GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

MEETING

----------------------------------------:
IN THE MATTER OF: : Case No.
528 4th STREET SE : HPA 22-145
----------------------------------------:

Thursday,
March 3, 2022

The meeting of the District of Columbia
Historic Preservation Review Board convened via
Video-Teleconference, pursuant to notice, at 1:17
p.m. EST, Marnique Heath, Chair, presiding.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD MEMBERS
PRESENT:

MARNIQUE HEATH, AIA, Chair
ANDREW AURBACH, Historian Member
MATTHEW BELL, FAIA, Architect Member
LINDA GREENE, Citizen Member
OUTERBRIDGE HORSEY, AIA, Citizen Member
ALEXANDRA JONES, PhD, Archaeologist Member
SANDRA JOWERS-BARBER, PhD, Historian Member
GRETCHE PFAEHLER, AIA, Architectural Historian
CARISA STANLEY BEATTY, Citizen Member

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE STAFF PRESENT:

STEVE CALLCOTT
JULIANNA JACKSON
MOIRA NADAL
IMANIA PRICE
P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

1:17 p.m.

CHAIR HEATH: All right, Moira, you're on.

MS. NADAL: Thank you. I'll try to keep it quick. So -- and I do apologize, allergens season is upon us, so I may sneeze at some point.

We are here to consider a potential change in the use of our cladding material on a property located at 528 4th Street, Southeast. In doing research into the building, it is a semi-detached, two-story, framed building that we first see in our records in the 1874 Faehzt and Pratt 1874 Real Estate Directory. I think the data for that was collected in 1872, so just to give a sense of the age.

The existing proposal is to remove existing aluminum siding and replace the siding and the trim with the exception of the door surround and the cornice and frieze with a Hardie product. So in considering the age and style of
the building, we know that this would have -- if
sided, it would have been sided in a wood board
and would have had wood trim all around as we see
at the cornice and the door surround.

The size of the building, the scale of the
existing trim that appears to be historic,
indicates also that these would have had a
narrower reveal than we see on some of the
historic, contemporary buildings in Capitol Hill
that are of a more humble architecture and have a
wider siding board.

Both the Board and we as HPO staff
have been very consistent in recommending against
the use of alternative materials such as Hardie
and other types of fiber cement board on street-
facing elevations. There have been some
instances in which I know at least I have
approved Hardie on minor additions that are
clearly at the back of house, for example, an
enclosed sleeping porch that might be visible
from the street or on the corner property.

We have not found that fiber cement
board from any brand does a good enough job of replicating historic materials, so when we consider more contemporary, modern materials for things like replacement windows, the way that we evaluate that is to see if the product does a good job of replicating the proportions and dimensions and detailing of a historic window or of a historic door as we perceive the property, in this case in a Historic District, from the public rights of way.

We feel that fiber cement board is clearly discernible from the sidewalk as you're moving through the Historic District, and as such, we have not been approving it on street-facing elevations and certainly not on primary elevations. So I have recommended revising the proposal to be for wood siding and wood trim and I look forward to hearing what the Board has to say on the subject. Thank you. I'll pass it to the applicant.

MS. DAVIS: Good morning. I would like to make sure that both myself and Mr. Craig
Deimler and Mr. Matt Handverger are all to speak
during our presentation.

I will begin. Good afternoon, members
of the Board and HPO staff. My name is Beth
Davis, the owner's permitting agent. We thank
you for your time and consideration as we
consider the application for Mr. Handverger's
property.

As Moira noted, the applicant proposes
to replace the existing aluminum siding on his
home with Hardie siding. On the line we have
both Mr. Craig Deimler, the contractor, Alco
Products Company; and Mr. Matt Handverger, the
owner of the property.

Craig will further explain the details
of the project.

MR. DEIMLER: Thank you very much for
your time this afternoon. I really appreciate
your consideration in what we're about to
propose. We have heard a few issues for the
narrower siding and maybe they're not aware of
it, but we can do a narrower profile for the
siding, just keeping consistency for the style of what we're looking for. What we are looking for is to take something that is obviously not historic, the aluminum siding, and make it more appropriate.

