
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District: **Anacostia Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **1340 Maple View Place SE**

Meeting Date: **June 23, 2016**
Case Number: **16-439** (x) Alteration

Staff Reviewer: **Tim Dennée** (x) Permit

The applicant, property owner George Augustus Stallings, Jr., requests review of a permit application to construct a deck on the principal roof of this 1905 Queen-Anne-style detached, frame house. The project was underway when it received a stop-work order.

According to the records of the D.C. Recorder of Deeds, the property owner purchased the house in 1985.¹ The eave on the side of the house was extended and a deck built on top after 2005, when the aerial photograph below was taken.² The dormers were modified to take multi-light doors in order to facilitate access to the deck. A knee wall was constructed between the dormers. The records of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs show no permits issued for this type of work.³



Courtesy of HistoricAerials.com

¹ John E. and Geraldine D. Warren to George Stallings, Jr., July 12, 1985, recorded August 9, 1985 as Document No. 8500029246.

² The photo clearly shows the eave projection the same along the entire northwest side of the house.

³ Staff consulted three DCRA permit databases, that cover permits from the year 2002 to the present, and HPO's own database, which logs permit applications cleared as far back as 1988, but which is more comprehensive for the years 2001 to the present.



The 2009 Google Streetview photo above shows the deck beyond the tree. In January 2016, a historic preservation inspector issued a stop-work order after it had been reported that new work was in progress:



At the very least, the railing and decking were being replaced, and it appears that the roof had been modified by the addition of wing walls at the outside ends of the roof, to accept the railings and to direct water away from the dormers and deck.

It was clear that, although only a few years old, the deck construction had caused damage to the roof because of the failure of water to drain properly off the new surface (see photos below).



Aside from the physical alteration of the eave, the deck and its railing have the effect of obscuring view of the dormers, character-defining features of this house and this architectural style, original, albeit modified.

The permit application now proposes to swap the windows/doors in the dormers for Craftsman-style doors, which would stray farther from the original style and condition. It should be noted that the architectural drawings are inaccurate as to the height, roof pitch and details of the dormers, and do not represent the wing walls.

The proposed rail is very much a deck rail—widely-spaced, face-nailed, pressure-treated—suited to a rear-yard deck and not to a roof on a prominently visible side of a high-style house. Code-complaint deck rails are proportionally too tall to place prominently atop most historic houses; they are taller than historic porch balustrades, let alone roof balustrades.



The historic preservation design guidelines for roofs on historic buildings state that,

Altering roof shapes, materials, elements and details will affect their design. Thus, any alterations must be undertaken with extreme care to ensure that the character of the roof is retained. Before proceeding with any roof alteration the owner of a historic building should consult with the Historic Preservation Division....

Rarely is it appropriate to change the shape of an existing roof. To do so almost always drastically alters the character of a historic building. If, for compelling functional or economic reasons, the shape of the roof must be changed, it should be done in such a manner as to retain the historic character of the building....

Adding a deck to the roof of a historic building is very difficult without altering its character. Adding a deck will also affect the roof's drainage and structure. If a roof deck must be added, it should be located so it is not visible from the street. If this is not possible, the design of the portion of the deck visible from the street should be compatible with the proportion, scale, materials, color and other character-defining elements of the building.

Elsewhere, the guidelines say that decks are appropriate to *rear* yards.

The Board's technical brief to applicants for roof decks and roof additions includes the following pertinent guidance: "The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) generally requires that new roof decks not be visible from surrounding streets or public sidewalks so as not to alter the character or appearance of the building or its streetscape...."

Finally, in recognition of the specific characteristics of Anacostia—the fact that nearly all homes are two stories tall and detached,⁴ that many have highly pitched roofs, and that they have historically lacked decks on the principal roofs—the historic design guidelines for the historic district include this passage:

Roof additions and decks are not appropriate for the predominately two-story houses in the Anacostia Historic District. These types of additions would visibly alter the proportions, massing, and rooflines of the underlying historic building in a manner inconsistent with the character of the historic district and with the building's immediate context. Roof additions also frequently do significant harm to the physical fabric of the underlying building.

In short, there shall be no decks on principal roofs in Anacostia.

