



CITY COUNCIL

Evidentiary Hearing

**HARB Appeal Hearing
1604 Bern St.
Wednesday, September 14, 2016
5 pm
Council Chambers**

The purpose of the HARB appeal hearing is to consider the request of the property owner to appeal the denial/approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for:

The construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade to consist of cement block construction with an EIFS (exterior insulation finishing system) finish in the color "Brite White" and to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower's roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home of the property at 1604 Bern Street, Reading, PA.

The subject property is located in the Heights Conservation District. The building, which appears to have been constructed in the early 20th century, is a two story dwelling featuring a full-width porch and gabled dormers on the facade. With a **Composite Index Rating of 82**

Motion: The Historical Architectural Review Board, upon motion by Ms. Weller and seconded by Mr. Sands, adopted the proposal to DENY a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein and specified the following:

1. The proposal for the construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade to consist of cement block construction with an EIFS finish in the color "Brite White" and to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower's roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home of the property at 1604 Bern Street, was presented by Richard B. Keffer.
2. The construction of a two story elevator tower as proposed, presented, and shown on the submitted architectural plans dated June 28, 2016 was DENIED based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Standard #9. ("New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.") and Standard #10. ("New additions and adjacent or related new

construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.”).

3. The Board approves the construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade of the dwelling, to be centered on the gable and centrally located between the two first story windows, covering the second story window.
4. The exterior of the elevator tower shall be finished in board-and-batten siding, painted white to match the existing color of the house, and is to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower’s roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home.

The motion to DENY the original proposal and approve an amended proposal as stated above was approved unanimously.

I. Testimony from Applicant (No more than 10 minutes)
Patricia & Michael Gordon, owners

During the hearing process, applicants are cautioned not to address the Administrative staff present but to make their presentation directly to City Council. The applicant may ask the President of Council or the Hearing Master to relay a question to Administrative staff.

- **Council’s Cross Examination**

II. Testimony from City Staff (No more than 10 minutes)

- **Council’s Cross Examination**

III. Other Testimony and Evidence

IV. Public Comment (No More than 3 minutes per speaker)

V. Rebuttal by Applicant (No more than 5 minutes)

VI. Announcement of expected date of decision

City Council will render a decision by adopting a resolution at the September 26th Regular Meeting of Council.

VII. Adjourn



CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Resolution No. 23-15

WHEREAS, the Reading Historical Architectural Review Board at its March 17, 2015 meeting reviewed the plans and specifications of Antonio Callesa, applicant for 15 S. 4th St., Reading, Pennsylvania for

**1. THE INSTALLATION OF A DUCTLESS MINI SPLIT HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING
CONDENSER UNIT AT THE FRONT FACADE**

and DENIED the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the said work as described in the attached report.

Now, therefore, on the 17th day of March, 2015, I, Amy Woldt Johnson, Historic Preservation Specialist, deny this Certificate of Appropriateness for aforesaid work in the name of the Reading Historical Architectural Review Board.

Amy Woldt Johnson

Historic Preservation Specialist

**READING HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA
August 16, 2016**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The monthly meeting of the Reading Historical Architectural Review Board was held on Tuesday, August 16, 2016 in the Penn Room, Reading City Hall, Reading, PA. At 6:30 PM, Mr. Booth called the meeting to order. Mr. Booth asked if there were any conflicts of interest and there were none indicated.

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Aaron Booth, Sean DeVine, Bill Sands, and Erin Weller.

Visitors present:

Michelle Mayfield, 1243-1245 Perkiomen Avenue

David Volosov, 1243-1245 Perkiomen Avenue

Richard Keffer, 1604 Bern Street

Brad Boltz, Bachman's Roofing, Building & Remodeling Inc., 729 N. 4th Street

Tadd Casner, 413 Douglass Street

Sergio Torres, 413 Douglass Street

Jennifer Fox, 520 Oley Street

Evelyn Cofresi, 1164 Perkiomen Avenue

Timothy King, 500 Buttonwood Street

Evelyn W. Morrison, Church Street

Press present: Carole Duran, Reading Eagle

Staff present: Amy W. Johnson; Christine Leggio, JMT/HARB Consultant

- B. Approval of Minutes:** The Historical Architectural Review Board, upon motion by Mr. Sands and seconded by Mr. DeVine, voted to approve the minutes from the July 19, 2016 meeting. The vote was taken with all in favor.

