

STAFF REPORT: 7/9/2025 REGULAR MEETING
APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00407-8057
VIOLATION NUMBER: 651
ADDRESS: 691 W. CANFIELD
HISTORIC DISTRICT: WEST CANFIELD
APPLICANT/ PROPERTY OWNER: ROSANNE AND DOUG PATTISON
DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 6/17/25
DATES OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 6/23/25

PREPARED BY: E. THACKERY

SCOPE: MULTIPLE EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 1997 National Register nomination for West Canfield identifies this house as the John Ward House, 1894, designed by architect Richard E. Raseman. The nomination describes it as a “rectangular, two and one-half story brick residence” “supported by a limestone foundation and topped by a front- and side-facing gable. A large stone arch surrounds a picture window on the first floor of the east bay. There is a sympathetic newly constructed porch on the western half of the façade with turned supports and a small gable over the porch’s staircase. Stunted columns rise from the roof of the porch to support the large overhanging eaves. A pair of windows are located over the picture window on the east bay. A beltcourse runs along the sills of the first floor windows and at the middle of the second floor windows where it rises up to form the lintel. Topping the house is a hipped dormer to the west of the gable with fish-scaled shingles.”

The vast majority of the proposed scope projects are on the rear (south) of the house. To inventory existing conditions, however, staff will begin at the house’s front (north) façade and inventory around the house from north, then east (side), then rear (south), and finally west (side).



Photo 1. 691 W Canfield, front (north) elevation, staff site visit 6/23/25, staff. The basement windows included in this scope of work are on the front of the house, below the arched rock detail on the east bay. See detail below.



Photo 2. Detail of the above picture from 2025. Proposed is the restoration of the mullion feature with the carved detail.



Photo 3. 691 W Canfield, side (east) elevation, staff site visit 6/23/25, staff. On this side of the house, scope of work items included in this proposal include the basement windows and window well, replacement of a vinyl second-story window with an aluminum-clad wood window with repairs to the brick opening, and removing the fishscale siding and transom as infill for a wide door opening to fill it with bricks and a double-hung clad window.

Traveling from the front of the house through the black metal gate to access the east side of the house, two basement windows with a shared window well exist. Vinyl windows were installed in these basement window openings in 2022, but those windows were not approved by the commission, so this application proposes that those basement windows be replaced with aluminum-clad wood windows and window wells. Continuing down the path along the east side of the house, toward the rear of the house, a trench was exposed in 2022 and it remains. The trench exposes the basement at the rear of the east side of the house. Steps lead down from grade to the bottom of the trench and a new door with sidelights leads out from the basement into the bottom of this trench. This portion of the trench has been covered with pavers, creating a sunken patio space from what has become a walk-out basement. The walk-out door with sidelights was proposed in 2022 and denied, but is being proposed again in this application with a new coat of paint.



Photo 4. 691 W Canfield, existing conditions, Google map, 2025, exposed trench behind the house is visible. Beginning at the rear of the house on the east side (at the southeast corner) and continuing across the entire rear of the house, the exposed trench is visible. Steps leading down into the trench are visible in this image near the house's southeast corner, at red arrow.



Photo 5. 691 W Canfield, September 2022, staff photo, post unapproved demolition work. The south end of the house still looks much like this in 2025. The south end of the house is shown where a single door and a window opening are boarded up. That door used to step out onto the rubble-and-concrete deck between the house and the retaining wall, and the bricks with white staining below the door and window were not visible because of the former deck. The wide door opening infilled with a transom and fishscale shingles near the house's southeast corner used to be double doors that opened onto the rubble-and-concrete deck. These boarded-up and infilled openings are part of this application. The door with sidelights visible here below grade at the house's southeast corner is the door with sidelights proposed in this application again, but painted a new color. That door would not have been visible either, when the former deck was in place, but the demolition exposed this area and the proposed new deck will not cover this area up. In the applicant's proposal, the door with sidelights would remain exposed and would open to a sunken patio.

Continuing to inventory the current conditions, the west side of the house in 2025 looks much like photo just above, from 2022. The privacy fence encloses the patio on the west side of the house, but the first-floor window opening with a board in it received a vinyl window in 2022. That window is proposed for replacement with a double-hung aluminum-clad wood window. (It is Window 9 in the application.) The applicant's drawing of the west elevation also shows the basement window below this window being replaced with an aluminum-clad wood awning window.

