



CITY COUNCIL

Evidentiary Hearing

**HARB Appeal Hearing
733 Madison Avenue
Monday, October 6, 2014
5 pm
Council Chambers**

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

1. The proposed installation of the wall mounted light fixture and the white vinyl replacement window at the first floor front façade, the installation of decorative wood trim and painting of the decking at the first floor front porch, and installation of fluted and flat wood trim at the first floor front porch columns, as completed.

And the HARB determination of the following (which includes the added extra issue about the K-gutter):

2. The removal of all decorative wood trim as installed at the first floor front porch and the fluted and flat wood trim applied to the first floor front porch columns in order to return the configuration of the porch to its original condition and the columns to their original proportions as exists at the first floor front porch located at 731 Madison Avenue.
3. The replacement of the installed white vinyl double hung windows at the first floor front façade window opening with a single wood double hung window in order to return the window to its original configuration and material.
4. The repainting of the first floor front porch decking in an epoxy paint to be gray in color and not to include any embellishment.
5. The K-gutter installed at the first floor front porch roofline is to be replaced with a half-round gutter and all downspouts are to be 3" round in configuration to match the round downspouts on the upper floors of the building.

I. Testimony from Applicant (No more than 10 minutes)

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 October 27th Regular Meeting of Council.

VII. Adjourn

Report

Name:	VARGAS JOSE
Mailing Address:	733 MADISON AVE READING PA 19601
Site Address:	733 MADISON AV
Municipality:	CITY OF READING
Deed or Instrument Number:	4739 0590
Deed Date:	20051223
Deed Amount:	000030000
Deed 2:	
Deed 3:	

Plan:	
Lot No.:	
Parcel ID or Property ID:	14530759746434
Account:	14478050
Label Point:	14478050
Map PIN:	530759746434
Assessed Acres:	0.03
Market Land Value:	9000
Assessed Land Value:	9000
Building Value:	31200
Total Assessed Value:	40200
Homestead Status:	ACCEPTED: EFFECTIVE 07/01/2008

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**READING HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA
July 15, 2014**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The monthly meeting of the Reading Historical Architectural Review Board was held on Tuesday, July 215, 2014 in the Penn Room, Reading City Hall, Reading, PA. At 7:00 PM, Mr. Booth called the meeting to order. Mr. Booth asked if there were any conflicts of interest and Mr. Hart had a conflict with item #1 and Item #9.

A. Roll Call:

Members present: Aaron Booth, Peter Hart, Cynthia LaSota, Allen Webster and Erin Weller.

Visitors present:

Alena Miladinov, 544 N. 5th St.
Ruben Bracero, 732 Madison Ave.
Barry Kostival, 1215 Eckert Ave.
Jose Vargas, 733 Madison Ave.

Press present: Carole Duran, Reading Eagle

Staff present: Amy W. Johnson

B. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the prior meetings were not available for review.

II. HEARING OF APPLICATIONS:

ITEM #5 - RESOLUTION #50-14 – It is proposed to paint the masonry façade yellow and trim in the colors green and white at the front façade (violation) at 733 Madison Ave., Reading, PA.

AND RESOLUTION #51-14 - It is proposed to install a wall mounted light fixture and a white vinyl replacement window at the first floor front façade, install decorative wood trim and paint the

decking at the first floor front porch, and install fluted and flat wood trim at the first floor front porch columns (violation) at 733 Madison Ave., Reading, PA.

Property Owner: Jose Vargas

Owner's Address: 733 Madison Avenue, Reading, PA 19601

Applicant: Jose Vargas

Applicant's Address: Same

Building description, period, style, defining features:

This 2-1/2-story row home is located in the Centre Park Historic District. Built in the Queen Anne style, the structure features a painted brick façade, a dormer at the second floor roof line with original wood decorative verge boards, the original front entrance door, and a simple wood square columned porch structure which has been compromised with the installation of a wrought iron railing and additionally compromised with the recent work that has been undertaken by the owner.

