



**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**



**Commission of Architectural Review**

6. COA-109611-2022	<b>Final Review Meeting Date: 4/26/2022</b>
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Teresa Fairbanks
<b>Project Description</b>	Replace deteriorated wooden rear porch elements with new materials and taller side rails.
<b>Project Location</b>	
<b>Address:</b> 2608 E. Grace St.	
<b>Historic District:</b> St. John's Church	
<b>High-Level Details:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant requests permission to alter the rear of a 3-story, brick, Italianate dwelling circa 1890.</li> <li>Install 6" tongue and groove vinyl paneling to ceiling of second story porch; wrap fascia boards on porch with PVC trim; install new 6" square posts with a PVC wrap; increase the height of wooden privacy rail on west elevation of the rear porch from 3' to 6' feet, replacing wood with PVC; replace wooden railings with aluminum railings; and install new rear steps, risers and treads with PVC.</li> <li>rebuild a brick pier to match existing. Work will not be visible.</li> </ul>	
<b>Staff Recommendation</b>	<b>Partial Approval</b>
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Alex Dandridge, <a href="mailto:alex.dandridge@rva.com">alex.dandridge@rva.com</a> , (804) 646-6569
<b>Previous Reviews</b>	None.
<b>Conditions for Approval</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of the replacement of the rear porch's railings with a new material and design; however             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>denial of the use aluminum Richmond Rail on the first and second floors of the rear porch, recommending that the replacement Richmond Rail be wood or a substitute material determined by the Commission to be appropriate.</li> <li>denial of the use of the 6' PVC panel on the west elevation of the first floor of the rear porch, recommending that the 6' panel be wood or a substitute material determined to be appropriate by the Commission.</li> </ul> </li> <li>denial of the PVC trim on the existing wood fascia</li> </ul>

	boards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>denial of the use of the vinyl sleeves on the new 6"x6" posts.</li> </ul>

## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Porches & Porch Details, pg. 49	<p><i>2. When designing a new railing for a new infill building, or for an existing building which has lost its railing and for which no documentary or physical evidence survives, the balusters in the traditional Richmond rail are generally rectangular in section (with the narrow dimension facing the street) or square. The baluster is fitted into the recess in the top rail and a sloped bottom rail. Typical deck railings, consisting of nailed-up stock elements, are not approved as they are not based on a compatible historical model found in Richmond's Old and Historic Districts.</i></p> <p><i>3. New porch railing designs, compatible with the overall design of the building, will also be considered.</i></p>	<p>The applicant is proposing to alter the railings of the rear two-story porch. The existing porch features wood Richmond Rail on the second floor and solid wood paneling on the first floor. The applicant proposes to replace the second floor wood Richmond Rail with aluminum Richmond Rail, and to replace the solid wood paneling on the first floor with aluminum Richmond Rail, and to install a new PVC 6' panel on the west side of the porch to replace the existing 3' wood panel for increased privacy.</p> <p>Based on a 1984 image of the rear of the building (See figures 3-5) staff has determined that a majority of the rear porch is not original. The original rear porch featured sawn pickets and lager, more ornate square columns.</p> <p>Due to the number of alterations to the rear porch over the years, staff finds the proposed changes to railing design appropriate and a simple design that is compatible with the main dwelling and district.</p>
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59	<p><i>7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type, or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections.</i></p>	<p>The images submitted by the applicant of the rear porches railing and stairs do not show that those elements are deteriorated beyond repair. However, based on photographic evidence, staff doesn't believe the railings are original to the building and recommends approval of their replacement.</p>

<p>Substitute Materials, Pg. 60</p>	<p><i>Painted PVC trim is an option that has limited application for use on historic properties. The use of painted PVC trim may be used on new freestanding buildings, secondary elevations with limited visibility from the public right-of-way, new additions with limited visibility from the public right-of-way, and new outbuildings. Painted PVC decorative features are an option that also have limited application for use on historic properties. Painted PVC decorative features (balusters, balustrades, columns, column capitals, cornice brackets, etc.) may be used as a substitute material for deteriorated wood and metal features. If the feature is missing, the applicant must provide physical or photographic evidence before approval will be granted.</i></p>	<p>While staff is supportive of the change in design of the railings, staff doesn't support the installation of aluminum railings on a historic property, as the material is not compatible with the building. <u>Staff recommends denial of the aluminum Richmond Rail on the first and second floors of the rear porch. Staff recommends that the replacement Richmond Rail be wood or a substitute material determined by the Commission to be appropriate.</u></p> <p>The applicant proposed to replace the existing wood paneling on the west elevation of the first floor of the rear porch with a taller PVC panel for increased privacy from the adjacent parking lot. Staff supports this increase in height. However, the <i>Guidelines</i> state that PVC has very limited uses on historic buildings. <u>Staff recommends denial of the use of the PVC panel on the west elevation of the first floor of the rear porch. Staff recommends that the new 6' panel be wood or a substitute material determined to be appropriate by the commission.</u></p> <p><u>The applicant proposes to wrap the existing fascia boards with PVC trim. Staff recommends denial of the PVC trim on the existing wood fascia boards.</u></p> <p><u>The applicant proposed to install new 6"x6" square posts wrapped in a vinyl sleeve. Staff recommends approval of the new 6"x6" wood posts but recommends denial of the use of the vinyl sleeves.</u></p> <p>Staff notes that the existing posts don't appear to be original to the rear porch.</p> <p><u>The existing wooden steps, treads, and risers off rear porch to be rebuilt using PVC. Staff believes that the stairs will be minimally visible from the public right-of-way and recommends approval of PVC in this location.</u></p> <p>The applicant proposes to install vinyl ceiling on the second floor of the rear porch for a more finished appearance. Staff recommends approval, as this element will be high enough and distant enough from the right-of-way that the vinyl should not be discernable from wood.</p>
-------------------------------------	--	--

## Figures



Figure 1. Rear of 2608 E. Grace



Figure 2. Rear of 2608 E. Grace



Figure 3. Rear of 2608 E. Grace 1984



Figure 4. Rear of 2608 E. Grace 1984



Figure 5. Rear of 2608 E. Grace 1984