A. CALL TO ORDER

1. The Chair, Steve Stone, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Christine Dawson, Historic Development Staff, called the roll as follows.

   Members Present: David Barr, Abby Davis, Catarina Echols, Kim Harden, Andre Rathle, Craig Roberts, Steve Stone, Gypsie Van Antwerp, and Jim Wagoner

   Members Absent: Joseph Rodrigues

   Staff Members Present: Bridget Daniel, Christine Dawson, Florence Kessler, and Marion McElroy

2. Adoption of the Agenda

   Mr. Wagoner moved that the Architectural Review Board find that all agenda items listed for the April 15, 2020 Architectural Review Board meeting be adopted as necessary for the performance of the ARB’s essential minimum functions. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harden and approved unanimously.

3. Mr. Roberts moved to approve the Minutes from the April 1, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wagoner and approved unanimously.

4. Mr. Roberts moved to approve the Mid-Month COAs Granted by Staff. The motion was seconded by Ms. Davis and approved unanimously.

B. MID-MONTH APPROVALS: APPROVED

1. Applicant: Paige Riggs
   a. Property Address: 1207 Selma Street
   b. Date of Approval: 03/25/2020
   c. Project: Construct one story wood shed back yard, to go on existing foundation. Pave apron and sidewalk at property.

2. Applicant: Lily Moye
   a. Property Address: 1410 Brown Street
   b. Date of Approval: 03/27/2020
   c. Project: Reroof main house with architectural shingles. Replace existing metal over rear porch with metal as per existing.

3. Applicant: Jimmy Jemison
   a. Property Address: 305 State Street
   b. Date of Approval: 03/27/2020
   c. Project: The four windows on the first floor west face of the house, and the back kitchen window will be replaced. The replacement windows will maintain the 6 over 6 grid pattern, window opening size, and be made of wood.

4. Applicant: Ronald Suggs
   a. Property Address: 354 Regina Avenue
   b. Date of Approval: 04/01/2020
   c. Project: Repair/replace rotten decking over porch, reroof to match; repair/replace rotten porch ceiling and tongue and groove boards as necessary to match existing.

5. Applicant: Alvin Holmes Whiddon
   a. Property Address: 557 Church Street
   b. Date of Approval: 04/06/2020
c. Project: Repair, replace rotten wood to match original in material, profile and dimension, repaint house and carriage house.

C. APPLICATIONS

1. 2020-23-CA: 51 S. Catherine Street
   a. Applicant: Mr. Don Williams, Agent, on behalf of Ms. Janet Conte
   b. Project: Expand front porch and add handicapped accessibility ramp; replace bay window with a pair of French doors; replace front door; rebuild front brick steps to meet building code

D. OTHER BUSINESS

   The next ARB meeting is scheduled for May 6, 2020.
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

2020-23-CA: 51 S. Catherine Street
Applicant: Mr. Don Williams, Agent, on behalf of Ms. Janet Conte
Received: 3/30/2020
Meeting: 4/15/2020

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Old Dauphin Way
Classification: Non-Contributing
Zoning: R-1
Project: Expand front porch and add handicapped accessibility ramp; replace bay window with a pair of French doors; replace front door; rebuild front brick steps to meet building code

BUILDING HISTORY

The c. 1955 one-story, brick-veneered house has a side-gabled roof and small, integral front porch. Two stacked, partial-width gables face the street and shelter the small projection that forms the south wall of the porch. A rear, full-width frame addition was made to the house between 1967 and 1980, per historic aerial photographs. The paneled front door with a multi-pane half-moon light is a non-historic replacement.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change…will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district.”

STAFF REPORT

A. According to the MHDC vertical files, this property has not appeared previously before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

B. The Design Review Guidelines for Mobile’s Historic Districts (Guidelines) state, in pertinent part:
   1. “Preserve an original porch or gallery on a house.
      • Maintain the height and pitch of a porch roof.” (6.4)
   2. “Design and place a new porch to maintain the visibility to and integrity of an original historic porch, as well as the overall historic building.
      • Do not expand an original historic front porch. Additions of new front porches or expansion of existing front porches are generally not appropriate.” (6.17)
   3. “Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing historic building.
      • Design the scale, proportion, and character of a porch addition element, including columns, corner brackets, railings, and pickets, to be compatible with the existing historic residential structure.
• Match the foundation height of a porch addition to that of the existing historic structure.
• Design a porch roofline to be compatible with the existing historic structure.
• Use materials for a porch addition that are appropriate to the building.
• Do not use a contemporary deck railing for a porch addition placed at a location visible from the public street.
• Do not use cast concrete steps on facades or primary elevations.” (6.18)

4. “Preserve the decorative and functional features of a primary door.
• Original doors and openings, including their dimensions, should be retained along with any moldings, transoms, or sidelights.” (5.14)

5. “Preserve the functional historic and decorative features of a historic window.” (5.20)

