

## 2. COA-078594-2020

PUBLIC HEARING DATE

September 22, 2020

PROPERTY ADDRESS

503 Stuart Circle

DISTRICT

Monument Avenue

# Commission of Architectural Review

## STAFF REPORT



APPLICANT

St. John's United Church of Christ

STAFF CONTACT

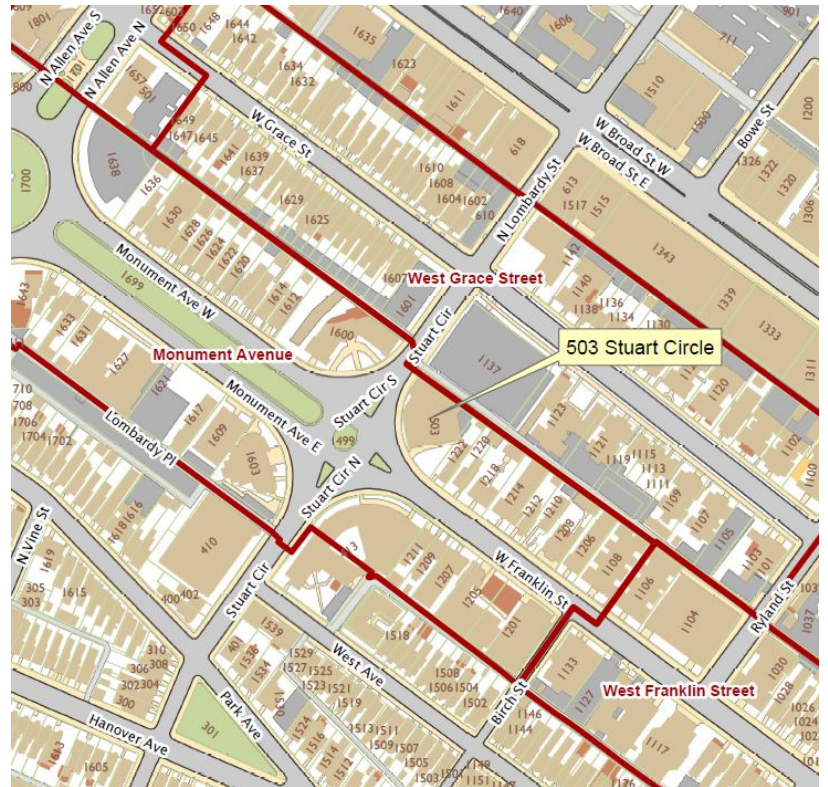
C. Jeffries

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Upgrade existing mechanical and HVAC systems and install a fabric awning over a rear door.**

### PROJECT DETAILS

- The St. John's United Church of Christ is currently under renovation. Exterior work includes updating existing HVAC systems, installing railings, replacement of stained glass protection, masonry cleaning and installation of an awning over a rear door.
- Upgrades to the HVAC will include a number of exterior alterations, including the removal of an elevated mechanical platform, the installation of new ground-mounted equipment and screening, and the replacement of window units.
- The proposed awning will be a simple fabric awning over a doorway, colors are to be determined.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS**

### PREVIOUS REVIEWS

None.

### STAFF RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

- The window units be installed in such a manner so as to divert water from leaking down the building envelope or pooling/building up around the foundation.
- Final color selection for the awning be submitted for administrative approval and the awning hardware be installed into the mortar joints to avoid damaging the masonry.
- Additional information be submitted for administrative review if repairs to the window above the altar are required.
- The masonry cleaning be done with the gentlest means possible, to prevent damage to historic materials.

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## STAFF ANALYSIS

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Mechanical  
Equipment #1-  
3, pg. 68

1. *New units should be placed in side or rear yards so as to minimize their visual impact. Side yard units should be located as far away from the front of the building as possible.*
2. *Rooftop units should be located so that they are minimally visible from the public right-of-way, and screening should be considered.*
3. *HVAC equipment on the ground should be appropriately screened with fencing or vegetation.*

The application states that the new window units will be placed in minimally visible locations, including existing window wells and the alley-facing elevations of the building. Staff recommends the window units be installed in such a manner so as to divert water from leaking down the building envelope or pooling/building up around the foundation.

The new ground-mounted mechanical equipment will be located in the rear, screened from view by a wood fence. A ground-mounted condenser, though visible from West Franklin Street, will be screened by landscaping.

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Awning Design  
& Placement  
#1-5, pg. 72

1. *Awnings should be placed carefully so that building elements or existing materials are not damaged or obscured.*
2. *The size and placement of awnings should not interfere with existing signs, distinctive architectural features of the building or with street trees or other elements along the street.*
3. *The bottom of the awning valance should be no lower than seven (7) feet above the sidewalk.*
4. *The use of metal, plastic or overly ornate fabric awnings should be avoided.*
5. *Awning mounting hardware should be installed directly into mortar joints to avoid damage to historic masonry.*

The proposed awning appears to be consistent with the guidelines for awnings, as it is a simple fabric awning over a doorway. Staff recommends the final color selection be submitted for administrative approval and the awning hardware be installed into the mortar joints to avoid damaging the masonry.

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Windows #14,  
pg. 70

*Exterior storm windows should not damage or obscure either windows or frames.*

The application indicates that existing storm protection will be replaced with new units. Staff recommends approval of the proposed replacement. A proposal from the stained glass contractor also indicates that one window will be evaluated for potential repairs. Staff recommends additional information be submitted for administrative review if repairs to the window above the altar are required.

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Guidelines for  
Administrative  
Approval of  
Handrails and  
Porch Railings

*... the railings are a simple wrought iron design and installed in such a way as to have a minimum impact on historic materials. Such railings shall be painted black, black green, or a color complementary to the primary structure on the property.*

The proposed simple black metal handrails are consistent with the guidelines for handrails.

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Maintenance  
and Repair,  
Masonry #4, pg.

*Masonry cleaning. Cleaning of masonry should only be undertaken when necessary, never simply to give a structure a "new*

Staff recommends the masonry cleaning be done with the gentlest means possible, to prevent damage to historic materials.

*appearance.” Masonry cleaning should be carried out by a knowledgeable contractor who specializes in non-invasive cleaning techniques. The gentlest means possible involving only low pressure water wash with a mild detergent is best. The lowest possible wash (ideally around 100 PSI, and no higher than 300-400 PSI) should be selected, as unintended damage often occurs when high-pressure water is applied to historic masonry. High-pressure washes can cause water and environmental contaminants to infiltrate a masonry wall and cause interior damage.*

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. Location of ground-mounted HVAC equipment in the rear.



Figure 2. Existing window units.



Figure 3. View of east elevation from West Franklin Street.