PROPOSAL

The applicant undertook exterior work without approval at the property in 2022. They therefore attended the Commission's October 2022 regular meeting and submitted an application to the Commission in an effort to address the violations/unapproved work. The Commission denied a number of the violations/unapproved work at the October 2022 meeting. The applicant has therefore submitted the current application in an effort to address the 2022 violations. Specific work items which are included in the current application are the following:

- Demolition of ca. 1945 loading dock, porch, and boilerhouse masonry structure at rear of the property. Note that the structure was built of concrete rubble, stone, and brick (work partially completed)
- Installation of a door at existing boarded-up opening on south/rear elevation wall, west corner, above grade
- Installation of door with sidelights at house's southeast corner below grade (material unknown)
- Replacement of 10, non-historic age, double-hung wood windows with aluminum-clad wood windows (these windows would replace 10 vinyl windows that were installed in 2022 without HDC approval)
- Replace opening at rear (currently covered with fishscale siding/ transom) with aluminum-clad wood window and brick infill to return the opening to its original condition. The current fishscale siding/ transom was added in 2022 without HDC approval to replace a set of non-historic age French doors)
- Add window wells and obscuring the window wells from view via the addition of landscaping
- Infill of one window opening at south/rear wall
- At front basement windows, remove a decorative wood mullion (work completed) and replace with a new wood mullion to replicate the original
- At the rear southwest corner door, erect a new wood porch
- At rear southeast corner, install a new wood deck at 6" above grade which will partially cover the current, below-grade areaway

See below for a more detailed description of the work proposed for review with the current application which staff has outlined for clarity because much of the work has already been initiated:

Rear Porch Removal, Demolition of Rubble-and-Concrete Structure over Exterior Stairs, Installation of Door in Existing Boarded-up Opening, and Proposed New Porch and Deck

As stated, most of the proposed demolition work has been completed. As late as 2022, there was a stone-and-concrete porch off the south end of the house attached to stone steps leading up to the porch and a curved, vault-like structure that sheltered stone steps leading down to basement level. The vault-like structure remains but the rest of that construction has been demolished.



Photo 6. Photos of the house's south end provided by applicant's consultant in a report that has been included in the application. All of the stone and concrete construction visible here, along with the wood porch/pergola construction further east, are "proposed for demolition." In reality, much of that material has been demolished and only the rubble-and-concrete vault-like structure remains; it, too, is proposed for demolition.

Once the demolition is complete, the applicant proposes to build two a deck and patio at the building's rear (south) end of the house to cover parts of the exposed areaway below. Below, staff outlined one area in red (Deck) and one area in yellow (Porch). These are roughly the two deck areas being proposed. The deck outlined in red will be at grade and will span roughly the area between the two exterior sets of stairs that go down to the basement level—one near the southeast corner of the house and one under the rubble-and-concrete vault-like structure. Because both ends will overlook the trench, both ends need a rail. The porch outlined in yellow will be raised and will cover the trench roughly from the sheltered stone steps west to the house's southwest corner, roughly the area that was covered by the stone steps and stone-and-concrete platform just west of the vault-like structure in the pictures above.

