

Discussion regarding garage door selection

Although two of the items I am requesting ARB approval for are not likely to result in any controversy (the wood siding replacement and concrete driveway), it was brought to my attention by Jane Peuser, who is helping put together my application for ARB approval, that the ARB has recently taken a different approach to garage doors than was the previous precedent in Historic Dublin. I was told that the ARB has recently changed the definition of what constitutes an acceptable garage door, although I can't really find those changes specified in the city codes that Jane directed me to reference.

The door I am requesting has is a "stamped carriage long" style of overhead door by Clopay from the Gallery Collection. I was surprised to hear that this door selection would be at all problematic since the garage door I am asking to have approved has been previously approved and is of similar or identical construction to my next door neighbor's garage door (Dana McDaniel at 73 South Riverview), which was approved by the ARB (case 16-073ARB-MPR) and these same doors were previously approved at the property next to Dana's, 63 South Riverview (case 18-073ARB-MPR), which is also a National Register listed house.

The door I am requesting did not even previously require a waiver for approval as far I can tell, but now I'm being told that the current iteration of the ARB may not like this door for some reason. I have some very real concerns about what seems to have become a very restrictive policy regarding garage doors. I was sent a link by Jane to watch a discussion regarding garage doors, where the homeowner was required to switch doors from a stamped type door to a composite door, since it was stated that "this was what we've previously approved" and I heard some reference to "is there any painted metal on the door?". I think that this may not be the best approach in evaluating the appropriateness of a garage door and would outline some of the issues and my reasoning of why the door I selected should be approved.

Aesthetic issues:

Although some may like the appearance of the plastic composite overlay on a composite door, this is not an appearance that is universally preferred and I personally dislike the appearance of composite doors. I wouldn't judge those who like the composite door "faux wood" or "faux board" look, but to me, the composite doors have a kitschy-look and the stamped doors are much more elegant and stylistically appropriate for a historical area. It's not that I'm saying that composite doors shouldn't be allowed, but I think stamped metal doors should certainly be an option for those who dislike the look of composite overlays.

Weight issues:

Weight of Clopay Gallery 16X7 garage door (the door I specified): 203 lbs

Weight of Clopay Canyon Ridge composite door 16x7 door (a door the ARB has approved previously): 346 lbs

Composite doors are steel doors with the same construction as a stamped door, but with the addition of a composite overlay, typically plastic or a blend of plastic and saw dust, that approximately doubles the weight of the door.

This is an issue since our garage building was constructed circa 1950's and the garage doors are completely supported by 2x8 rafter ties spaced 4 to 6 feet apart (every second to third rafter has a tie). These rafter ties were never designed to support a nearly 400 pound garage door. The current door is approximately 150 to 200 lbs, as is the replacement I'm requesting. I don't really wish to have to add additional rafter ties or get an architectural engineer involved to simply replace a garage door, when there are better and lighter options in garage doors available.

Cost issues:

Cost Gallery: \$3418

Cost Coachman (typical composite door equivalent): \$7158

Although some may believe that cost should never be taken into account when making design decisions or establishing aesthetic codes for a historic area. Cost is obviously a significant issue to someone who actually owns a home and is obligated to pay for its upkeep and repair. Stylistic decisions rendered by the architectural review should definitely take into account whether any perceived benefit of restricting styles or building material outweighs the very real cost of these decisions to a homeowner to own and maintain a home in this district. Pricing people out of an area of the city due to arbitrary and expensive design restrictions does not seem right, especially when some of the historic homes in our area have been in the same family for generations.

Lack of clarity about the current code issues:

When specifying a garage door for approval, I was referred to the Dublin code. The current code states that garage doors should use similar features to windows. I was referred to code section 153.174(D)(1). The current code specifies that garage door should have the same composition as the approved window compositions. The code specifically states acceptable window composition to include wood, metal clad wood with vinyl clad wood (per 153.174(D)(1)). I selected a stamped door, which to me is "metal clad door". I feel this meets the current code as written. Obviously garage doors don't have wood cores as that applies only to windows (usually they have insulated polyurethane or similar cores), but the door I selected, seems to be the garage door equivalent.

Precedent for other historic areas:

It may be helpful to look at how other historic areas handle garage doors. It could be argued, that there isn't a more historically important area in the United than Old Alexandria Virginia.

This is the wording from Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review (BAR), which does review for the historic area of Alexandria, which was founded in 1749 with buildings date back to circa 1650. The section concerning garage doors states this as approved option for garage doors:

“Original side-hinged or slide sliding wood doors on historic garages must be repaired or replaced in the original material and style.

Garages constructed after 1931 may have overhead sectional doors and may use pressed (stamped) steel or composite material, provided they have a smooth finish.

Glazing on garage doors must be stylistically appropriate.”

*NOTE: Statement underlined by me for emphasis

Summary:

I’m not sure that my garage door selection will truly be that much of a sticking point in my application since I do think that it is a very high quality and attractive door that is stylistically appropriate for the historic district and has been approved and used multiple times in the district. I did, however, want to put this issue and my thoughts in writing in my application just in case it comes up for discussion.