Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Commission of Architectural Review

4.COA-158351-2024	Final Review	Meeting Date: 12/17/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Richard L. Buchanan Jr.	
Project Description	Remove a rear, deteriorated, standing seam metal roof and install a new asphalt shingle roof.	
Project Location Address: 2609 East Leigh Street Historic District: Church Hill North		
High-Level Details: The applicant proposes to replace a deteriorated metal roof on a rear one-story wing of a frame building circa 1847, otherwise known as the Frederick Elliot House. The applicant requests approval to install a new asphalt shingle roof in place of the deteriorated standing seam metal roof. The portion of roof in question is minimally visible from East Leigh Street, and highly visible from the alley. The existing metal roof is deteriorated to the point of causing severe interior damage. The applicant has received an improvement grant from the Historic Richmond Foundation to assist with the roof replacement. Based on historic maps and documentation, the primary portion of the dwelling was constructed around 1847, and the rear, one-story portion with the roof in question was constructed sometime between 1889-1905.		
Staff Recommendation	Partial Approval	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov, (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	None.	
Conditions for Approval	***Staff recommends approval of:*** • the replacement of the existing metal roof with a new standing seam metal roof that matches the profile of the existing as closely as possible. Final roofing material and color must be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.	

	Staff recommends denial of: • Replacement of the existing metal roof with asphalt shingles.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Building Elements, Roofing, Roof Repair and Replacement, pg. 66	*3. Substitute materials may be used if the same kind of material is not technically feasible because the material is no longer being made. Substitute materials should match the original style and form as much as possible*	The applicant requests approval to replace a deteriorated standing seam metal roof on a one-story rear wing with asphalt shingles. While modern metal roofing is not as durable as historic tin and terne coated tin, it is a common substitute material for historic metal roofs. Asphalt shingles do not resemble metal roofing.
Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, pg. 59	*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. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements. Pictorial, historical, or physical documentation can be helpful.*	Based on the application, it is unclear if the existing metal roof can be repaired; however, the roof does appear to be in poor condition given the amount of interior damage that is occurring. The applicant's choice of material, asphalt shingles, does not adequately convey the same appearance as the metal roof. Staff does not support the use of asphalt shingles.
Substitute Materials, pg. 60	*When and where to use substitute materials is a decision to be reached only after careful consideration for the consequences to an historic structure and not before more appropriate preservation options have been explored. As with other proposed exterior changes, the use of substitute materials within a designated Old and Historic District is subject to Commission review. The purpose of repairing damaged architectural features and of replacing lost or irreparable ones is to create a visual match to the original feature and to prevent further deterioration. The use of synthetic materials that will alter the appearance, proportion and/ or details of an historic structure is strongly discouraged. However, there are three generally accepted circumstances under which substitute materials may be appropriate and economical replacements:* *1. UNAVAILABILITY OF HISTORIC MATERIALS*	When considering the use of substitute materials, the *Guidelines* recommend that they be considered only after more appropriate preservation options have been considered. In addition, substitute materials may be appropriate when they closely convey the visual appearance of the original material. Staff finds that there are other substitute materials to historic tin/metal roofs that will be a closer visual match to the existing roof. Staff recommends denial of the use of asphalt shingles on the roof. Staff recommends approval of the replacement of the existing metal roof with a new standing seam metal roof that matches the profile of the existing as closely as possible. Final roofing material and color must be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

	2. UNAVAILABILITY OF SKILLED CRAFTSMEN *3. REPLACEMENT OF POOR-QUALITY ORIGINAL MATERIALS* *REPLACEMENT OF POOR-QUALITY ORIGINAL MATERIALS:* *If in-kind materials cannot be found, or are impractical, substitute materials can be used. For example, modern tin-coated steel roofing is much less durable than historic tin or terne iron, which is no longer available. Modern terne-coated stainless steel or lead-coated copper is a visually compatible roof material and is a viable alternative. Approving the use of substitute materials may be made more difficult with the availability of traditional materials that can be used for in-kind replacement.*	

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

Figures (next page)

Figure 1. Façade, 2609 East Leigh Street, 2024

Figure 2. East side elevation, 2609 East Leigh Street, 2024

3. Rear wing. Existing metal roof in question.

4. Interior damage from leaking metal roof.

5. Interior damage from leaking metal roof.

6. Historic maps.