

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
November 25, 2014 Meeting**

10. **CAR No. 14-120** (Selway and Som) **21 West Clay Street
Jackson Ward Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Replace original 6/6 wood windows
with 6/6 vinyl windows**

Staff Contact: **J. Hill**

Commission members: Because this item was deferred at the October 2014 meeting, the application materials attached do not include all photos originally submitted by the applicant. If you would like to view the entire set of photographs online, you may do so at the Legistar website:

(<https://richmondva.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>)

If you would like a hard-copy of the entire application for the meeting, please let us know and we will provide them for you.

The applicants request approval to replace 13 of the second and third floor six-over-six true divided-lite wood sash windows at this Greek Revival single-family residence in the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District with Pella 350 Premium vinyl double-paned windows with six-over-six simulated divided lites.

Photographs provided with the application demonstrate damage and deterioration primarily to the glazing, the exterior sills and weatherguards, and the interior rails and sills, apparently from condensation/water penetration. (*Note: This application was deferred at the October meeting after presentation, public comment and Commission discussion in order to give the applicants additional time to consider alternatives to the original proposal.*)

Staff recommends denial of the project. The building is a notable example of the Greek Revival style, extensively restored/rehabilitated in the early 1990s. The building appears to have retained a high percentage of original, or carefully replicated, features and materials.

The *Guidelines* address the issue of replacing windows on page 90:

It is generally not appropriate to replace historic windows. Replacements are often made as a result of poor maintenance of the original materials, or from a belief that original windows do not provide sufficient energy efficiency; such replacements are considered inappropriate if the new windows do not duplicate the historic character of original windows in size, materials or design. Vinyl replacement windows are strongly discouraged and rarely permitted.

The applicants brought a sample of the proposed window for review by the Commission to the October meeting. Generally, vinyl is a material that, to date, has not successfully been manufactured in a way that effectively replicates the appearance of historic sash windows. Often the rails and muntins are wider than

those found in historic wood sash windows and this renders them visually distinct from the original materials.

Additional references to handling historic windows appear in the standards for residential rehabilitation included in the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* on page 51, "Retain original windows including both functional and decorative elements such as frames, sash, muntins, [and] glazing," and in more detail in the guidelines for windows on page 59-60:

- Original windows should be repaired by patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing them. (The presence of rotted or decayed wood can be determined by jabbing an ice pick into wet wood at an angle and prying up a small section of the wood or by inserting an ice pick perpendicular to the wood. Sound wood will separate in long splinters, decayed wood in short irregular pieces, and penetration of less than one-eighth of an inch means the wood is solid.)
- Windows should be replaced only when they are missing or beyond repair. Any reconstruction should be based on physical evidence or photographic documentation.
- Changes to existing windows or the addition of new windows along a secondary elevation will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.
- The architectural character of windows should not be altered by inappropriate materials or finishes that radically change the sash, depth of reveal, muntin configuration, the reflective quality or color of the glazing or the appearance of the frame.
- Do not replace multi-paned sash windows with new thermal sash windows that use false muntins.

It is the assessment of staff that the work described in the application is not consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) 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.

For these reasons staff recommend denial of the application for the replacement of the windows and further recommend the retention and repair of the windows and the replacement in kind of the damaged sills.