II. HEARING OF APPLICATIONS:

ITEM #2 - RESOLUTION #36-16 – It is proposed to construct a two story elevator tower at the western façade to consist of cement block construction with an EIFS (exterior insulation finishing system) finish in the color "Brite White" and to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower's roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home of the property at 1604 Bern Street, Reading, PA.

Property Owner: Michael and Patricia Gordon

Owner's Address: 1604 Bern Street, Reading, PA, 19604

Applicant: Richard B. Keffer, Architect LLC

Applicant's Address: 648 Mt. Penn Road, Reading, PA 19607

Building description, period, style, defining features: The subject property is located in the Heights Conservation District. The building, which appears to have been constructed in the early 20th century, is a two story dwelling featuring a full-width porch and gabled dormers on the facade.

Composite Index Rating: 82

Proposed alterations: The applicant proposes the construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade to consist of cement block construction with an EIFS finish in the color “Brite White” and to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home.

Guideline Citation: SIS 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment. **SIS 10.** New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Evaluation, effect on historic district, recommendations: The proposed EIFS siding is not historically appropriate. Wood clapboard or board-and-batten siding would be historically appropriate alternatives. The proposed shingles are appropriate, however, the installation as a whole would be less intrusive if it were positioned between the two windows on the west elevation and if the roof of the shaft is designed constructed to fall below the existing roofline.

Discussion: Mr. Keffer stated that the dwelling was constructed in 1932 and that it is clad in asbestos siding. He presented drawings of the proposed work and indicated that they would like to install the elevator shaft in the first bay on the west elevation because the basement and first floor windows line up in that location and they would like to utilize those openings for the installation. He stated that they felt this option would minimally disturb the existing asbestos-containing siding. He stated that the proposed finish for the exterior of the shaft would be in EIFS with a smooth finish which is intended to allow the shaft to blend in with the exterior of the house. He also stated that the tower is designed to blend in with the dormer on the west end of the front elevation of the dwelling.

Ms. Weller asked whether it would be possible to design the elevator shaft so that it would not interrupt the roofline of the house.

Mr. Keffer stated that this particular elevator is designed with the motor at the top, which is somewhat unusual. He indicated that, at the height presented, the workings of the elevator just fit.

Mr. Sands asked whether there had been any discussions about other materials for finishing the exterior of the shaft.

Mr. Keffer stated that there is a small board-and-batten sided shed in the rear of the property, and that they had originally designed the shaft to be clad in board and batten siding, but ultimately felt that the vertical battens called too much attention to the structure. The proposed EIFS exterior would have a sandblasted finish and would be less noticeable. He indicated that his clients would prefer EIFS.

The Board discussed the possibility of applying a horizontal siding to the exterior of the shaft, but all agree that it would likely be too pronounced in appearance.

Mr. Booth suggested the possibility of using vertically oriented tongue-and-groove siding, and Mr. Keffer indicated that he felt the vertical grooves would call too much attention to the structure, similar to board-and-batten siding. Mr. Booth suggested butted boards of random width.

Mr. Booth indicated his concern about the clearance for the interior elevator door at the proposed second floor opening and asked for the head height of the second floor window. Mr. Keffer stated the height is six feet, eight inches, and agrees that the shaft may need to be shifted eight to ten inches toward the center of the west wall to accommodate the door.

Mr. Booth stated his concern that the positioning of the elevator shaft in the front bay of the west elevation will interrupt the formal, symmetrical fenestration pattern, which is a character defining feature of the building.

Mr. Keffer stated that there are built-in shelves in the basement of the dwelling centered within the west wall of the building, which the property owners would prefer not to disturb. He also reiterated that they would like to utilize the existing basement and first floor window openings in the installation.

Mr. Booth restated the importance of the formal, symmetrical, fenestration pattern and indicated that the addition of the asymmetrically located elevator shaft would not be "in concert" with the overall design of the building. He indicated that the elevator shaft would be better suited to a position centered within the wall, which would allow utilization of the second story window opening.