Composite Index Rating: 74

Proposed alterations: It is proposed to paint exterior surfaces, install a wall mounted light fixture and a white vinyl replacement window at the first floor front façade, install decorative wood trim and paint the decking at the first floor front porch, and install fluted and flat wood trim at the first floor front porch columns. The above work has been completed prior to review by the HARB and therefore is in violation of the Historic District Ordinance.

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 compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Discussion: Ms. Johnson summarized the proposed work explaining that she had received a complaint that work was being undertaken at the property and upon investigation; she determined that the majority of the proposed work had been completed by the owner prior to receiving approval by the Historic Preservation Specialist or the HARB and without obtaining a building permit. The discussion focused on the painting of exterior surfaces, the replacement of the first floor front window and the application of decorative trim to the first floor front porch. Ms. Johnson presented a photo of the adjacent property at 731 Madison Avenue in order to show what the original porch structure looked like and presented photos of other homes in the block.

Regarding the painting of exterior surfaces, the Board felt that the painting of the exterior of the home was done well and the colors were appropriate.

Regarding the first floor front window, Ms. Johnson explained that the original window was a double hung wood window that matched the still extant wood window located at 731 Madison Avenue. Ms. Johnson noted that the last time this property was reviewed was in 1999 at which time a previous owner had wanted to repair the existing double hung wood window. Ms. Johnson explained that the owner has installed two double hung white vinyl windows, installed on their side, and has added a decorative piece of trim in order completely fill the original window opening which is not an appropriate treatment. Regarding the light fixture, Ms. Johnson explained that the original colonial style light fixture has been replaced with a larger light fixture but has been installed so that the glass globe points upward like a torch. Mr. Vargas presented the Board with the original light fixture. Ms. Johnson explained that a significant amount of decorative wood trim has been applied to the first floor front porch.

Mr. Hart inquired as to what the original porch posts looked like. Ms. Johnson replied that the original porch columns were flat square columns as exist at the first floor front porch at 731 Madison Avenue and that the owner applied fluted wood trim to the exterior of the column. The Board felt that the fluted wood trim, wood brackets, and decorative trim installed at the first floor front porch significantly altered the historical integrity of the original porch structure and should be removed in order to restore the porch structure to its original design. Mr. Vargas noted that other homes across the street have fluted columns and therefore the reason he decided to install fluted wood trim on the outside of the columns at his property. The Board explained that the other homes in the block were designed with different details and the alterations he made are not appropriate. The Board further explained to the owner that he should have obtained a building permit prior to doing the work which would have allowed him to work through the HARB process before the work was completed.

Regarding the painting of the first floor front porch decking, Ms. Johnson explained that on her initial visit the owner had only applied primer to the porch floor. Ms. Johnson stated that she informed the owner that he must not paint the porch floor until he had submitted paint color samples and upon her second visit she found that the owner had applied epoxy paint with a speckled finish to the porch floor. The Board felt that the speckled paint finish was not appropriate and noted that the only paint that will cover the applied epoxy paint is epoxy paint. The Board recommended that epoxy paint in the color gray, without the speckled finish, be applied to the first floor front porch decking to cover the existing inappropriate finish.

Regarding the installed first floor front window, the Board noted that the decorative trim installed at the top of the window and the meeting rail running vertically through the center of the window is not original to the building and alters the integrity of the original window design. Mr. Webster noted that the left side of the window is thicker than the right side, further demonstrating that the windows are not installed properly. Ms. Johnson noted that the Board has previously approved the installation of two double hung windows in a window opening but stated that she feels the original window opening at this property would not be large enough to install two double hung windows in the proper manner. Ms. Johnson inquired as to why the owner replaced the original window. Mr. Vargas replied that the original window was broken when the home had a problem with the furnace and the Fire Department broke the window in order to ventilate the home.