C. Scope of Work (per submitted rendering and application):
1. Expand the existing front porch to the north along the façade of the house with a 36” wide accessibility ramp along the west (front) and north sides of the expanded porch.
   a. The porch addition would be sheltered by a new, front-gabled roof covered in matching shingles and of matching pitch to complement the existing front-gabled projection. The gable end would feature vertical wood boards to match the existing front gable.
   b. The expanded porch with ramp would measure 14’ wide by 20’ deep.
   c. The porch roof would be supported by 8” wood boxed columns and would be enclosed with wood railings.
   d. The ramp would be enclosed by a brick knee wall on the west (front) and north elevations.
2. Replace the existing bay window on the west (front) elevation with a two (2) 30”x68” French doors with 10”x68” sidelights.
   a. The French doors and sidelights would be constructed of wood.
   b. The doors, when open, would permit passage of a wheelchair.
3. Replace the front door with a wood door of the same dimensions.
   a. The replacement door would have three square, translucent glass panels.
4. Rebuild the front brick steps to meet the building code.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The subject property, 51 S. Catherine Street, is a non-contributing property within the Old Dauphin Way Historic District. The application under review involves the expansion of the existing front porch, the construction of a handicapped accessibility ramp, the replacement of an existing bay window with French doors, the replacement of the front door, and the rebuilding of the front steps to meet the building code. The Guidelines offer some guidance for the construction of new porches, but little to no guidance regarding the replacement of windows with doors and the placement of ramps.

The Guidelines specifically state, “Do not expand an original historic front porch. Additions of new front porches or expansion of existing front porches are generally not appropriate.” (B.2) While the existing front porch is the original porch and is “historic” insofar as it is over 50 years old, the property is not a contributing structure within the district. Therefore, the expansion of the porch may not be considered inappropriate, as it is in conformance with additional guidance stating, “Design a new porch to be compatible with the existing historic building.” (B.3) The proposed porch expansion would be compatible with the existing house and the surrounding district, being appropriately scaled and proportioned so as not to detract from the existing house or its neighbors. Further, the proposed columns and railings would be plain in appearance and would not be out of keeping with the existing vernacular house. (B.3)
Other details of the proposed expansion also would be in conformance with the Guidelines. Because the porch would be expanded, the floor level would be the same as the existing porch, which has the same foundation height as the house. The porch roof would roughly mirror the existing front gable, thereby being compatible with the existing structure. The wood porch columns and concrete floor would match the existing materials. (B.3)

The Guidelines do not offer any directives regarding the construction of handicapped accessibility ramps. However, the proposed ramp would be located along the west (front) and north sides of the expanded porch. The sides of the cement ramp would not be visible, as they would be hidden behind a brick knee wall to match the existing brick veneer of the house and the expanded porch, giving the appearance of the porch foundation. Overall, the ramp would be an inconspicuous structure alongside the expanded porch and would not detract from the historic or architectural character of the surrounding district.

Regarding windows, the Guidelines state, “Original doors and openings, including their dimensions, should be retained along with any moldings, transoms, or sidelights.” (B.4) In an effort to allow for a handicapped accessible front entrance to the house, the application proposes removing the existing bay window and replacing it with a set of French doors with sidelights. Although the original window would be removed, the use of French doors in its place would not only preserve the historic fenestration pattern, if not the specific kind of fenestration, but it would preserve the existing transparency of this area of the façade. Therefore, the functional feature of the bay window would be preserved. (B.5)

The application proposes the replacement of the non-historic front door with a new wood door with three translucent glass panels. The same guidance from the Guidelines (“Original doors and openings, including their dimensions, should be retained along with any moldings, transoms, or sidelights.” (B.4)) applies here. The appearance of the original front door is not known. However, the existing door features a half-moon light at the top. The proposed door design is in keeping with the mid-century timeframe of the building’s construction and allows the transmission of light to the interior, as does the existing door. Therefore, the design of the proposed new door would be appropriate to the existing building.

Finally, the application proposes to reconstruct the brick steps at the front of the house to meet the building code. In accordance with the Guidelines (“Do not use cast concrete steps on facades or primary elevations” (B.3)), the steps would be reconstructed using materials to match the existing. Therefore, the proposal is in conformance with the Guidelines.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on Section B above, Staff believes the proposed porch expansion, ramp construction, French door installation, front door replacement, and front step reconstruction would not impair the architectural or historic character of the existing house or the surrounding district. Staff recommends approval of the application.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Mr. Williams, the owner’s agent, was present to discuss the application.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion took place concurrently with the public testimony.
The Board had no questions or comments.

No comments were received from the public prior to the meeting. Mr. Stone closed the period of public comment.

**FINDING OF FACT**

Mr. Roberts moved that, based on the evidence presented in the application, the Board finds the facts in the Staff’s report, as written.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Barr and was approved unanimously.

**DECISION ON THE APPLICATION**

Mr. Roberts moved that, based on the facts approved by the Board, the proposed porch expansion, ramp construction, French door installation, and front step reconstruction would not impair the architectural or historic character of the existing house or the surrounding district and a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Davis and was approved unanimously.