When walking around the area, most of the buildings in this area are a masonry finish. There is not a whole lot of sided buildings. You actually have to walk several blocks in order to find any type of siding that faces the street. I was able to find at least three within three blocks of this property. It did have Hardie siding on the front side. Now whether that was put on without approval or not, I can't say, but it does exist and unless somebody is walking by it, and they are up close to it, from a 30-foot distance, it is very difficult to tell the difference between a wood side and a Hardie siding when it's done, especially when you use a smooth product that is there which is again what we are proposing for this.

Can we get the next slide?
MR. HANDVERGER: Thank you for allowing me to speak as well. I'm Matt Handverger, the home owner. The whole project came to be when I noticed some of the trim around my windows were showing signs of rot. The previous owner put in new windows on the alley side and the front and there's very little evidence that they used flashing and I thought it was time to replace them and I know there are signs of wear on the aluminum siding and I wanted to replace that as well. If I was going to do one, I might as well do both and I wanted to use something that was more sustainable like fiber cement board which Greg can go into a little more on the next slide.

MR. DEIMLER: So one of the benefits of using the fiber cement, most of the old growth trees that were used when the wood siding was put in, it's not available any more. So we have new growth wood that is being used and it's secondary growth and it does not last nearly as long. In fact, if you take a look at the wood siding that
is already at the back of this property, in the back addition that was put back there, it's only about maybe 20 years old and already needs to be replaced. The primary reason for that is the wood that we get today is not nearly as durable and sustainable and long-term wearable as what the old growth was.

So one of the reasons that fiber cement came out is to allow you to keep it there for a much longer period of time and not have to rip it off when you redo it. It allows for painting. It allows you to do everything you would do with wood, but with a much more sustainable material.

It provides protection from rot so you don't have that issue. It does not warp and do all kinds of bad things that wood will do, especially when it's second growth wood and not old growth wood. It's not going to split and crack and deteriorate over time like wood will. So it allows for while you may have a 30-year warranty on it, it actually will last much longer
than that. As long as it is maintained like any other product, if it's maintained, it will go much, much longer than 30 years as they have said for a non-prorated warranty. I mean they're guaranteeing it for all 30 years. You're never going to get that from wood. You'll never get any type of warranty like that from a piece of wood.

Next slide.

MR. HANDVERGER: In regards to the addition, it's actually less than 15 years old and the wood is buckling and just showing -- you can touch it and will move.

But in terms of the project, there's community support for it. When I was notifying all of the neighbors, they all signed a letter saying that they would be happy that I would replace the aluminum and they are completely fine with this material. I also have a letter of support from the ANC and I believe that it is consistent with the Historic Preservation requirements.
And finally, the Capitol Hill Restoration Society. It is important to recognize that old growth building materials are no longer available and that in many instances modern materials should be employed. And I certainly believe that if we want to preserve this building, if possible, we use a modern material like Hardie plank which lasts, as Craig was saying, 30 to even a 100 years.

Next slide.

MR. DEIMLER: So one of the things to consider in all of this is what is there is not historic, even as it stands. It's aluminum siding. It's been there since roughly 1986 and could remain there if it wanted to because it already exists. What we're proposing is to actually enhance the overall look of the area by taking that ugly aluminum siding off and putting on something much more appropriate.

As you can see, the staff report asserts that Hardie does not have any irregularities such as wood graining. They do
have the option as wood grain would -- it does have the option to do smooth or a wood grain type finish embossing called cedar mill. We're proposing smooth because painted siding would be smooth. It would not have that wood grain effect and it would give you the ultimate look that you're looking for without all these irregularities, irregularities with new growth wood.

Next slide.

MR. HANDVERGER: Thanks, Craig. We've covered how wood siding today isn't really as strong as it was even 50 years ago, but when I purchased the house, I knew there was aluminum siding. I knew there was very little maintenance that went into it, but if I'm forced to, you know, when I replace the siding with something like wood and have to paint it every 5 to 7 years and seal it every 5 to 7 years, and then replace it every 10 to 15 years because the wood from yield today is no longer -- is not as strong and so it's creating an undue burden that I am doing
just to create the effect of historic preservation.

