



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



**Commission of Architectural Review**

2. COA-173644-2025	Final Review	Meeting Date: 10/28/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Dianna Jennings Macon	
Project Description	Replace porch decking, posts, railings, and structural elements, and install new screen and three storm doors.	
Project Location		
Address: 2917 East Broad Street		
Historic District: St. John's Church		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to the following work to the rear/side porch of a brick, Italianate Row House circa 1888:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace existing floor joists with pressure treated wood.</li> <li>• Replace existing porch decking with Azek Timber Tech-Rustic Elm synthetic boards.</li> <li>• Replace porch posts with new 6x6 pressure treated posts.</li> <li>• Replace existing wood railing with new white vinyl railings and vinyl square pickets.</li> <li>• Install screen in both levels of the porch and install three screen doors.</li> </ul>		
Staff Recommendation		
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov, (804) 646-6569	
Previous Reviews	The Commission approved a new metal front yard fence and rear wooden fence at the February 2025 meeting.	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant submit a detail drawing of one of the proposed posts to staff for review that demonstrates that the molding around the top, neck, and base of the posts will match that of the extant posts.</li> <li>• Staff recommends approval of the synthetic decking boards with the following conditions: the width of the boards match the existing as closely as possible, the decking boards have a tongue and groove profile, the decking boards be installed perpendicular to the face of the building, and that final decking material specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that the porch ceilings have a finished appearance with a smooth or beadboard finish, final specifications submitted to staff for review and approval.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff recommends that the original porch roof structure and built in gutter be repaired and maintained and that all gutter and downspouts be inspected and are dispersing water effectively.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that all new wooden elements be painted after appropriately weathering.</li> <li>• Staff recommends that the applicant replace the existing Richmond Rail with new wood Richmond Rail or submit a railing system that better resembles the appearance of a wooden railing system; not having connector pieces, but rather hidden fasteners. Final railing system submitted for Chair and Vice Chair approval.</li> </ul>
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## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<b>Building Elements, Porch and Entrance Repair, pg. 71</b>	<i>1. Elements that are damaged or loose should be repaired to match the detail of the existing original fabric.</i>	The applicant is proposing to replace various components of the building's rear/side porch.
<b>Building Elements, Entrance and Porch Removal, Replacement and Reconstruction, pg. 71</b>	<p><i>4. Do not remove or radically change entrances and porches important in defining the building's overall historic character. Front and side porches are architecturally more ornate than utilitarian back porches.</i></p> <p><i>7. When replacing a railing on a historic building which has lost its railing, the first step is to look for documentary evidence which records the appearance of that railing. If no documentary evidence survives, look for physical evidence (this may benefit from the help of a design professional).</i></p> <p><i>8. Do not strip entrances and porches of historic material and details that should be retained in any repair or partial replacement.</i></p>	<p>The existing porch is comprised of an original 42' section, and then a newer, 6' extension off the rear that consists of a landing and stairs for access to the second story porch. Overall, the porch is simple in design being two stories in height and featuring wooden Richmond Rail and square posts with simple molding around their bases, tops, and necks.</p> <p>The existing square posts will be replaced with new pressure treated 6x6 square wooden posts. The drawings submitted indicate that there will be some molding around the base and tops of the new square posts; however, the exact design is not clear. The dimension and detail of the new posts should match that of the extant posts (See figure #7). <u>Staff recommends that the applicant submit a detail drawing of one of the proposed posts to staff for review that demonstrates that the molding around the top, neck, and base of the posts will match that of the extant posts.</u></p> <p>The existing porch features wooden tongue and groove decking boards. The applicant proposes to replace the existing decking with Azek Timber Tech decking boards in the Rustic Elm Color. Based on the information submitted, the dimensions of the new boards are unclear. <u>Staff recommends approval of the synthetic decking boards with the following conditions: The width of the boards match the existing as closely as possible, the decking boards have a tongue and groove profile, the decking boards be installed perpendicular to the face of the building, and that final decking material specifications be submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p>

		<p>Three aluminum storm doors will be added to the building's entrances to the porch. They will be painted tan and match the trim color on the building.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to screen in the porch, placing the screen on the interior of the new railings and posts so that character defining porch elements remain visible.</p> <p>Specifications were not provided on the treatment of the porch ceilings. <u>Staff recommends that the porch ceilings have a finished appearance with a smooth or beadboard finish, final specifications submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the original porch roof structure and built in gutter be repaired and maintained and that all gutter and downspouts be inspected and are dispersing water effectively.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that all new wooden elements be painted after appropriately weathering.</u></p>
<p><b>Substitute Materials, pg. 61</b></p>	<p><i>There are three generally accepted circumstances under which substitute materials may be appropriate and economical replacements:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Unavailability of Historic Materials</i></li> <li><i>2. Unavailability of Skilled Craftsman</i></li> <li><i>3. Replacement of poor-quality materials.</i></li> </ol>	<p>The applicant proposes to replace the existing wood Richmond Rail with new white vinyl railings and banisters.</p> <p>While Staff is supportive of considering a substitute material for the railings and banisters, the material submitted doesn't adequately resemble a wooden railing system. The vinyl railings and banister submitted include large connector pieces. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant replace the existing Richmond Rail with new wood Richmond Rail or submit a railing system that better resembles the appearance of a wooden railing system; not having connector pieces, but rather hidden fasteners. Final railing system submitted for Chair and Vice Chair approval.</u></p>

*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

Figure 1. Façade 2917 E Broad Street, 10/2025



Figure 3. View of subject porch from N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 10/2025



Figure 2. View of subject porch looking southwest, 10/2025



Figure 4. View of subject porch looking northwest from N. 30<sup>th</sup> Street, 10/2025



Figure 5. View of newer porch extension



Figure 6. deterioration of structural porch elements



Figure 7. Extant Column Detail



Figure 8. 1905 Sanborn Map. Porch in its original configuration without the new landing and stair extension off the rear.

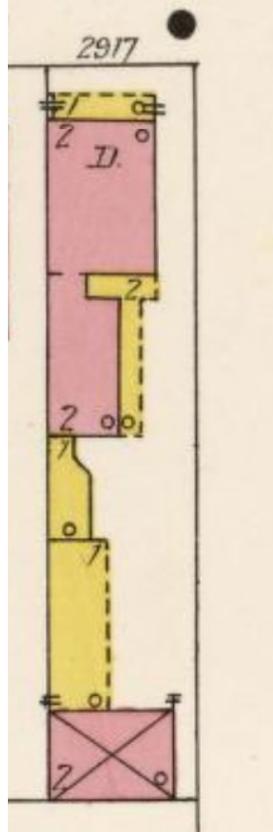


Figure 9. Subject porch 1984

