

**City of Charlottesville
Board of Architectural Review
January 16, 2001**

Minutes

Present:

Joan Fenton (Chair)

W.G. Clark

Preston Coiner

Lynne Ely

Linda Winner

Wade Tremblay

Ken Schwartz

Also Present:

Tarpley Vest

Ms. Fenton called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Ms Fenton asked if there were any corrections to the December 19, 2000 minutes. It was noted that the name of the architect for Kane Furniture Company was "Skinner" rather than "Skin." No other corrections were suggested.

Mr. Coiner made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Tremblay. The motion carried and the minutes were approved with one abstention.

Ms. Fenton asked whether items from the public not on the formal agenda should be presented at this time or relegated to the end of the meeting. The consensus was to postpone this portion until the end of the meeting.

Mr. Kuttner announced to the Board that there was going to be a meeting of City Council that night at 7:30 on the subject of parking. Ms. Fenton added that she would be at that meeting, speaking for the Merchants' Association, and invited comments from the Board that she might take with her and present to the Council. She invited a motion to that effect under Other Business at the end of the meeting.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 98-11-52

100 West Main Street

Applicant Oliver Kuttner asked again that the keystones be allowed to remain in place, now that they had been seen in the context of the building as a whole and in light of other peculiarities which were allowed to stay. He stated that he considered them to be in character and that many people had voiced the opinion that they looked really good, but said he would do what the Board decided and not make a fuss about it.

Ms. Fenton enquired if there were other details to be considered. Mr. Kuttner indicated that the windows would not be changed, but the gothic arch would be taken away.

Ms. Fenton called for comments or questions.

Mr. Tremblay asked how many keystones there were, guessing eight. Mr. Kuttner responded that there were more likely nearly twenty, and Ms. Winner remarked that they were not visible all at one time. Mr. Kuttner explained that they appeared at every major level of the building and assured the Board that the pieces of metal which could be seen beneath some of them would be removed, as they were only reinforcements while the keystones were being built.

Ms. Fenton asked if there were any further questions or comments for the applicant.

Mr. Tremblay commented that he had no problem with the keystones. He stated that he had reviewed them again and considered the matter to be an issue of taste, remarking that the building was unusual with many features and elements of which the keystones were a relatively small aspect. Ms. Fenton then requested a motion on the subject.

Mr. Tremblay moved for approval of the keystones as installed, seconded by Ms. Winner; the motion carried 4 to 2.

Mr. Clark, who, along with Ms. Ely, had opposed the motion, explained that his vote against spoke more to the issue of procedure than aesthetics. He did not truly think the keystones looked that bad, especially since they were far smaller than they had appeared in the picture that was first presented.

Ms. Fenton asked the next applicants, Mr. John Gorman and Mr. Peter Sheeran, representing Sheeran Architects, to bring their drawings to the front.

Mr. Gorman explained that the map drawing showed the site, on Water Street next to the C & O Restaurant and the Cat House, situated in the crotch of the "L" between the two parking garages downtown. Roughly 14,000 square feet in size, the property presently provided thirty-eight parking spaces in a surface lot. He stated that the basic program was that it was to be a five-story building with underground parking providing forty-one spaces; the grade-level floor would be retail and commercial; the next three floors above that would be primarily office space; and the top floor would be six to seven residential condominiums. He referred to a drawing purporting to show how the building would fit into the rest of the downtown area, pointing out that while most of the buildings on the downtown mall were low, they were interspersed with much higher structures. An early conceptual sketch showed the proposed structure on the Water Street elevation, where there were many industrial, warehouse-type buildings. He added that one of their ideas was to emulate the converted "loft" buildings found in former warehouse districts of many large cities, and towards that end, the facade would utilize some large-scale windows. Several devices were contemplated to break up the mass of the admittedly very large building: At grade level, the fenestration pattern was more pedestrian-scale and retail oriented; the second and third floors employed large, tripartite vertical bay window treatments; the fourth floor

employed a long vertical strip of glazing; and on the top floor, the residential sections were set back.

