



402 LEE STREET  
DECATUR, ALABAMA 35601  
May 9, 2024

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Council Chambers

Architectural Review Board

4:00 PM

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**I CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**II APPROVAL OF MINUTES: APRIL 11, 2023 (no ARB meeting in February or March)**

**III EXPEDITED CoAs SINCE THE APRIL MEETING:**

445 Jackson Street SE (Hammond) repair in-kind wood siding on garage (#4 for the CoA)

**IV HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS**

Wendell L. and Susanne M. Pritzel, 626 Grant Street  
First Baptist Church Decatur (Robin and Cecil Henderson), 123 Church Street  
First Baptist Church Decatur (Patrick Rasco), 123 Church Street  
Bill Nelson, Remax Platinum

**V NEW CoA REVIEWS:**

**CoA #1: 904 Line Street NE (Balbuenas)**

**Background:** This house is a circa 1868 house (originally Victorian in detailing) that underwent a significant remodel in the 1940s, transforming it to its current Neo-Classical revival design.

**Action Requested:** New wood front yard fence, front of house, then sides to tie into existing fences. Fence panels will be 3' tall, with posts that are 39" high. Pickets will be 1.5" wide, spaced 2" apart.

There are two proposed double gates, the front gate on Line Street, and a side gate on Church Street. Front gate will be approximately 6.25' while the gate on Church Street will be approximately 4.8".

**Decatur's Design Review Standards: 16.0 Fences and Walls**  
**16.5 New fences should be compatible with the associated building, site and streetscape in height, proportion, scale, material, and design.** Wood picket or metal fence materials are appropriate in front yards and side yards in public view. **16.6 Fences in front and side yards shall not exceed a height of three (3) feet.**

**Staff Assessment:** Fence appears to be consistent in design and location to the municipal design review guidelines and to other fences approved by the Architectural Review Board. The ARB should clarify what cap, or decorative cut will be placed on the fence posts. One is not shown in the drawings.

#### **CoA #2: 1018 Sherman Street NE (Stokes)**

**Background:** This 1958 Minimal Traditional house is located in the Albany historic district.

**Action Requested:** Rear master bath addition. Approximately 8' off the back of the house and 12' wide. Smooth hardie board siding, 8' exposure, to match existing wood siding on portions of the house. TPO flat roof, to match previous addition. Painted to match existing exterior paint color. Existing window will be reused, and one additional window will be added. Full data on new window not available when staff finished report. This will be given to the ARB at the time of the meeting.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards: 23.0 New Construction – Additions. 23.1 Construct new additions at the rear of a dwelling as to result in minimal impact to the façade of the building or adjacent properties. 23.2 The overall proportions of a new addition should be compatible with the existing building in height, scale, size, and massing so as not to overpower it visually. New addition should be compatible with the existing building in terms of materials, style, color, roof forms, massing proportion, and spacing of dormers and windows, details, surface texture, and location. 23.4 Additions should be constructed for possible future removal without damage to significant features.**

**Staff Assessment:** The addition is quite small, and is fully hidden behind the historic house. Hardie plank (smooth side exposed) has been approved for rear additions and new construction by the board. The addition appears to follow the standards the listed above.

### **CoA #3: 812 Johnston Street SE (Machado)**

**Background:** This house is located in the Albany District. Tax records indicate the house was constructed in 1941, but it may be a remodel of an earlier house that occurred in the 1940s. A stop work order was placed on the property in March after recent construction work was observed on the site. A new rear deck was constructed and a new storage shed was moved onto the property. There are two CoAs, the first for the newly constructed rear deck, the second for a new storage shed moved to the property.