Regarding the installed light fixture, Mr. Hart explained to the owner that improperly installing the fixture will decrease the life of the fixture. Mr. Hart stated that he felt the installed light fixture would be appropriate if it was turned 180 degrees so that the fixture is properly installed. Mr. Webster stated that he was unsure as to whether there would have originally been a porch light on the structure. Mr. Booth noted that the neighboring properties have ceiling lights and not a porch light next to the entrance door. Ms. Johnson noted that there was a porch light there originally. Mr. Booth stated that the light fixture has an Arts and Crafts style to it and is not necessarily out of character for a Victorian style home. The Board concurred and felt that if the installed light fixture was turned 180 degrees, so that the globe faces downward, it would be appropriate.

Mr. Webster noted that the K-gutter installed at the front porch roof is inappropriate and recommended that the gutter be replaced with a half-round gutter. The Board concurred and Mr. Hart added that all of the downspouts should be 3" round in configuration to match the top half of the building.

Because the Board felt the painting of exterior surfaces as undertaken by the owner of the property was appropriate but the other alterations made to the front façade were not appropriate and compromised the historical integrity of the structure, the Board approved and denied a COA for the proposed work in two motions as stated below.

RESOLUTION #50-14 - Motion: The Historical Architectural Review Board upon motion by Mr. Hart and seconded by Mr. Webster adopted the proposal to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein:

1. The proposal to paint the masonry façade yellow and to paint trim in the colors green and white at the front façade (violation) at 733 Madison Ave. was presented by Jose Vargas.
2. The HARB approves the painting of exterior surfaces at the front façade in the colors and location as described above, as completed.

The above work was unanimously approved.

RESOLUTION #51-14 - Motion: The Historical Architectural Review Board upon motion by Mr. Hart and seconded by Mr. Webster adopted the proposal to DENY a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein:

1. The proposal to install a wall mounted light fixture and a white vinyl replacement window at the first floor front façade, install decorative wood trim and paint the decking at the first floor front porch, and install fluted and flat wood trim at the first floor front porch columns (violation) at 733 Madison Ave. was presented by Jose Vargas .
2. The proposed installation of the wall mounted light fixture and the white vinyl replacement window at the first floor front façade, the installation of decorative wood trim and painting of the decking at the first floor front porch, and installation of fluted and flat wood trim at the first floor front porch columns, as completed was DENIED (based on the Secretary of the Interior Standards #9).

In order to rectify the items in violation and restore the historical integrity of the structure, the Board ISSUES a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following:

3. The removal of all decorative wood trim as installed at the first floor front porch and the fluted and flat wood trim applied to the first floor front porch columns in order to return the configuration of the porch to its original condition and the columns to their original proportions as exists at the first floor front porch located at 731 Madison Avenue.
4. The replacement of the installed white vinyl double hung windows at the first floor front façade window opening with a single wood double hung window in order to return the window to its original configuration and material.
5. The repainting of the first floor front porch decking in an epoxy paint to be gray in color and not to include any embellishment.
6. The installed wall mounted light fixture at the first floor front façade is to be turned 180 degrees so that the globe of the light is facing downward.
7. The K-gutter installed at the first floor front porch roofline is to be replaced with a half-round gutter and all downspouts are to be 3" round in configuration to match the round downspouts on the upper floors of the building.

The above work as stated in numbers 1. and 2. was unanimously denied and modifications were unanimously approved as stated in numbers 3. through 7.

Name:	VARGAS JOSE
Mailing Address:	733 MADISON AVE READING PA 19601
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Municipality:	CITY OF READING
Deed or Instrument Number:	4739 0590
Deed Date:	20051223
Deed Amount:	000030000
Deed 2:	
Deed 3:	
Plan:	
Lot No.:	
Parcel ID or Property ID:	14530759746434
Account:	14478050
Label Point:	14478050
Map PIN:	530759746434
Assessed Acres:	0.03
Market Land Value:	9000
Assessed Land Value:	9000
Building Value:	31200
Total Assessed Value:	40200