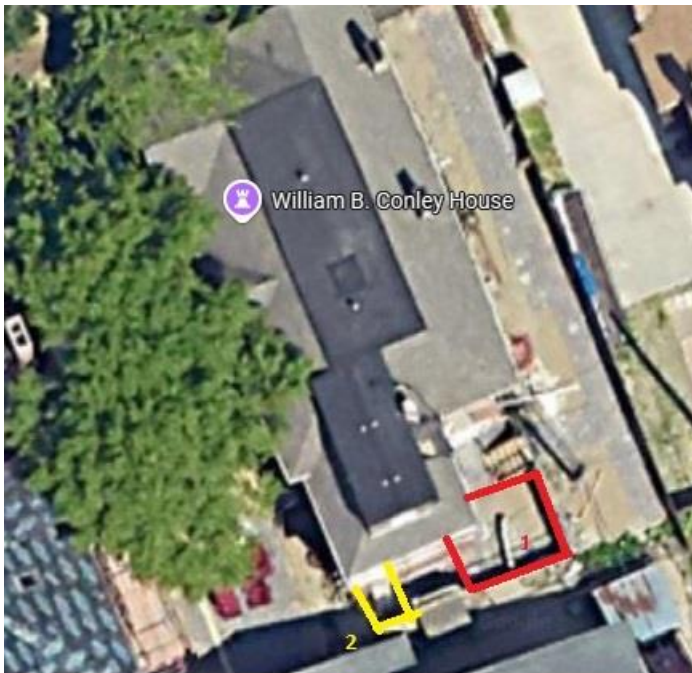


Figure 1. 691 W Canfield, Google aerial view, 2025. Staff drew a red outline showing where one proposed deck will be to cover part of the trench and a yellow line outlining where new rear porch will be erected to cover the exposed trench and lead to the new rear door. Between the two, the trench will remain exposed, the existing set of stairs will lead down to the basement level/areaway, and the rubble-and-concrete, vault-like structure that shelters those stairs will be demolished.

Deck

At grade, proposed wood (either 1" x 6" or 8" wood deck boards) with black metal rail along its north and west sides where it overlooks the sunken areas below.

Porch

Wood (1" x 8" deck boards) with black metal rail. Steps: 1" x 8" deck boards and metal handrail. Access from the boarded-up door shown in *Photo 7*. A new **door for that opening** is proposed to be a steel door that has a window in half the door and two raised panels below the window. Door is proposed to be painted to match the door with sidelights to the sunken patio near the house's southeast corner.

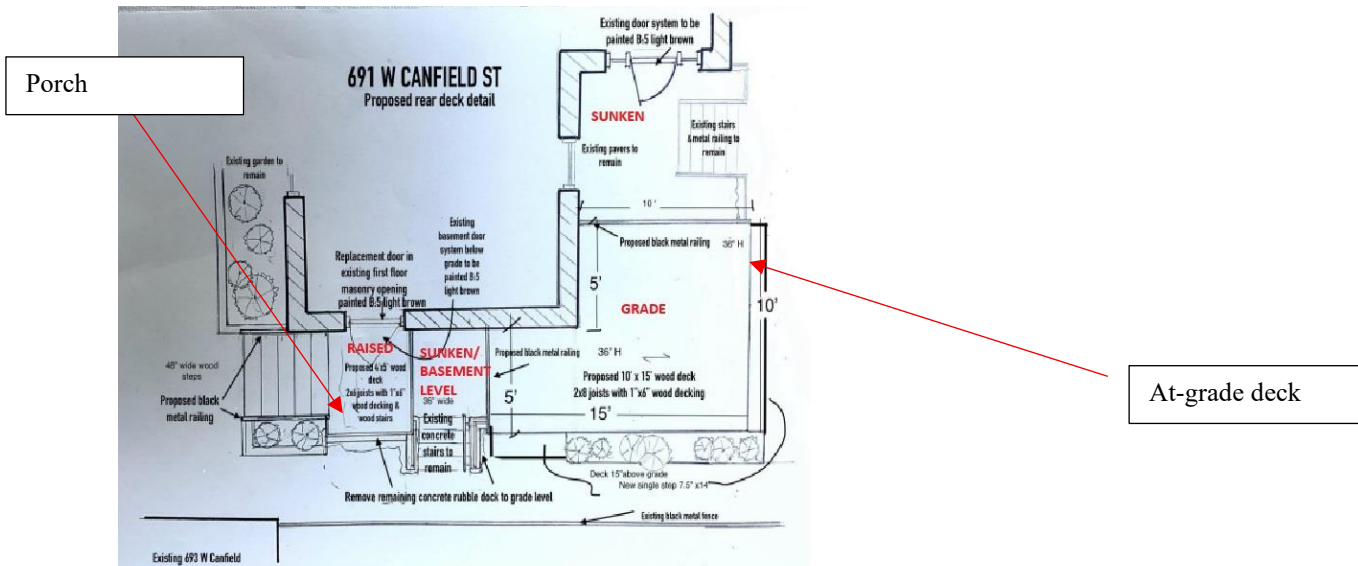


Figure 2. Applicant provided plan; staff marked it in red.

