

Minutes
August 7, 2009
North End - Huntington Heights Architectural Review Board

The meeting was called to order at 6:03

Members present:

Chip Carpenter, Mary Kayaselcuk, Phil Shook, Robin Stippich, Deirdre Wells

Members Absent: None. The Board has two vacancies.

Staff present: David Watson

Review of the minutes. Minutes of the May 7, 2009 and July 9, 2009 meetings were reviewed and approved with editorial modifications to include the acceptance with regret of Mr. Whittaker's resignation.

Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness (COA):

COA-09-221. 324 57th Street. Tim Dolan. Installation of solar panels.

Mr. Carpenter called for the staff report.

The applicant stated that the individual shingles are in excellent condition but are falling off due to deterioration of the nails. The roof has begun to leak in multiple areas and it is this condition that has necessitated the property owner to take corrective action.

The installation of the panels will require the removal of the existing roof. These slates will be recovered and reused on the front of the house.

The guidelines do not address the installation of solar panels, but does allow for the replacement of slate shingles with modern shingle material. The applicant's alternate plan to installing solar panels is to replace the entire existing roof with new asphalt shingles. The guidelines allow the replacement of slate shingles with asphalt shingles.

Staff cited a proposed ordinance amendment from Frederick MD, noting that this historic district is quite extensive, and dates back to the time of the Revolution.

Solar panels. *On existing buildings, solar panels may be approved if they are not visible from the street and if they do not extend higher than the existing building. On new construction they may be approved on rear elevations on a case-by-case basis, if they are well-integrated with the overall construction.*

Staff opined that these guidelines are prudent in that they allow modernization of a structure so long as it does not impair its historic integrity.

The concluding summary noted that the proposed panels are not visible from the street and the panels do not alter the contour of the roofline. The guidelines currently allow the applicant to remove the entire slate roof and replace it with fiberglass shingles. Should the property owner not wish to

have solar panels on the roof, they could be removed in the future without harming the structure. The Guidelines do not allow the Board to rule based on aesthetics.

Staff made a recommendation for the approval of the proposed installation of solar panels on the second story rear roof slope.

Mr. Carpenter asked for clarification of the material that will be placed under the panels. Mr. Dolan stated that architectural grade slate gray shingles that will match the existing slate shingles.

The Board discussed the term “visibility from the street”, noting that corner properties, duplexes, etc. have different considerations. The Board concluded that the Guidelines imply that visibility is considered from the street frontage.

Mr. Shook noted that in the past, when the Board considered new materials such as cellular PVC or vinyl siding, the new material is made to look like the original material. He noted that skylights are specifically mentioned in the guidelines as not permissible on roofs original to the structure.

Ms. Stippich asked about the different style solar panels available on the market, specifically noting the smaller tiles and solar film. Mr. Dolan stated that solar tiles that attempt to mimic the profile of shingles are a technology that is still improving. Currently these shingles cost considerably more than panels while providing substantially less power. The smaller panels lose more power during electrical conversion than do the larger shingles. Ms. Stippich then asked if the roof itself would be damaged by the installation process. Mr. Dolan stated that bolts would go through the roof, and this area would require patching should the panels be removed. Ms. Stippich and the Board asked the applicant precisely how much area of the roof will be covered by panels. The applicant stated that there would be 30 panels with a shingle boarder of approximately one foot in width on each side of the roof. Since submitting the application, he decided not to pursue the installation of the smaller tile panels at the edges.

Ms. Stippich stated her concern that there is very little precedence for the installation of solar panels in historical areas in the area, and perhaps the country. She noted that areas in California that allow the use of “Thin Film” panels provided that no more than 50% of the roof is covered. Mr. Shook concurred with Ms. Stippich that the Board must act carefully because this case will set precedence for future applications and that the Board should set up guidelines for solar panels prior to approval of applications.

The Board decided to vote on establishing guidelines prior to voting on the application. Mr. Shook made a motion that solar panels may be installed by meeting all of the following criteria:

1. The surface area of the solar panel may not be visible from the front of the house nor from the side facing a street if the property is a corner lot.
2. Panels may only be installed on the rear roof.
3. Panels shall be uniformly colored
4. Only electrical panels may be installed
5. Roofing under the panels must comply with standards set forth in the Guidelines.
6. The panels must be parallel to the existing roof and may not extend more than six inches above the roof surface.

Ms. Wells seconded

Aye: Kayaselcuk, Shook, Stippich, Wells, Carpenter

The motion carried 5:0

Mr. Shook made a motion to approve COA-0-221 with the following conditions:

1. The underlying shingles will be architectural grade shingles that will be the same shade as the existing slate shingles.
2. The panels will be mounted in a 3x10' pattern.
3. All conditions noted in the guideline update regarding solar panels will also be followed.

Ms. Wells seconded

Aye: Kayaselcuk, Shook, Stippich, Wells, Carpenter

The motion carried 5:0

Old Business

Mr. Shook revisited concerns about houses that are being allowed to fall into neglect, noting that there may some programs in the future that will help people in their restoration efforts. Mr. Shook sated that he believes that these programs should allocate resources based on the level of financial need of the applicant rather than be awarded to those who chose to allow their properties to fall into neglect. Mr. Carpenter noted that these programs are interesting, but do not seem to be under the purview of the ARB.

Mr. Carpenter thanked the Board for their review of applications at the July meeting, and that he would be writing letters of recommendation upon returning home from the meeting.

New Business

Mrs. Wells noted that at the Guidelines update the Board will should address energy conservation efforts that impact exteriors of homes in the historic district.