



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

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FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

February 3, 2021

Address:	3739 Urbana Pike, Urbana	Meeting Date:	February 3, 2021
Applicant:	Dusty & Kristina Rood	Report Date:	January 19, 2021
Case No.:	COA 21-01	Staff:	Amanda Whitmore
Proposal:	Landscape Plan		

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Elisha Beall House is listed on the County Register of Historic Properties (CR # 99-01) and the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (F-7-60). The property includes the entire 6.732 acres, which consists of the main house, a smoke house, former slave quarters, and a stable/carriage house. The property is accessed from Urbana Pike. The buildings are approached along an asphalt driveway, once flanked by mature trees, leading in a northeasterly direction.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to plant 17 trees along the driveway, add vegetative screening along the northwestern and western property boundary lines, and install a split rail fence on the northern and western property boundary lines.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations within a designated County Register property several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the *Frederick County Interim Design Guidelines (County Guidelines)* and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (SOI Guidelines)*. The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Frederick County Interim Design Guidelines

The *County Guidelines* contain a Landscaping, Walls, and Fences section that should be referred to when reviewing this COA application. This section of the guidelines includes:

- Landscaping, Walls, and Fences. Landscaping should be undertaken to beautify a building, highlight special architectural features, screen unattractive areas from public view, and create privacy.

Landscaping should be accomplished in such a way that the overall effect harmonizes with the established look of the neighborhood and complements the architectural style of the building.

Recommended - Retaining plants, trees, fencing, walkways, streetlights, signs, and benches that reflect the property's history and development.

Not recommended - Destroying the relationship of buildings and their environment by changes that are incompatible with the character of the neighborhood or site.

Recommended - Using brick walls or cast-iron, picket, straight-board, and board-and-batten fences compatible in material and design with adjacent structures.

Not recommended - Installing fences of split rail or post-and-rail design.

Secretary of the Interior's Treatment of Historic Properties Guidelines

The *SOI Guidelines* for rehabilitation include building site recommendations. This section of the *SOI Guidelines* includes:

- Recommendations to identify, retain, and preserve features of the building site that are important in defining its overall historic character. Site features may include walls, fences, or steps; circulation systems; vegetation, such as trees, shrubs, grass, orchards, hedges...; landforms, such as hills, terracing, or berms.
- It is not recommended to substantially change feature or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the property so that the character is diminished.
- Replacing in kind an entire feature but if using the same kind of material is not feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.
- It is not recommended in these guidelines to add conjectural features to the site that are historically inappropriate, thereby creating an inaccurate appearance to the site.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The applicant proposes to plant 17 oak trees, all of which will be selected from one of these species: red oak, pin oak, white oak, or scarlet oak. These trees will be planted along the driveway and up to the house. Additionally, a variety of ornamental grasses, shrubs, and trees in areas along the western and northwestern property boundary lines are also proposed to be planted. The applicant also proposes to install a wooden split rail fence along the northern and western property lines to match the split rail fencing that already exists on the southern and eastern property lines. Staff checked the proposed plant types against the Maryland Invasive Species Council's (MISC) Invasive Species of Concern in Maryland, terrestrial plants list and none of the proposed plant types on the landscape plan were identified on this invasive species list.

At the time of the designation of the site in 1999, several trees were present and contributing site features to the property. The past use of the site was agricultural since its construction in about 1810. It is known through the available historic context of Frederick County for this period that farms and plantations were almost completely cleared of forests. Tree lines or hedgerows along field boundaries and occasional clumps or single trees near the dwellings would have characterized agricultural complexes.