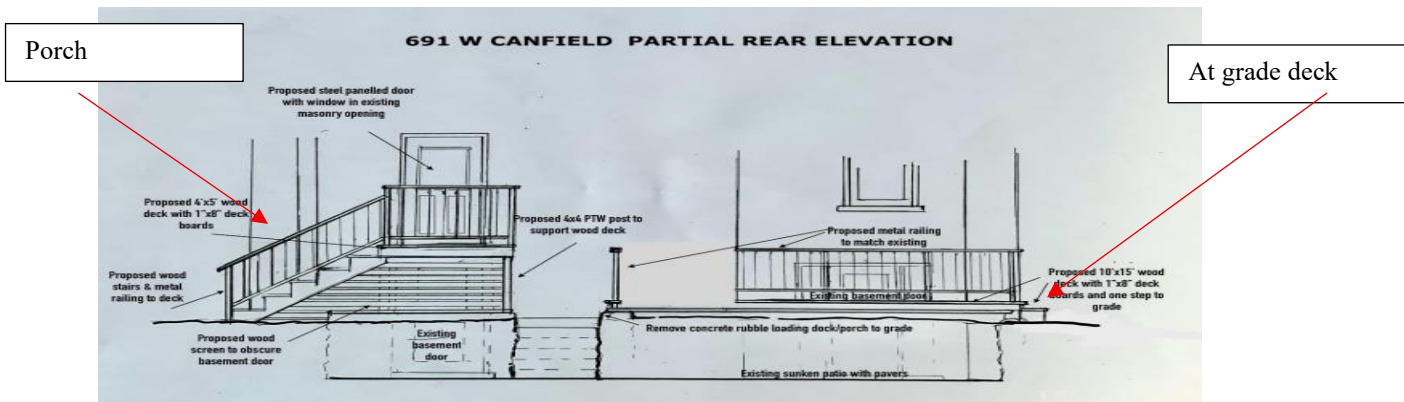


Figure 3. Applicant-provided proposed rear (south) elevation. Deck and Porch are shown, along with the concrete steps that go down to the basement level

Replace 10 Vinyl Windows with Aluminum-Clad Wood Windows; Add Two Window Wells and Obscure the Window Wells from View

Proposed is to replace 10 vinyl windows with aluminum-clad wood windows. The applicant had installed these without commission approval to replace non-historic, single hung wood windows that had been installed in the 1960s

- Applicant installed two vinyl basement windows at the front of the house; is now proposing to replace these two fixed basement windows with clad wood casement windows. Also proposed is to reproduce and replace the carved mullion that had been between the two windows. That decorative mullion was removed in 2022 (see below). Because these are egress windows, the applicant increased their size. There is also a window well built here at the front of the house.



Photo 7. 691 W Canfield, front (north) elevation, basement windows visible below the large stone arch and picture window with transom toward the east side of this elevation, October 2020, Google streetview. The carved mullion between the two windows was visible in 2020 and is proposed to be replicated in 2025.

- Applicant installed two vinyl basement windows on the east side of the house, and now proposes to replace these with two clad wood double-hung windows that are for egress and so applicant proposes a window well.
- On the east elevation, on the second floor, near a chimney, a vinyl window had been installed and the bricks surrounding the window were damaged or removed in the process. Applicant proposes a double-hung clad window in this opening and repairing the damaged brick.
- Applicant proposes to replace four vinyl basement windows with four fixed clad wood windows in the same size as existing; these are scattered on the house.
- Applicant proposes to replace Window 9 on the west elevation from vinyl to aluminum-clad wood.

Applicant states that they will be painting the aluminum-clad exteriors of these windows—the commission may wish to confirm.

Replace Opening at Rear (currently covered with fishscale siding/ transom) with Aluminum-Clad Wood Window and Brick Infill

This opening is shown in above *Photo 5*; it is the opening that currently is filled in with a transom window and fishscale siding. In 2022, the applicant replaced a set of non-historic French doors with the current fishscale shingles and transom without approval. With the current proposal, the applicant is seeking to install an aluminum-clad wood double-hung window and infill the remaining opening with brick to bring the opening more in line with a historic photo shown in the application. .

Install Door with Sidelights at House's Southeast Corner Below Grade

This item was denied in 2022. Applicant seeks to repaint and get approval for this door.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The West Canfield Historic District was established in 1969.

- The current owner acquired this property in May 2022.
- Staff initially received the first application in response to violation notices that were issued for work done without approval since staff first received a neighborhood complaint on September 1, 2022. Staff referred this to the Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department (BSEED) on the same day. Staff observed that BSEED received permit applications on September 15, 2022.
- In October 2022, the HDC approved some of the work on that original application, but not all. The remaining items have been revised and placed on this application for commission review.
- Almost all proposed work has either started or is completed without approval.