Moreover, it's just not sustainable if we want to preserve the earth, cutting down trees to fulfill the dream of everyone is living in the 1850s doesn't really make sense at all, right?

Next slide.

We've found some examples. Even one on the street across that has fiber cement and I didn't know it was. Craig worked every single day, so he could spot it. But I don't think the average person who's enjoying the neighborhood would be able to spot fiber cement board, but they could certainly spot old aluminum siding.

MS. DAVIS: Thank you all so much for your time.

CHAIR HEATH: Thank you. So does the Board have any questions?

MEMBER HORSEY: I have a question for Moira about when you run into this issue with other projects, what has typically been the resolution?
MS. NADAL: So this is a question that I get I wouldn't say often, but I also wouldn't say infrequently. And so I have spent time looking into it. I have one applicant do a survey of the neighborhood similar to this, but at a more comprehensive scale to look for if we've been approving it or not, sort of to fact check me. And it seems that we've been pretty consistent. I know off the top of my head I thought at least one of the three images being shown is actually an on-going enforcement case, the Hardie wood was put in in error and they have applied for a permit which has been approved to replace it with a more compatible material.

So generally, what we do is people will do an exploratory demo to see what's underneath it. More times than not, the historical siding has been covered over, sometimes for multiple layers and that gives us a good idea. I don't always require that people do the exploratory demo. It helps to give a more detailed idea of the profile, but I try to be
relatively flexible, as long as people are willing to propose wood since I know that's some of the profiles and styles of historic wood siding that we find in Capitol Hill are very difficult to source today. So instead of asking people to have their fronts custom fabricated or milled, I try to find some flexibility where we can as long as it's wood.

Does that answer your question, Outerbridge?

MEMBER HORSEY: Well, I mean honing in a little bit, so do they usually put wood up?

MS. NADAL: Yes, they usually put wood up. And I have said to people here's my answer and to appeal that you apply to HPRB and this is the first time someone has or under the invitation before.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right. And I was going to ask the applicant just what you said. Have you looked under the aluminum siding to see what's there, if anything?

MR. HANDVERGER: Yes, sir. We
actually took some of the aluminum siding off a few months ago when I had insulation installed in the house and there is just plywood from the 1980s.

MEMBER HORSEY: Got it. Okay.

MS. NADAL: So this is also a more unique case in which there isn't historic material that they found existing underneath. I thought it would be an interesting question for the board.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right, and I did notice -- I visited the site and I did notice that there is wood siding on the back wing, but you say that's not very old, it's what, it's 15 years old?

MR. HANDVERGER: Yes, the addition was done in 2007, I believe. And you can slide your fingers under the clapboard because it's just warping so much.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right. Well, I don't think we should consider that as typical installation or ideal installation. I think wood
siding, I mean certainly can be installed properly. I think your point that it's not old growth wood, but it's wood and if it's maintained, it should last.

I don't have any other questions at this point.

CHAIR HEATH: Do any other board members have questions? All right. We do have Beth Purcell from Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee registered to speak.

Is Ms. Purcell on the line?

MS. PURCELL: Hi, good afternoon, board members. My name is Beth Purcell. I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee.

We agree that in some instances the use of Hardie plank siding might be problematic. A typical wood lap, cedar siding with a nominal dimension of one half inches by six inches has an actual dimension of about 3/8ths inches by 5 and
a half inches which is nearly identical to Hardie plank siding.

We do not oppose the use of modern, durable materials that closely replicate original materials. We agree that it's important to recognize that old growth building materials are no longer available and that in many instances modern materials should be employed.

The Board has made similar decisions concerning windows such as Fibrex.

The guidelines recommend removal of non-original wall coverings to determine the condition and design of the original wall. It seemed to us that for a semi-detached building, somewhere there must be some original siding underneath the aluminum and possibly the plywood and for this reason, we urge the applicant to conduct an original research on this.