Mr. Gorman indicated that, on the 5th Street side, the corner of the building was modeled to create what they called a "slot" building, while the façade employed punched windows, to better blend into the type of architecture found on 5th Street and facing the downtown mall. He added that they used a short, projecting canopy to help bring down the scale of the structure, and reiterated that the top level was set back from the building's perimeter.

Mr. Tremblay enquired about the depth of the setback on the top level. Mr. Gorman indicated that it would be approximately eight feet, such that a pedestrian passing the building at street level would be unlikely to see the residential units above. Concerning the projecting canopy, Ms. Fenton asked if the part on the street was set back or if the canopy was coming out over the street. Mr. Gorman and Mr. Sheeran responded that the canopy would project over the sidewalk. She also expressed grave reservations about Mr. Gorman's suggestion that aluminum windows might be used due to the problems created by wooden windows of that size.

Mr. Clark commented that the BAR did not have a problem with just aluminum, but with a particularly cheap type of aluminum that had shown up on several projects on West Main Street. He suggested that if the windows were larger scale commercial windows rather than something that was trying to look like a double-hung divided sash, that might be more acceptable. Mr. Sheeran assured Mr. Clark that the materials used in the building would be first class.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that the canopies would likely be copper, and that street landscaping would be part of the project as well. On the 5th Street side, he cited their agreement with the City that it be improved and brought up to something on the order of 3rd Street, with mall pavement, landscaping and street furniture.

Ms. Fenton asked about the possibility of undergrounding the utilities, to which Mr. Gorman replied that there was a considerable amount of overhead utilities, and that at least those on their property would have to be moved and put underground. He said he did not know whether they had the right to do anything with any utilities out in the sidewalk area. Mr. Sheeran commented that after speaking with City Engineering, which had done some per-pole cost studies, he understood that at least one pole would need to be relocated as it blocked the proposed parking garage entrance. However, he thought the cost of undergrounding the entire block would be prohibitive.

Mr. Sheeran then addressed the layout of the parking garage, showing a diagram of the facility, and explained how it was to be entered. He stated that everything in the garage was to be at grade.

Ms. Fenton asked for questions and comments.

Mr. Coiner asked about pedestrian traffic in front of the entrance to the parking garage. Mr. Sheeran indicated that a seven foot sidewalk along Water Street would be maintained, enhanced

with landscaping including trees and elevated planters, and said that the incline into the garage was only two feet.

Mr. Clark wanted to know what would be visible from grade level on 5th Street. Mr. Sheeran and Mr. Gorman assured him there was no parking visible on 5th, because the opening was on Water Street and the garage was beneath grade level on 5th. Mr. Gorman explained that the northwest corner of the site was the high point, and the southeast corner the low point. He stated that the entrance to the garage was located at the low point, and the grade rose as one approached the C & O Restaurant, so that the garage was indeed "underground" from the standpoint of 5th Street.

Mr. Sheeran told of meeting with surrounding building owners for their input, shortly before Christmas of 2000, and of another such meeting scheduled for perhaps later in January. He remarked that one of the things that came up in the December meeting was a possible drop-off point along the previously mentioned seven-foot sidewalk, for perhaps a bus stop, or for people dropping off passengers for whatever reason.

Mr. Coiner enquired about the possibility of a traffic light at the corner of 5th Street. Mr. Sheeran brought out a drawing, the result of his meeting with traffic engineers. He expressed their early concern about the curve in the street at that point and the fast traffic often encountered westbound on Water Street. The traffic engineers, he said, were proposing to install a traffic light at this location, allowing for a left-turn lane heading east, and allowing for easier turning both into and out of the building.

Ms. Ely expressed concern about the scale of the proposed structure, noting that it overpowered a small building to its right, as well as the C & O. She had visions, she said, of another Marriott on West Main, even though this building did not appear to jar with other downtown mall structures.

Mr. Clark added that that was exacerbated by the fact that the opening to a parking garage was also beside that building, even though he could understand why they needed to put it there. Mr. Sheeran claimed they had exhausted every other possibility on placement of an entrance to the parking garage on that site. He stated that they had considered at least a half dozen other designs, but for many different reasons, the other designs had been rejected.