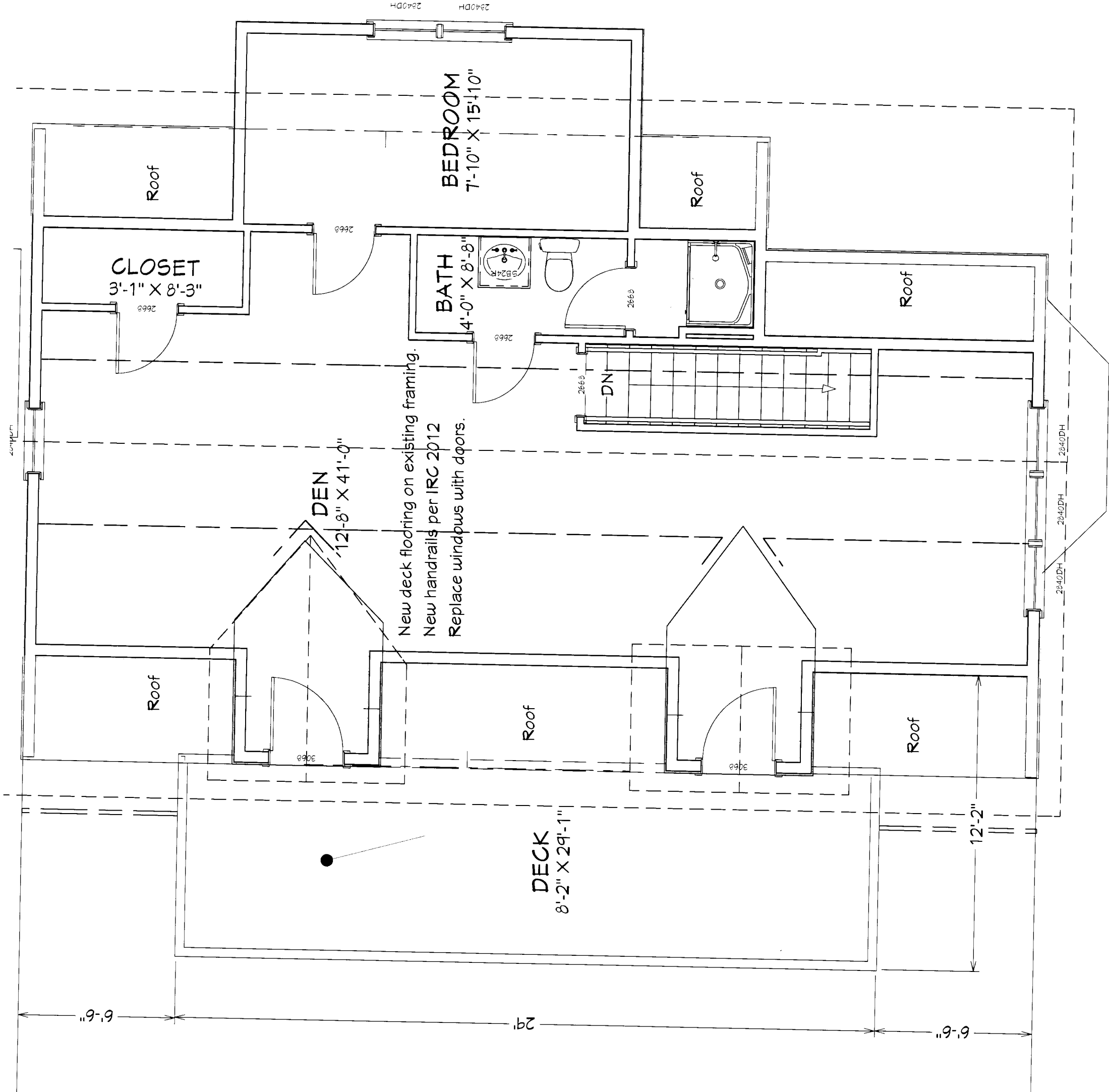
It will surely be claimed that there is an entitlement to the deck, it not having been previously challenged, either because it was obscured by trees or neighbors cared not report it. As it was never permitted or inspected, however, and it was erected during the tenure of the present owner, and it is being substantially reconstructed and further altered, it would be difficult to construe a vested right to this alteration.

The existence and character of the deck and its further alteration are incompatible with the character of the subject property and the historic district in general.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board recommend denial of a permit for the construction or reconstruction of the roof deck and alteration of the dormers as incompatible with the character of the property and the historic district and thus inconsistent with the purposes of the preservation law.

