

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

11. **CAR No. 15-051** (G. Aston) **3017 Williamsburg Avenue
Woodward House-Rocketts Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Replace wood siding and
window sills with in-kind materials**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to replace all of the siding and other deteriorated elements on the Woodward House which is one of the oldest remaining wood frame structures in the City dating back to pre-1784. In addition to being in a Richmond Old and Historic District, the residence is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. The House is a frame 2 ½ story structure set on a brick foundation with three exterior end chimneys. The house faces North onto Williamsburg Avenue (Route 5) at the base of Libby Hill. Historic Richmond Foundation purchased and restored the house in 1978 and now holds a preservation easement on the exterior.

In 2012, the applicant applied to the CAR to remove the existing siding and to replace the siding with HardiePlank Lap siding. The Commission deferred the application requesting the application provide a survey of the existing condition of the siding. The Historic Richmond Foundation advised the Commission that it would only support the 2012 application if the wood siding was replaced with wood.

In the current application before the Commission, the applicant requests approval to replace all siding on the Woodward House with ¾"x7 ½" yellow pine beaded and beveled siding. In addition to the wood siding, the applicant proposes to install a moisture barrier using Tyvek or similar product and 1/8 wooden battens to allow for air movement behind siding, to prime and paint the siding using a latex exterior house paint of similar color to existing, and to replace corner boards as needed. The applicant would like to also install ½" 4x8 plywood or OSB sheathing to help firm up the structure if there is no base sheathing present. In regards to the windows, the applicant proposes to replace weathered window sills, frames and sashes with in-kind materials.

Staff recommends approval of the project as submitted with conditions.
Wood Siding. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines'* Standards for Rehabilitation of residential structures states that original features and materials that define the building style, including wood siding should be retained (pg. 55, #1). The *Guidelines* further state that if elements are damaged they should be repaired rather than replaced, and if

replacement is necessary, the materials should match the original materials in type or physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections should be used (pg. 55, #7). Based on these guidelines, the wholesale replacement of all of the historic siding would not be appropriate as some of the existing siding is salvageable. Due to restoration and repair efforts throughout the years, there are currently four distinct weatherboard profiles found in the home and five different styles of beading milled to match the various existing styles. Each of these styles is historically significant as they represent a different era of the house though the weatherboards installed as part of the 1970s restoration appear to be the least historically significant and are failing. Staff recommends that any rotted boards or non-historic boards that were part of the 1970s restoration be replaced in-kind with a matching profile to those in the surrounding area; and that intact and repairable siding be preserved, particularly where that siding is original. Additionally, staff recommends that if limited in-kind replacement of corner boards is necessary, then they should be an exact match. The applicant should consult with the easement holder in to determine the condition of the boards.

Paint. The easement holder recommends that the house paint should match the colors determined in the 1978 paint analysis as described in the 1980 Completion Report. Though the CAR considers a wider variety of colors for a historic structure, the easement holder's covenant is more restrictive than the Commission's guidelines and therefore staff recommends that the CAR defer to the easement holder's recommendation in terms of paint.

Moisture Barrier, Battens, and Sheathing. The *Guidelines* note the historic reveal or exposure of the siding and trim should be maintained, as it is an important character-defining feature (pg. 55, #2). The installation of plywood, OBS sheathing or any subsurface material may alter the exterior plane of the façade and result in the siding extend beyond the window frames. Because of the resulting change to the building's façade, staff cannot recommend approval of wooden battens, OBS sheathing, plywood, or other subsurface may alter the exterior plane. Though the proposed moisture barrier may not alter the exterior plane and therefore may not be under the CAR's scope of review; the easement holder advises against the installation of the moisture barrier, and therefore staff recommends that the CAR defer to the easement holder's recommendation in terms of the installation of a moisture barrier.

Windows, Sills and Frames. The applicant is proposing to replace the existing deteriorated window sills with wood cut to match the existing sills which is consistent with the *Guidelines* that recommend when replacement is necessary it should be completed with in-kind materials (pg. 55, #7). Staff recommends approval of the window sill replacement as necessary based on the condition of the sills.

Windows, Sashes. The *Guidelines* state that "windows should only be replaced when they are missing or beyond repair" (pg. 65). Currently, the windows on the structure are not original windows and were installed as part of the 1970s restoration of the property. The applicant has not provided staff with

documentation of the current condition of the windows and specifics as to which windows will be replaced. Staff recommends that the applicant supply this information, and in consultation with the easement holder, staff would administratively approve individual decisions on window replacement.

As the easement holder, Historic Richmond Foundation supports this application if their recommendations, enumerated in the attached letter, are followed. Staff's recommendations are consistent with the recommendations of the Historic Richmond Foundation though limited to the elements of the proposal visible from the public right of way.

In summation, staff recommends the Commission approve the application as follows:

- Any rotted boards, as determined in consultation with the easement holder, or non-historic boards that were part of the 1970s restoration be replaced in-kind with a matching profile to those in the surrounding area; and that intact and repairable siding be preserved, particularly where that siding is original. Additionally, staff recommends that if limited in-kind replacement of corner boards is necessary, then they should be an exact match.
- Applicant should not install wooden battens, OBS sheathing, plywood, or other subsurface may alter the exterior plane.
- Deteriorated window sills be replaced with in-kind materials as necessary.
- Applicant should supply details of window sash conditions and replacement plans; and in consultation with the easement holder, staff would administratively approve individual decisions on window replacement.
- For items for which the Commission does not have authority to approve including more restrictive requirements for paint color and the installation of a moisture barrier and all elements that are not visible from the public right of way, staff recommends the Commission support and endorse the recommendations of the easement holder, the Historic Richmond Foundation.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the applicant's acceptance of the above conditions, the application is consistent with Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) of the City Code, and 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.