We think that every effort should be made to document and replicate the original design. As far as the replacement siding at a minimum, we think the exposure dimension of the
lap siding should replicate the original or those typical of Italianate cottages from this part of the 19th century.

We think that the proposed seven inch Hardie plank will leave a five to five and a half inch exposure with the lap siding which may be perhaps a bit too much for an Italianate cottage of this time period. So we agree with the staff report on this point.

We believe that this project may be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District. We would really like to see more research on the original siding which we hope is underneath there somewhere.

And so we thank you for considering our comments.

CHAIR HEATH: Thank you. The applicant mentioned having some discovery under the aluminum. Can you talk about how expensive that work was?

MR. HANDVERGER: Yes, absolutely. So when I had the insulation installed, they took
off parts of the aluminum siding and the little bit of -- their waterproofing for the actual plywood and then drove into the house and it's just this Sunday. There's nothing behind the plywood. There was a fire, supposedly, in the '80s which is why they replaced all the siding and modernized all the inside as well. So that's why I think it was all just destroyed.

CHAIR HEATH: Okay.

MR. HANDVERGER: And with respect to the Restoration Society, Craig and I have worked, we're in agreement that we're more than happy to change the reveal if that will facilitate approval in this application.

CHAIR HEATH: Thank you.

MR. DEIMLER: Most people don't know this, but Hardie actually has different profiles. Most people think about the '70s profiles because that first encouraged this 15, but if you go to the Dream Colors, I can do a 4, 5, 6, or 7-inch reveal which allows 740 available colors then, too.
CHAIR HEATH: Okay. Are there other questions from the Board?

MR. HANDVERGER: Well, I have a question.

CHAIR HEATH: Go ahead, Outerbridge.

MEMBER HORSEY: Either from Ms. Purcell or Moira or the applicant. Is there any reason to question why the size of the siding that's there now isn't the appropriate size that should be used?

CHAIR HEATH: I wasn't questioning if it was the appropriate size.

MEMBER HORSEY: Let me put it another way. Wouldn't it be appropriate for this siding, seems appropriate to me, but --

MS. NADAL: Seems appropriate to me and I am aware that Hardie comes in different sizes and dimensions of reveal. I've seen that when we're doing that at the rear of the property. Some people have done different effects using different sizes of Hardie. I think the question for me is more about if Hardie or
other type of cement products are compatible for
the street-facing elevations at all and then we
get to build on a little bit into the details
about the reveal.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right, right. And I
agree with that. But I must have missed it, but
is the proposal to replace it with a different
exposure siding?

MS. NADAL: Yes.

MEMBER HORSEY: Okay. All right. Two
issues, what's the exposure and what's the
material?

MS. NADAL: Yes, and so I addressed
the exposure in my staff report in an attempt to
say if we don't have original material, if there
was a fire in the '80s, there's plywood
everywhere. We don't have the original
materials. Do we still have the ability to make
an educated guess of what would have been there
historically? I felt comfortable doing that.
Maybe not to prescribe a specific profile or
style, but to make guesses about material and
relative guesses to reveal if that helps to
clarify my staff report.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right. So you agree
that the reveal that's there with exposure --

MS. NADAL: It has to meet --

MEMBER HORSEY: Is there. I mean
that's what should come back.

MS. NADAL: Yes, that we're pretty
close to that and I think we would feel a
difference if they were to remove the non-
operable shutters which are not under my purview
and then this house, I would guess, probably had
two over two windows and then you'll really start
to really feel how fine that house used to be.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right, right. I mean
I don't know why -- why wouldn't they have reused
the same size siding as was there before, but who
knows.

MS. NADAL: I've seen that sometimes
with windows. It depends on availability, right?
I think we have more products available to us now
off the shelf than at previous periods, so I've
seen a lot of instances where people wanted to do something that looked historic and put in a six over six window because it was one of the only window products they could find if they couldn't get four over four or two over two. So I don't know, but sometimes that comes up.