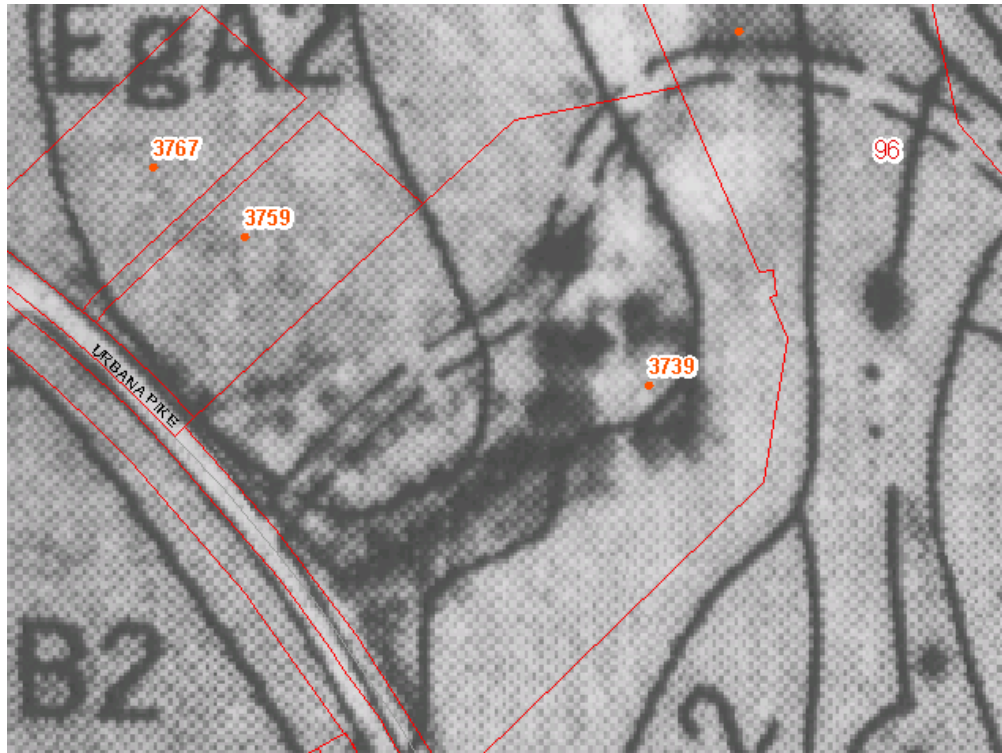
Additionally, *Tillers of the Soil: A History of Agriculture in Mid-Maryland*, written by Paula S. Reed in 2011, provides a historical context of the history of agriculture in mid-Maryland and examines farms throughout Frederick, Carroll, and Washington Counties. *Tillers of the Soil* states on pages 86 and 87:

Fences formed an important part of the agricultural scene. They marked property boundaries and road edges, and defined the borders of fields and meadows. The oldest fences were "worm," consisting of zig-zagged overlapping rails, bolstered at the corners with cross bucks... Post and rail fences were probably most common after the mid-nineteenth century. Post and rail fences in mid-Maryland typically had six rails with the lower three placed closely together and the upper rails more widely spaced....