**Action Requested:** Replace an existing non-historic deck with a larger deck, on the rear elevation.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards: 24.0 New Construction – Decks 24.1 Locate decks only on the rear ground level of historic buildings not visible from public view.** Their footprints should be recessed from the house's rear corners, to reduce their visual impact. **24.2 Design decks to eliminate physical or visual damage to significant historic architectural features. 24.3 Decks should be attached to the historic building so that they may be removed without significant damage. 24.5 Decks should be recessed from the side walls of the dwelling to help reduce their visibility.**

**Staff Assessment:** The new deck is larger than the existing deck that it replaced, but it is still set back from the rear elevation on both ends. Due to the deck's extension 15' off the back of the house, a portion of the western-most metal deck railing is visible from the street. The tall support posts for the railing are significantly higher than the railing and not something that the commission has reviewed/approved in the past. If the commission feels that the deck is sufficiently hidden at the rear of the house to allow these design elements, the discussion needs to be clearly addressed. If the commission feels that design adjustments need to be made, historically decks with wood railings and standard post height have been approved.

### **CoA #4: 812 Johnston Street SE (Machado)**

**Background:** See CoA #3, above.

**Action Requested:** Add a storage shed along street view in side yard.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards: 22.0 New Construction – Outbuildings. 22. 1 The design of new outbuildings should be compatible with the associated dwelling in architectural style and scale. 22.2 Site new outbuildings on the lot appropriately.** Locate new outbuildings to the rear of a dwelling or set back from side elevations. Attached garages and accessory buildings should be set back from the front façade of the primary dwelling at least one-half of the total depth of the dwelling. **13.0 Roofing 13.6 Metal standing seam, copper, copper-plated steel or patterned metal roofs are typically not appropriate for dwellings built after 1915 unless documentation for their original application exists.** The application of modern factory- finished metal roofing

systems is typically inappropriate, but may be considered where pan-width, ridge details, seam profile and eave details are consistent with traditional metal roof designs. The use of “V-crimped” or corrugated metal roofing is not appropriate for primary dwellings but may be considered for outbuildings not readily visible from the public right-of-way. Installing a copper or copper-plated steel roof on a building that never had copper originally is not appropriate.

**Staff Assessment:** The board has consistently required that new outbuildings be placed out of public sight from the sidewalk, and if they are within public sight that they be screened and have an asphalt roof. The building is highly visible (it is almost 9’ tall on the front) and has a 5-V metal shed roof, a style of roof and type of roofing material that have not been approved within public sight lines within the district historically, per Design Review Guideline 13.6. In the past the commission has required asphalt shingle roofs and gable roofs on auxiliary buildings. The only identified exception was a shed roofed garage (in the alley) that matched the shed roof on the main house at 430 Sherman. In cases where the site did not allow an auxiliary building to be hidden behind the house, the commission has required evergreen landscaping (tightly packed tall Arborvitae) to shield the structure.

#### **CoA #5: 644 Johnston Street SE (Hughes)**

**Background:** House is located in the Albany district and was constructed circa 1908.

A stop work order was placed on the property in March when two large sheds were being moved onto the rear of the site without approval. New front replacement shutters and porch railing were added without a CoA as well.

**Action Requested:** Approval for two rear prefabricated sheds.

**Decatur’s Design Review Standards: 20.0 New Construction – Outbuildings 22.1 The design of new outbuildings should be compatible with the associated dwelling in architectural style and scale. 22.2 Site new outbuildings on the lot appropriately. Locate new outbuildings to the rear of a dwelling or set back from side elevations. 22.4 The outbuilding should maintain a proportional mass, size, and height to ensure it is not taller or wider than the principal building on the lot.**

**Staff Assessment:** The two sheds placed at the rear of the lot, and are not easily visible from the front. The board has typically approved auxiliary sheds that are not easily visible with minimal design requirements.

#### **CoA #6: 644 Johnston Street SE (Hughes)**

**Background:** See CoA #5.

**Action Requested:** New front porch railing, house did not have a porch railing at the time the current owners purchased it in 2007. Adding a railing is not required by code (house is grandfathered in not having a railing due to its age), but the property owner has requested one. The owner has requested turned posts, which are seen in higher styled porch designs.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards: 12.0 Porches 12.5 It is not appropriate to create a false historical appearance, such as adding Victorian ornament to a plain early twentieth century porch. 12.10 If a new porch railing is required, consider alternatives such as raising the grade in front of the porch or adding an additional railing above the traditional porch height.**

### Staff Assessment:

There are three distinct discussion points for this property, does it require a railing, how tall should the railing be, and what design should the railing be.

