

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
April 28, 2015 Meeting**

7. **CAR No. 15-046** (New Community School) **4211 Hermitage Road
Hermitage Road Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Install two modular classroom buildings**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to install two 24' by 60' modular classroom buildings behind the 1 ½ story brick structure at 4213 Hermitage Road within the Hermitage Road Old and Historic District. These structures will be temporarily installed to accommodate the development of an academic building which the Commission approved at its meeting on March 24, 2015. The project previously approved included the demolition of an existing academic building at 4217 Hermitage Road to allow for the construction of a new academic building. These proposed structures will accommodate the classrooms lost by the demolition until the construction of the new building is complete. The proposed structures will be constructed of 4' by 8' sheets of composite material. Additionally, the buildings will have two 1/1 windows, two composite doors, and wooden stairs and ramp leading to the doors. Though located behind existing buildings, the proposed structures will be visible from Hermitage Road, most prominently from the south looking north.

The applicant is seeking final approval for the proposed installation. Commission staff reviewed the project through the lens of the "Standards for New Construction: Residential Outbuildings" on page 48 of the *Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* and the resulting comments follow.

RESIDENTIAL OUTBUILDINGS

- 1) *Outbuildings, including garages, sheds, gazebos and other auxiliary structures, should be compatible with the design of the primary building on the site, including roof slope and materials selection.*

The primary building on the site is a one-and-a-half story, three-bay, Colonial Revival style Cape Cod building with a side gable, asphalt shingle roof with paired gable dormers. The proposed rectangular, shed roof structures are not compatible with the primary building on the site.

- 2) *Newly constructed outbuildings such as detached garages or tool sheds should respect the siting, massing, roof profiles, materials and colors of existing outbuildings in the neighborhood.*

To the north of the proposed buildings is an existing gable roofed brick garage which is a contributing structure in the Hermitage Road National Register Historic District. The proposed composite structures with shed roofs are not compatible with the other outbuildings in the vicinity though the applicant opted to use the composite material rather than metal which is usually found in these structures in order to improve the buildings' aesthetics.

3) *New outbuildings should be smaller than the main residence and be located to the rear and/or side of the property to emphasize that they are secondary structures.*

The proposed modular classroom buildings are smaller than the main structure and located at the rear of the property behind the main structure.

4) *Prefabricated yard structures are discouraged. Screening will be considered as a mitigating factor for the installation of these structures. However, prefabricated structures will still be reviewed for compatibility using the criteria developed in this section.*

These are prefabricated modular classrooms that, as proposed, are not screened from Hermitage Road though views of the structure are blocked by existing buildings on the property.

Overall, the design and materials of the modular classroom buildings do not appear to meet the *Guidelines* for new residential outbuildings. These proposed structures are temporary additions to the property which are necessary to facilitate the construction of a new academic building in a similar manner as construction trailers are necessary during building construction. Though visible, these structures are located in an inconspicuous location to limit the visual impact from the public right of way. The Commission may wish to consider the effectiveness of screening as a measure for mitigating the design and materials by reducing the visibility of the modular classroom buildings from public view. If the applicant is amenable to the recommendation that the buildings be sited so that they are screened by vegetation, staff would recommend approval.

Staff recommends approval of the project with the condition that the modular classroom buildings be screened by vegetation. It is the assessment of staff that with the applicant's acceptance of the above condition the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114.930.7(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 code.