    MEMBER HORSEY: Right. And Ms. Purcell, do you think that this is the appropriate size siding?

    MS. PURCELL: Well, I think it is the appropriate size. I guess our concern was doing everything possible just to figure out what the original siding looked like.

    MEMBER HORSEY: Right.

    MS. PURCELL: And we just felt -- it has not been proven that the entire house was so burned that there was nothing left to look at for basically a semi-detached house.

    MEMBER HORSEY: Right, got it. Thank you.

    And one problem with Hardie, even the Artisan, is that the reveal, what I call the
reveal which is the projection, the thickness of the siding as opposed to the exposure which is how much of the siding you see vertically.

In Hardie plank, even the Artisan version which is their deluxe version as it were, really it's significantly thinner. This looks like it's about 3/8ths as I recall and there's, even the Artisan I think is a quarter and may be slightly more than a quarter and the non-Artisan, the regular siding is less. And so you get a very flat, you don't get that shadow line that you get with this aluminum siding and also the wood siding which has about a 3/8ths inch reveal.

Anyway, okay, that's all I've got for now. Thank you.

MR. HANDVERGER: We also, my wife and reached out to the Library of Congress and other house historians even prior to us wanting to replace the siding and just due to the pandemic, their staffing was so low and no one got back to us and that's multiple emails. So it's not like we have not attempted to do research.
CHAIR HEATH: Sure. In addition to the letter that we received from Ms. Purcell at Capitol Hill Restoration Society, we also received the ANC's letter of support finding that the concept and the materials were compatible.

They did indicate in their letter that they would appreciate having the Board address the use of fiber cement. They asked that we consider this as something we might add to guidelines, but I think they're looking for some clarity from the Board on the use of fiber cement.

And then we also have a petition letter of support from nine neighbors.

MS. DAVIS: Something that we would like to address, just as the application team, is that in our community support, the ANC did make a note that they believe that in this unique situation, fiber cement siding on a primary elevation is appropriate.

We understand the hesitancy of HRB to make this a precedent and we would ask that you
note the fact that the old siding is not there.

There is not historic siding on the building now
and we are making a good-faith effort to improve
what is there.

And I know that there are cases that
are kind of seen as stand alone and we would ask
that you would consider it in that manner versus
staying a precedent of putting fiber cement
board. Because they do understand that this
property, as well as this application not having
the old siding available for us to look at, this
is a more unique situation and there are
obviously cases where the original siding is
there which is just a little bit different from
what we have going on here.

MEMBER PFAEHLER: I didn't know that
that's substantially different with the projects
that we've had in the Capitol Hill Historic
District, so speaking personally as a property
owner of a property in the Capitol Hill Historic
District, my property when I purchased it, was
probably stucco in a wire mesh and insulation as
well and I acquired the property with an exposure that's appropriate for the period of my own home in Northeast, not Southeast. But I do know from Moira's staff that has been an issue.

    MS. NADAL: And I just want to chime in and say although you may choose to keep it this case as a stand alone, for me as HPO staff, if you feel that my guidance to applicants against fiber cement boarding is contrary to what the Board finds compatible, to please elaborate more broadly if you'd like to. It would be helpful to me.

    CHAIR HEATH: Okay. Is the Board ready to deliberate?

    MEMBER HORSEY: Okay, so this is just general information. There's another material called Boral made by TruEx which is often substituted for one by trim, one by wood trim. It's better than PVC. Doesn't move as much. Contractors seem to like it. I don't know a lot about it. I see that it is available in trim. I don't know how customized you can get the trim.
I think if you can find the material -- if Hardie plank made something that had a 3/8th inch reveal, I would feel a lot more comfortable about it than I do now which is the quarter inch reveal and I don't know if Boral TruEx has that option. They have various types of siding. So maybe some other materials like that.

MEMBER PFAEHLER: Or maybe continuing with the sustainability maybe you go to Community Forklift and they have this siding with this kind of reveal from other properties that have been either lost or abated.

MEMBER HORSEY: That's possible. I mean obviously, you can upgrade the wood, but that adds cost. Although I don't know -- Hardie plank is not cheap and neither -- I don't think Boral is either.