Mr. Keffer stated that the interior circulation pattern and furniture arrangement on the first floor of the dwelling would be disturbed by a central installation.

Mr. Booth indicated that, because the top of the tower would extend beyond the roof line as designed, the top of the elevator shaft would create the appearance of a two-sided dormer, adversely affecting the symmetrical design of both the façade and the west elevation of the house.

Ms. Weller inquired about the possibility of having a rough-stucco finish rather than the smooth EIFS on the exterior of the shaft. Mr. Booth stated that there would be little difference in appearance between stucco vs. EIFS. Mr. Keffer stated that the EIFS could be finished in a variety of ways but that the sandblasted finish was chosen to minimize the appearance of the tower in general. He stated that the board-and-batten siding would be his second choice for an exterior finish.

Mr. Sands remarked that it was a shame that they couldn't find another, less conspicuous location for the tower. Mr. Keffer stated that they looked at other positions within the dwelling, as well as at installing a chair lift rather than the elevator, but none of the options were satisfactory. Mr. Booth indicated that locating the elevator shaft centrally within the west elevation is a preferable, less conspicuous location for the elevator shaft.

Mr. Booth stated that his reasoning for locating the shaft between the first floor windows was more than just an aesthetic preference. He stated that he believes it will not be feasible to locate the shaft in the first bay as proposed, due to the slope of the roof. He stated that he would hate to see construction begin only for the installers to realize that the roof of the property would need to be altered to make the installation fit. It was noted that Staff had requested an elevation drawing of the proposed second floor elevator door opening to show its placement, as per the HARB Executive Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Keffer stated that measurements would be taken using lasers to confirm the measurements before construction begins.

Mr. DeVine stated his confusion as to the interior circulation problem which Mr. Keffer stated would result if the shaft were installed in the center of the wall. Mr. DeVine stated that the central position would create the appearance of a chimney from the exterior, and on the interior the door would be positioned where a mantle would be, in the living room. Mr. Keffer responded that it would alter the interior circulation on the first floor, and would also disturb the set-up of a laundry room in the basement. He also indicated that he felt utilizing the basement and first floor windows for openings would allow them to minimally disturb the asbestos siding.

Mr. Booth and Mr. DeVine agreed that the asbestos siding will be disturbed regardless of the positioning of the shaft.

Ms. Weller asked whether positioning the elevator centrally between the first floor windows would compromise or limit the functionality of the elevator. Mr. Keffer stated that it would not.

Mr. DeVine stated his concern regarding reversibility of the installation. Mr. Booth stated that the installation would be permanent and, as such, would not be reversible.

Mr. Booth stated that he feels it is possible to achieve a solution which is both historically appropriate and can provide the homeowners with the accessibility which they require.

Ms. Johnson asked what is on the interior wall between the two windows. Mr. Keffer stated that the concern about locating the door in the center of the wall is related to the furniture arrangement and circulation pattern of the room.

Ms. Weller asked what the distance between the gable of the house and the gable of the elevator shaft would be if the shaft were positioned centrally. Mr. Booth stated that, based on the presented drawings, the apex of the shaft would fall between 18 and 14 inches below the ridgeline of the house's roof.

Motion: The Historical Architectural Review Board, upon motion by Ms. Weller and seconded by Mr. Sands, adopted the proposal to DENY a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein and specified the following:

5. The proposal for the construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade to consist of cement block construction with an EIFS finish in the color "Brite White" and to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower's roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home of the property at 1604 Bern Street, was presented by Richard B. Keffer.
6. The construction of a two story elevator tower as proposed, presented, and shown on the submitted architectural plans dated June 28, 2016 was DENIED based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Standard #9. ("New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.") and Standard #10. ("New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the

essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.”).

7. The Board approves the construction of a two story elevator tower at the western façade of the dwelling, to be centered on the gable and centrally located between the two first story windows, covering the second story window.
8. The exterior of the elevator tower shall be finished in board-and-batten siding, painted white to match the existing color of the house, and is to include the installation of gray asphalt architectural shingles at the tower’s roof to match the existing shingles on the main roof of the home.

The motion to DENY the original proposal and approve an amended proposal as stated above was approved unanimously.