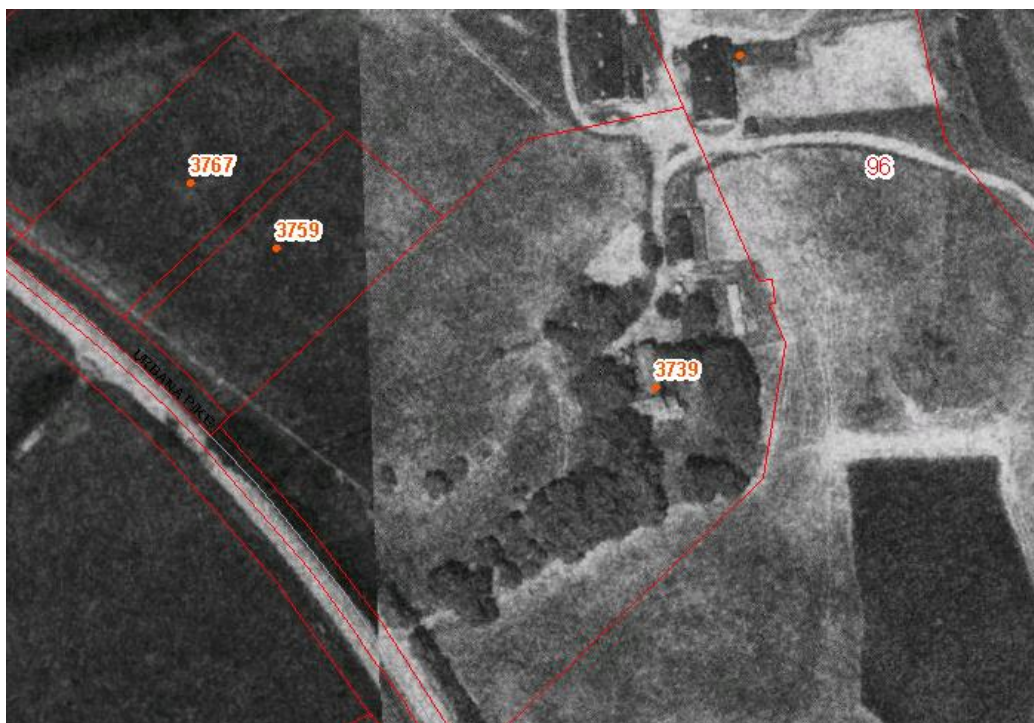
Further review of this document includes sketches and photographs from the mid-1800s that depict split rail and post and rail fencing along roads and in fields. Excerpts from this document are included in the packet.

The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns & Other Farm Structures, written by Allen G. Noble and Richard K. Cleek, dated 1996, states on page 173 that post and rail fence are "two or three split rails...mortised into upright timber posts." This section continues that, "In 1871, according to federal statistics, this fence was heavily concentrated in lower Michigan, New Jersey, northern Pennsylvania, New York, and northern New England, although it existed throughout most of the eastern United States; Quebec." Figure 13.9 on page 174 of *The Old Barn Book* includes an illustration of a post and rail fence that resembles split rail fencing. An excerpt of these two pages is included in the packet.

The farm continued in agricultural use throughout the 19th century and into the mid-20th century. No photographs of the property earlier than the 1980's have been found. The



1952 aerial photograph imposed on the Frederick County, Maryland Soils Map



1973 aerial photograph of Elisha Beall property

earliest aerial photographs available to the County are dated 1952 and 1973 and show the domestic area around the dwelling and outbuildings to be heavily covered with foliage. Trees once lined the driveway from the entrance up to and surrounding the house. Open fields with intermittent hedgerows and trees at the border along Urbana Pike can be seen in these aerial photographs.

Since there is no conclusive evidence of the appearance of the property prior to the late 20th century, the applicant cannot be required to recreate a historical environmental setting. However, for nearly 70 years, the environmental setting of the property has been characterized by shade trees along the drive and vegetation, including trees along Urbana Pike. Additionally, based on the research and documentation completed for *Tillers of the Soil* it was not uncommon for fencing to mark property boundaries and road edges and for this fencing type to be split rail or post and rail.

Therefore, staff finds that the landscape plan meets the *Design Guidelines* and the *Secretary of the Interior's Treatment Guidelines* since adding vegetation to the areas indicated on the plan would not destroy or substantially change the relationship and character of the site and is consistent with vegetation patterns that have existed on the property for nearly 70 years or that have been found common in agricultural settings. Additionally, staff finds that although the County's *Interim Design Guidelines* created in the early 2000s recommend against split rail or post and rail designed fencing, updated research in the 2011 *Tillers of the Soil* document identifies post and rail fencing as a common mid-nineteenth century agricultural fence type. This document also includes historic sketches and photographs from the mid-1800s that depict both split rail fencing and post and rail fencing. Therefore, a split rail fence would be appropriate along the northern and western property boundary lines.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the HPC **approve** COA 21-01.