⁴ The fact that they are usually detached means both that decks would likely to be visible even on low-pitched roofs and that homes generally have sufficient outdoor space without adding roof decks. Thus are roof decks more associated with predominantly rowhouse neighborhoods with taller, and often deeper, nearly flat-roofed houses.



Third/Attic Level - Existing Layout

Scale: 1/4" = 1' - 0"

Replace windows with doors.

Remove and replace existing deck floor. Install new railing.



Left Side Elevation - Upper Level w/ Deck

scale: 1/4" = 1' - 0"

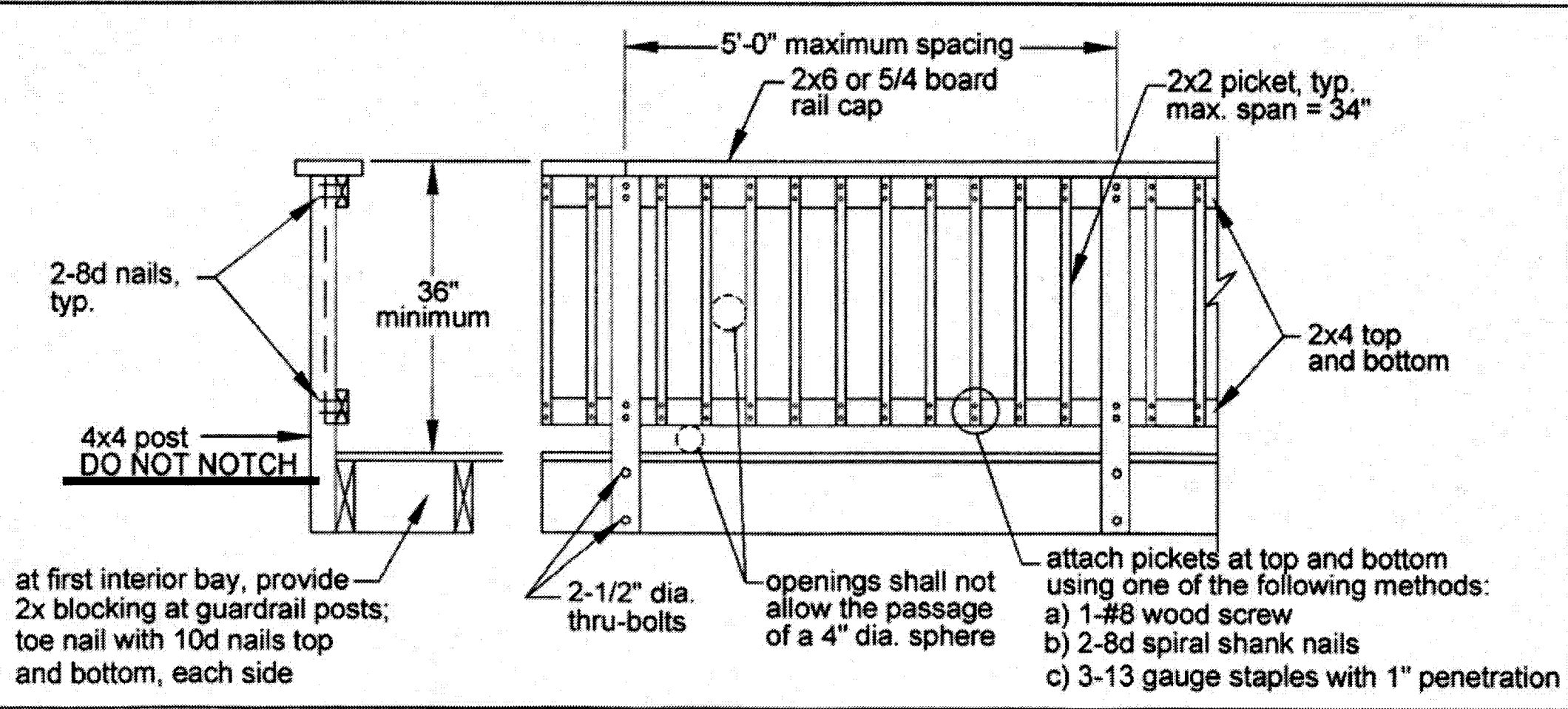


FIGURE 24: TYPICAL GUARDRAIL DETAIL