**DEMOLITION OF REAR PORCH AND VAULT-LIKE STRUCTURE IN RUBBLE AND CONCRETE;
PROPOSED NEW DECKS**

- Please see the applicant's submission, and note that the applicant sent a corrected drawing for the house's east side to replace page 40 in the packet. That updated drawing was uploaded to the commission website. Although the rubble-and-concrete steps, porch, and stair shelter were built during the period of significance, the addition did not relate to the historic contexts that the 1997 National Register nomination discussed. If the nomination were written today, it would likely discuss more about the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and how the building was used by entrepreneurs and business owners and how those uses shaped its changes. Staff did conduct research on the property and noted that the house had been used as a dry cleaner beginning in the 1940s. It was likely at that point that the rear of the building was excavated, boilers added, and then that addition was covered by the rubble-and-concrete material that we see on the vault-like structure remaining. Staff would like to reach out to the owner to request that they document what is left of this construction, if possible, to help tell a more complete story of the house's (and neighborhood's) more recent past. However, because the rubble-and-concrete construction does not relate to the house's historic contexts as conveyed in the National Register nomination, it is staff's opinion the structure is not contributing to the property and that its removal is therefore appropriate.
- Staff believes that the new deck and porch proposed for the rear are appropriate and largely meet the Standards, specifically Standard 9. Staff would, however, recommend that:
 - the proposed deck surface be painted or stained to help blend in more with historic materials
 - there be no unpainted pressure-treated wood left visible above ground, and that
 - the skirting proposed below the new porch should be less horizontal in emphasis and more compatible with historic screening methods.
 - a different railing type be selected for the deck that has a slightly more traditional appearance and is wood painted to match the house's trim, or possibly wood composite that matches the trim. The current proposed railing is modern and thin black aluminum and would match the current railing (see the above) that was installed without HDC approval.



*Photo 8 from the application
showing current conditions at
rear yard/proposed location of
rear deck and porch.*

- The proposed sunken patio/areaway
 - In the section about Building Sites, the Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings states that Not Recommended is, “Changing the grade level of the site if it diminishes its historic character. For example, lowering the grade adjacent to a building to maximize use of a basement, which would change the historic appearance of the building and its relation to the site.” As noted above, the current below-grade areaway was likely excavated in the 1940s to house a boiler for a drycleaning business that was located within the building, and the masonry loading dock/porch structure was then built over the boilers. The 2022 demolition of the masonry loading dock/porch structure then exposed this areaway.
 - Leaving the excavated site and foundation fully exposed in this southeast corner to create a walkout basement and sunken patio was proposed in 2022 and was denied by the Commission at that time. The current application revises the 2022 plan for the area by proposing to add a 10’x15’ deck and a patio at grade, which would leave only a small area of the below-grade/sunken patio/areaway visible/exposed.
 - Note that Standard 9, states, “...exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property.” When considering the phrase “spatial relationships *that characterize the property*,” staff notes that it is true that exposing this basement changes the house’s spatial relationship to its yard. However, staff has ultimately found that this house’s spatial relationship to its site has greatly changed in any case. Historically the building was a single-family residence that sat on a deep lot with a small, wood-frame garage to the rear. By 1951, the small garage to the rear had been removed and replaced with a larger concrete block commercial building (an auto collision shop) and a drycleaning business had been established in dwelling. The result of the establishment of the commercial enterprises within the property, to include the construction of the below-grade boiler room and the masonry loading dock/patio, essentially destroyed the original residential rear yard’s character and altered the rear elevation of the building. Furthermore, the house and its outbuilding were considered the same parcel until the 1980s. When the outbuilding became separated and independent from its primary house, the primary house’s yard became very small. Fences now separate the two properties. The relationship the house had to its yard is fundamentally different than it was historically. So, while the guidelines would typically recommend against exposing a basement wall for the establishment of a sunken patio, in the total analysis, staff finds that the proposed sunken patio/areaway is not inappropriate because the house’s relationship to its site behind the house has been fundamentally altered for a long time. The sunken patio changes the appearance of the building, but it doesn’t alter the relation to the site—that alteration was done in this area of the property long before.
 - Note that when the excavation was complete in the 1940s, it was then covered up. The house had decks and patios at grade. The proposed installation of the new porch and at-grade deck will serve to partially/mostly cover the current exposed trench, bringing the backyard area closer to its appearance prior to the 2022 unapproved work, while it also leaves a small portion of the basement wall exposed and with a large door with sidelights. For reference, below left is how the space over the current sunken patio looked as of the real estate listing in October 2021:



Site Photo 10 by Real Estate.com, listing date, October 2021: (South) rear, east-facing elevation showing French doors, rear porch covering, patio, planter bed and fence over the boiler room below.