This house was grandfathered in and does not require a porch railing. For new construction, a porch railing is required if the top of the porch floor is 30" or more off the ground.

Railing Height: Historic porch railings were traditionally low, no higher than the top of the window sill. Because that height is lower than current code, the solution the commission has followed when a new or higher railing is requested is for the new railing to stop at the traditional low point, with an added booster rail above, providing a clear visual break between the historic railing height and one currently desired.



Example of an ARB required booster rail design to meet taller height requirements, 722 Ferry Street.

Design: This early 20<sup>th</sup> century house is a vernacular structure with few stylistic details. For other examples of this style, the board has required that railings be the traditional slender square posts, with no elaborate styling details.



Example of a simple railing design used when a house doesn't have a defined architectural style that requires strong stylistic matches.

**CoA #7: 644 Johnston Street SE (Hughes)**

**Background:** See CoA #5. House had under scaled non-operational shutters added by prior owners at an unknown point (possibly before the district was created).

**Action Requested:** Hinged shutters on the two ganged front windows.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards:** Design review standards address historic shutters and adding shutters when historically appropriate. 15.0 Window Shutters and Screens states that louvered shutters are appropriate. Paneled shutters are only appropriate with physical or photographic evidence.

**Staff Assessment:** There are two items to review with the shutters, if these windows historically would have had shutters, and if so what type of shutter.

Houses built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Decatur typically did not have shutters, particularly with windows that were ganged (two or more windows placed side by side). For shutters to be useful, they would have to be large enough to cover the entire window, since with two windows placed together, each window would have only one functional shutter on the outside.

Shutter style: The shutters currently on the house are board and batten shutters, a style that is not found in the district. The ARB has not approved similar shutters in prior CoA submittals.

## CoA #8: 650 Jackson Street SE (Shelton)

**Background:** Applicant submitted a CoA at April's meeting to remove an existing stained glass window unit on the front portion of the west elevation, and replacing with a contemporary multi-light steel unit. CoA was denied.

**Action Requested:** Applicant is proposing removal of the same window unit, but replacing with a custom designed window that utilizes the rhythm and materials (beveled leaded glass) seen in the historic windows on the front façade.

**Decatur's Design Review Standards:** 14.0 Windows. **14.1 Preserve and maintain historic windows and significant elements such as frames, sashes, shutters, hardware, glass, sills, trim, and moldings. 14.2 Maintain existing historic windows where possible.** Follow guidelines for wood or metal maintenance, as relevant. **14.3 Repair, rather than replace, existing historic windows where possible.** Wood epoxies and wood patches can be used to make spot repairs and strengthen deteriorated wood elements. Replacement may be warranted if 50% or more of the windows require significant repair. If a pick can penetrate more than halfway into the sash's rails then repair may not be possible. **14.4 Replace in-kind, using replacement windows that match the existing historic elements as closely as possible.** Attempt to replace only the deteriorated element, such as a single sash, rather than the entire frame. If an entire window is deteriorated, its replacement shall match the original in dimensions, materials, and detailing as closely as possible. Wood windows or alternative materials such as composite or aluminum-clad with a baked enamel finish may be approvable. Some modern windows do not accurately resemble historic windows and may not be approvable by the ARB. It is not appropriate to replace double-hung sash windows with sliding, single-hung, or fixed-light windows.

**Staff Assessment:** Historic stained glass windows are rare in our two historic districts and are considered character defining features for Victorian era homes when they exist. The municipal Design Review Guidelines address the importance of preserving the historic windows. The Board has historically required that character defining details, including historic windows, be retained, regardless of location. (14.2 and 14.3) There are very few historic stained glass windows in our historic districts.

14.1-14.3 address the guidelines for when window replacement is generally accepted, 14.4 addresses guidelines for the type/style of replacement to be considered if the board approves removal of the stairwell windows.