

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
April 26, 2016 Meeting**

4. **CAR No. 16-062** (T. Carter)

**2114 East Leigh Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Install new porch railings on the front
and rear porches at a high height.**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to rehabilitate the front and rear porches of an existing home in the Union Hill Old and Historic District by installing new wooden railings to replace the existing deteriorated railings. Currently, the front porch railings include balusters in Richmond rail with 2" pickets and height of 29" from the floor line to the top of the rail. The rear porch consist of three horizontal 3 ¾" rails. The existing rear railings do not meet code in regards to both railing height and the size of the openings between the wood members. Both the front and rear porch railings appear in deteriorated condition. The applicant is proposing to replicate the front porch railing system on the front and rear porches but elongate the pickets by 7 inches in order to meet the code requirements for railing height.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* note that porch railings and balustrades are important character defining features of a structure and that proportions of these railings are important elements to the appearance of the structure (pg. 47). The *Guidelines* state that when restoring a railing there may be difficulty in maintaining the original height while meeting current building code requirements (pg. 67, #6). For detailed balustrades with turned pickets and pedestals, elongating the balustrade inappropriately alters the proportion of these character defining features; and therefore staff would recommend installing a backer rail to achieve the code required height. In this application, the existing rails do not contain details which would be obscured by elongating the simple rectangular pickets. Additionally, the railing at the rear does not appear original and the Guidelines note that for missing railings, balusters in traditional Richmond rail are appropriate (pg. 46, #2). For these reasons, staff supports the replacement of the existing railings with wooden railings to match the design of the front railing with a longer picket with the condition that the proposed paint color for the railings be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation in Section 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 pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.