higher standard and built so that people in 50

years would want to preserve it. She suggested the use of brick as the primary material, as it has a lower life-cycle cost, and substituting other durable materials – such as metal panels – for the fiber cement. She said the canopies over the doors looked odd, while the rhythm of the windows could be improved through varying their size, shape and grouping, thereby adding visual interest to the exterior. She suggested using colors to differentiate details and brick bands. She approved of Mr. Conkey's suggestion for inset balconies, and suggested that community gathering spaces could be fostered under pergolas along the first-story. She also wanted it on the record that the history of the evolution of the project included an option proposed by the PG BAR to keep one of the historic Ramsey Homes buildings presently on the site, which was omitted by the applicant from their earlier presentation of the history of the process.

Ms. del Ninno complimented the applicants for the design's evolution, stating that it had improved. She stated that the BAR's role should be to give clear direction and she wished to comment on the present design's mass and scale. She stated that in the original plan, the setback on Wythe Street was 25 feet, and in this draft, it had been reduced to ten feet while the building's height had been increased. She was concerned that this would overshadow the civic buildings on that block of Wythe Street, and asked the architects to increase the setback an additional 10-15 feet; the increase could be subtracted from the open space at the south end. She asked about the floor-to-floor and parapet heights. She pointed out that no mechanical equipment was shown and asked how the roof would drain.

The architect responded that the floor to floor height was 10' - 8" and that 9' tall ceilings were created in response to a previous BAR request for larger windows, that the roof would drain internally and that the parapet was needed for rooftop mechanical equipment screening but that the units would be grouped in the center of the fourth floor roof.

Ms. del Ninno asked them to reduce the floor-to-floor height and eliminate the parapet to reduce the building's scale. She commented that the windows, as drawn, are monotonous and the fenestration could be refined by varying the size or turning the corner. She suggested making the corners masonry and putting fiber cement on the recessed bays and at higher elevations. She liked the staff sketches and suggested that the architects simplify the palette and that the next submission should include a roof/HVAC plan.

Mr. Slowick did not like the black windows, saying none exist in the neighborhood while the Jefferson-Houston school utilized a brushed aluminum silver color successfully. Like Ms. Irwin, he believes the project is a civic one on par with the Jefferson-Houston school and should be held to similar standards.

Mr. Karty had no comments.

Ms. Irwin noted that she liked the rear elevations of Old Town Commons better than the fronts. This design could be made more interesting, perhaps with the use of color. She asked what the architects' intentions were in regards to sustainable design practices. The architect responded that the design would meet Earthcraft gold-level criteria.

The applicant asked the BAR if they could clarify the broad issues, which he identified as the siting of the entrances; the choice and application of materials; the setback on Wythe Street; and the Wythe Street elevation or the hierarchies of elevations.

Mr. Spencer responded that all facades are important, as they are highly visible and should be equally considered. The other members agreed.

Mr. Slowick stated that he would prefer that the open space all be located at the south end of the tract.

Mr. Conkey responded that the quality of the open space is more important than its quantity, and that having an open space at the north end, facing the community recreation center, is very important.

Ms. Irwin added that a porch or pergola element on the north façade would create a gathering space and an architectural dialogue with the civic institutions on Wythe Street. She asked that the architects generate perspective views of the Wythe Street context for the next submission using Revit software.

Mr. Spencer asked what the open space on the south-end would be used for.

Mr. Blair responded that there would be a separate community process to determine the use and design of the open space.

Ms. del Ninno advised the architect to study the design of the electrical transformer shown in the open space.

Messrs. Slowick and Karty did not like the idea of an open space on the north side and preferred that it all be at the south end. The other four members disagreed and said that a small amount of open space would not be missed in a 70' wide open space but 10' would make an enormous difference adjacent to the sidewalk and the one story museum.

Ms. Del Ninno asked staff whether a special meeting may be necessary in early September for ARHA to stay on schedule, in addition to the regular meeting on September 28, 2016. Staff responded that they would work with the applicant over the next two weeks to see whether that was necessary.

### **3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The BAR held its annual elections for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair.

Mr. Conkey nominated Ms. del Ninno for the Chair, for which she was unanimously reelected.

Ms. del Ninno nominated Ms. Irwin for Vice chair, for which she was unanimously reelected.

The Board of Architectural Review Parker Gray District meeting was adjourned at 10:43 pm.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVALS SINCE LAST MEETING**

### **CASE BAR2016-00245**

Request for alterations at **418 N. Fayette St**

Applicant: Lori Gershaw

### **CASE BAR2016-00246**

Request for window replacement at **908 Pendleton St**

Applicant: Nathaniel George

### **CASE BAR2016-00242**

Request for window replacement at **922 Pendleton St**

Applicant: Tyler Addison

### **CASE BAR2016-00165**

Request for window replacement at **517 N. Patrick St**

Applicant: Ryan Conway

### **CASE BAR2016-00159**

Request for alterations at **1122 Oronoco St**

Applicant: Community Presbyterian Church

### **CASE BAR2016-00212**

Request for roof repair at **428 N. Fayette St**

Applicant: Springfield Roofing

### **CASE BAR2016-00196**

Request for alterations at **612 N. Columbus St**

Applicant: Lindsay Strump

### **CASE BAR2016-00170**

Request for door replacement at **910 Queen St**

Applicant: Lysa Senich