Mr. Clark questioned the necessity of an opening that large. Mr. Sheeran commented that the intent was to put in a spandrel fascia to limit the height of vehicles which could enter the garage. Mr. Gorman indicated they realized the problem and had considered employing a canopy or some type of architectural device to minimize the apparent size of the entrance, but that nothing had proved to be a satisfactory solution and that the juxtaposition had to be lived with.

Ms. Winner brought up the possibility of using a facade of a material other than brick, to which Mr. Sheeran replied that, given the rest of the area, and the fact that it was maintenance-free, brick was the obvious choice.

Ms. Fenton mentioned that the imposing, "warehouse" appearance of the 5th Street facade might be better suited to the Water Street side, given the small size of the two 5th Street structures on the right of the building, noting that it looked more like something on South Street. She

suggested that an appearance on the order of the old train station across the way might be more appropriate.

Mr. Clark commented that the context drawing the applicants had presented was remarkably useful, but advised them that they would be doing themselves a favor by preparing a context drawing which showed more of Water Street. He felt that the current drawing did not show enough of the surrounding structures to give the Board a true feel for how this new building would actually fit in.

Mr. Sheeran brought out a photo-montage of the entire

Water Street block, taken with a digital camera, and Mr. Gorman presented a photograph which looked down Water Street, though not at street level.

Mr. Clark commented that the elevations were more helpful, and asked if a physical model of the project had been made. The applicants informed him one had not been done yet. He remarked that physical models were of great help to the Board. He then suggested that their Water Street motif of "industrial warehouse" was self-defeating when taken in context with the design of the upper floors and, even more noticeably, in contrast with the residential floor, which included some classical design elements. He thought the warehouse motif would work better on 5th Street than on Water Street, but that the original idea was good and that, since the extra elements took away from that idea, the entire design should be tightened, reconsidered and made more true to itself. He also warned against too much glass, since the facade faces south.

Mr. Schwartz, after apologizing for his late arrival at the meeting, called the 5th Street elevation very handsome due to its simplicity and the way it picked up a repetitive rhythm, responding to but not mimicking surrounding structures. He agreed with Mr. Clark concerning the Water Street residential floor, though admitted it was not really visible from the street. However, he objected to the windows on the level beneath, saying that they were a totally foreign element in an otherwise pretty clear strategy, and they looked like a zipper. He also felt that the scale of the entrance to the parking garage could use some serious redesign at the garage entry point, as the present size trivialized the small buildings adjacent. He asked whether parking was entirely below grade, and expressed satisfaction when told that it was.

Mr. Sheeran commented that the drawings were indeed in a very preliminary stage, with perhaps only two weeks' work having been done thus far. Mr. Schwartz commented appreciatively on the project, and thanked the gentlemen for including the Board in their plans. He stated that he hoped it helped. Mr. Sheeran assured him that it did indeed help them, and that they had been looking at some of the issues the Board had brought up and had wanted to apprise the Board of what they were doing prior to their appearance before City Council.

Ms. Fenton expressed appreciation for that. She commented that if they were meeting with the neighbors, she would be happy to accompany them to the meetings, if that would help. She indicated it would certainly help the BAR to hear the comments from the neighborhood.

Mr. Gorman indicated he wanted to summarize his understanding of what they had talked about that evening: Aluminum windows per se were not evil but needed to be commercial fabricated type windows; Water Street building design, especially on fourth and fifth floors, was of grave concern, as was the entrance to the parking garage; and the 5th Street elevation seemed to have no significant problems as yet.

Mr. Clark noted that the building's eastern façade was going to be very prominent and he was interested to see how they were going to handle that. Mr. Sheeran replied that they were very interested in that as well. He went on to say that it was probably going to be more along the lines of the 5th Street facade as opposed to what they were doing on Water Street. One issue with the eastern side was that it abutted a property line so the windows would have to be able to be blocked up at some point.