MEMBER PFAEHLER: Hardie plank additional weight to it than some of the wood material, too.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right, right.
MEMBER PFAEHLER: There are some trade-offs along with that, but if you're purchasing a property in the Capitol Hill Historic District and this kind of detailing is similar to the detailing that I'm sure you're familiar with in Georgetown that's important to the character of the neighborhood and this is a fairly unique property within the Historic District as well.

MEMBER HORSEY: Right.

CHAIR HEATH: Well, that's appropriate so you're not getting ahead of yourself. I think we are ready to deliberate, so is there anything you want to expand on with that thought, Gretchen?

MEMBER PFAEHLER: So I think that the exposure and the dimensions of the siding are important as an attribute to the definition of the character of this residential style and I wouldn't be adverse to an alternate material if they could duplicate that exposure, but it sounds like that's just not possible and so I think there are a number of resources that are
available for them to be able to find old growth
since they're concerned about new growth wood or
look for a species of new growth that has the
density and the durability that's required, they
exist out there. I have it on my own home, so I
think there's the possibility to do that.

CHAIR HEATH: Okay. So to be clear
with our decision, are we in agreement that
Hardie fiber cement board is not compatible for
siding elevation and agreement with the staff
report?

MEMBER HORSEY: I am.

CHAIR HEATH: I agree with the staff
report.

MEMBER HORSEY: And I think the side
elevation because it's on an alley is fairly
prominent and the house is a big house. It's a
handsome house, an unusual house in that way. So
I think the side elevation has to follow, too.

MEMBER JOWERS-BARBER: I am in
agreement with the staff's report as well.

CHAIR HEATH: Does anybody have a
different viewpoint or other thoughts?

    All right, then I will make a motion
that we support the staff report, Moira
indicating that we are agreeing with your
assessment and that we don't see this as a unique
condition that should be -- need an exception.

    MEMBER JOWERS-BARBER:  I second.

    CHAIR HEATH: Okay. All right. Any
further discussion?

    Did you have a question, Moira? Or is
that all clear for you?

    MS. NADAL:  I did have a question, but
-- for the small, rear addition that's 15 years
old, how does the Board feel about Hardie there?

    CHAIR HEATH:  I would be in support of
that, just for the one story.

    MS. NADAL:  Yes, with the little shed
roof.

    CHAIR HEATH:  Yes, I would be in
support of that. That's what your staff report
indicated that you would be in support so that
being Hardie as well.
MS. NADAL: It's in line with past approvals of mine. I just thought of it while Outerbridge brought up the side secondary elevation. I just wanted to make sure I was clear in terms of also how I'm guiding other applicants.

MEMBER HORSEY: I think it should be the Artisan siding though, don't use Hardie. It's just slightly thicker.

MS. NADAL: Okay.

MR. HANDVERGER: I have a question for the Board then.

CHAIR HEATH: We don't take questions from the applicant or anybody in the virtual audience once we get to deliberations, but you'll be able to work with staff following the hearing. Outerbridge, were you saying something else?

MEMBER HORSEY: No, I was just saying that if they use Hardie on the rear addition, they should use the quarter inch Artisan version of Hardie.
CHAIR HEATH: Okay.

MEMBER HORSEY: Not the standard version.

CHAIR HEATH: Okay. That makes sense.

Any further discussion?

All those in favor of the motion signify by saying aye.

(Chorus of ayes.)

CHAIR HEATH: Anyone opposed? All right. So the motion carries and we've reached the end of our day.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 1:52 p.m.)
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30-foot 6:16
30-year 8:21

4

4 19:20
4th 1:6 2:11

5

5 11:18,19 16:22 19:20
50 11:13
528 1:6 2:11

6

6 19:20

7

7 11:18,19
7-inch 19:20
70s 19:18
740 19:21

8

80s 19:6 21:16

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: 528 4th STREET SE

Before: DC HPRB

Date: 03-03-22

Place: teleconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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Court Reporter