Site Photo 11 by staff, September 1, 2022 : (South) rear, east-facing elevation showing location of removed French doors and infill with fish-scale siding and stained glass transom from another building installed in the opening.

WINDOWS/DOORS/WINDOW WELLS

- In 2022, staff observed that the front basement windows are publicly visible and had bars over the windows from at least as far back as 2015 and before. The color and material of this preceding condition caused the basement windows to recede in the landscape. It is staff's opinion that the modesty of this original condition of the basement windows is a distinctive character-defining feature. In 2016, these bars were removed, and vinyl slider windows were installed, which were replaced with larger vinyl windows and a window well which staff found created a larger, louder presence on the building and in the landscape. Proposed now are wood aluminum-clad windows to replace the larger vinyl windows. Landscaping has been introduced to try to camouflage the window well. Staff's initial/2022 recommendation re: this scope was that the vinyl material, the scale of the windows, and the presence of the window well at this location introduced a material, scale, color and expansion of a modest element into a more dominant element that altered and therefore substantially detracted from the historic appearance of the building. Now, upon second review, with the revisions being proposed, staff finds that these objections have largely been overcome. The landscaping hides the window well successfully, at least from the sidewalk, and the aluminum cladding (instead of vinyl) will help these front basement windows meet the Standards in terms of color and texture. Also, the carved, character-defining wood mullion that was removed without HDC approval will be reproduced to match the historic element. However, because the new windows are taller than the original, the applicant must take care to ensure that the new mullion matches both the proportion of the windows and the appearance of the historic mullion that was removed without HDC approval.
- Staff finds the other basement egress windows with window well also in line with the Standards and successfully camouflaged from the right-of-way. However, note that the application does not outline the materiality of the window well.
- At the time of this report, staff does not see door product information for the below-grade door with sidelights. Staff cannot comment on its materiality, but it is staff's opinion that the proportions of the door with its sidelights do not match the historic house's proportions. Staff does not see another historic door opening on this house that is as wide other than the front door. Having this rear door almost as wide as (if not as wide as) the front door when it is not an historic opening gives the rear, below-grade door prominence that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines would not support, in staff's opinion, as new work or alterations should be secondary to historic materials and features. However, staff

does find that the door proposed for access to the new rear porch near the house's southwest corner to be appropriate, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines.

- All of the windows mentioned above (10 windows) are vinyl windows which were installed in violation by the current owner in 2022. These windows replaced non-historic single-hung 1/1 wood windows. The Commission denied the vinyl windows in 2022. The current application proposes to replace the unapproved vinyl units with new 1/1 aluminum-clad, wood double-hung units which better conform to the building's historic character. Staff believes that the proposed aluminum-clad windows conform to the Standards.
- As noted above, the wide opening on the rear of the house was infilled with a transom and fishscale siding in 2022 without HDC approval. The infill replaced a set of non-historic French doors (see the above photo # 10) The Commission denied the work in 2022. The current application is proposing to replace the current unapproved infill with a narrow double-hung, clad wood window and brick to return the opening to its historic/original condition as documented in a historic photo which is included in the submitted application materials. It is staff's opinion that this work item is appropriate with the condition that the bricks and mortar must be suitable matches for adjacent historic brick.

ISSUES

None

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

Recommendation # 1 of 1 – Certificate of Appropriateness – Multiple Exterior Alterations

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and West Canfield Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- The applicant supply staff with a final dimensioned sketch of the front basement windows with the finished mullion in place prior to the issuance of the project's permit
- The material of the window wells and the door at the rear façade, basement level shall be compatible with the building's historic character, as determined by staff
- Anywhere bricks will be used to infill, the bricks need to be a good match for the building both in color but also in hardness/strength, the bricks need to be exterior-grade for use outdoors, and the mortar used must be lime-based, soft mortar.
- The new rear deck and patio will either be painted or stained; no unpainted pressure-treated wood will be visible above ground. Also, applicant shall propose a new skirting design for the new rear patio which is more compatible with historic building and the railing for the new deck shall be wood, rather than the proposed aluminum. The final railing design shall be submitted to staff for review and approval.