Mr. Coiner brought up the subject of HVAC. Mr. Gorman allowed that this issue had not yet been addressed and therefore was not shown in any drawings. He thought that probably, given the set-back of the top residential units, the PAC units could be disguised up there, perhaps on the alley side of the building.

Ms. Fenton suggested that what Mr. Coiner had in mind was that they shouldn't complete the whole building and then come back with the HVAC issue at the last minute.

Mr. Clark suggested that when they returned to the BAR, a building section that went through the mall, through the neighboring buildings, the alley, their proposed building and Water Street that would demonstrate the opportunities for improvement that Mr. Coiner brought up would be very helpful.

Mr. Coiner asked about deliveries on 5th Street, which was used by large trucks, and whether the canopies would go all the way to the street and get in the way. Mr. Sheeran's response was in the negative, that the canopies would project only about six feet, just over the sidewalk. The intent, he continued, was that all the mall businesses that got deliveries from 5th Street would continue to have that access, despite the projected pedestrian landscaping with trees and plantings. Mr. Gorman added that they were planning also to maintain and in fact widen the alleyway on the north side of the lot.

Mr. Clark asked about trees on Water Street. Mr. Gorman responded that that had been a request not only from City Council but also from adjacent property owners.

Mr. Clark approved of this, on the grounds of solar gain, etc.

Mr. Gorman indicated that landscaping would be extended to 5th Street as well, to which Mr. Clark replied that he didn't see how they were going to do that if they also had the canopy. Mr. Gorman admitted there were some things they had not yet worked out. Everyone laughed.

Ms. Fenton thanked the applicants, asking that they keep the Board up to date as to what they were doing. In turn, they thanked the Board and invited questions at any time.

Mr. Coiner asked what the time schedule was. Mr. Gorman replied that according to the contract that City Council was going to vote on that evening, they had 120 days to obtain all of their approvals from the City.

Ms. Fenton pointed out to the Board that the 2nd Street crossing was coming up before City Council, in addition to 5th Street, and that the Board should ask that the City quickly come up with a plan for what they desired for the mall, rather than have many people investing in cross-street redesign and then winding up with a design that was not what anybody wanted.

Mr. Coiner asked about the status of the reappointments. Ms. Vest responded that the present officers were asked to serve through this January meeting, and they were waiting for more applications. Her understanding was, and had been since December 2000, that the matter would be resolved before the February 2001 meeting. She commented that if there were no Chair or Vice-Chair available for the meeting, the person with greatest tenure would chair.

Ms. Fenton advised that she would be absent for the February 20th meeting, which meant that Ms. Winner would chair. Ms. Fenton said her understanding was that she was to stay on as Chair until they made their decision. There was some discussion about the fact that Ms. Hook did not re-apply.

Mr. Clark asked Ms. Fenton if she was speaking to the City concerning parking as a representative of the BAR. She replied that she was speaking as Chair of the Downtown Business Association. He wondered if it was appropriate for the Board to make a statement on that issue, since it was not part of their purview.

Ms. Fenton said her thought was that the BAR should make clear that they supported on-street parking only for retail, that they preferred not to have visible parking, and that they supported underground parking as opposed to massive parking structures such as the deck proposed for the Court Square area. She stated that those parts would come within the purview of the BAR.

Mr. Clark added that what bothered him was that in the past eight or nine years, the City had taken away several hundred surface parking spaces, and were continuing to do it regarding individual parking spaces. Magistrates, police and other specific people had many parking spaces. He said he found it frightening, and remarked that if they went to Fashion Square and put in meters with a one-hour limit and \$10, not \$5 fines, they could put Fashion Square out of business very quickly, and yet that was what they were doing to themselves downtown. He stated that this was myopic and was troublesome to him, although it was not a BAR issue. He stated that he had asked a City Councilman recently who was in charge of the parking, and the person said he was sorry but he did not know.

Ms. Fenton said she would be glad to bring up the matter at the Council meeting that night. She then asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Schwartz so moved, seconded by Mr. Coiner. The motion carried unanimously. Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

