12.   CAR No. 17-027 (H. Ghorashi)   **812 Jessamine Street**
                                                          Union Hill Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Replace porch decking, railing, and columns.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to rehabilitate an existing full façade front porch on a home in the Union Hill Old and Historic District. Only the roof of the existing porch remains as the remainder of the porch was removed by the applicant due to deterioration. The applicant is proposing to rebuild the framing with wood to match the original porch and will reuse the PVC lattice below the porch. The applicant is proposing to utilize composite tongue and groove flooring in an orientation and width to match the previous wood decking. The applicant is proposing to replace the previous round columns and half columns with square 6" columns wrapped in PVC. The applicant is proposing a white composite railing system with square pickets and 46" in height.

812 Jessamine Street (Historic District Survey 1993)

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that

whenever possible porches should be repaired and partially replaced rather than completely replaced and that replacements should match the original as much as possible (pg. 67, #3, #5). The applicant is proposing to retain the existing porch roof and replace the framing in-kind.

Decking: The *Guidelines* states that synthetic tongue-and-groove porch flooring may be a reasonable alternative to the use of wood tongue-and-groove decking (pg. 57). The *Guidelines* also notes that if in-kind materials are impractical, then substitute materials may be used (pg. 57). Staff recommends approval of the proposed composite decking, understanding that modern wood decking is much less durable than the first-growth timber that was historically used for porch flooring.

Columns: While the Commission has approved substitute materials for the replacement of wood columns, staff has concerns about the design of the proposed columns. Though the most recent full columns with their bases constructed of pressure treated lumber are not original to the porch, the ghosting on the façade of the half columns and an image of the property and the 1993 Historic District survey indicate that the original columns were Tuscan, full height columns. Staff recommends that the applicant install Tuscan columns to match the appearance in the 1993 photograph, and the proposed composite material be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

Railing: The existing railing is not original to the porch as the 1993 photograph shows a turned balustrade with more substantial pickets and railings that engage with the columns. The *Guidelines* state that new features shall match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials, and reconstruction should be based on documentation (pg. 5). Staff recommends the proposed railing should match the 1993 photograph to include a turned balustrade without a center post. Staff also has concerns that the proposed railing system does not effectively convey the appearance of a wooden rail as the material appears to have a sheen to it and large installation brackets which are not elements found on a traditional wood railings. Staff recommends the applicant work with staff to determine an appropriate substitute material for the railing, to be reviewed and approved by staff, that has a less glossy finish and smaller installation brackets than the proposed Fiberon HomeSelect railing.

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