City of Charlottesville Board of Architectural Review February 20, 2001

Minutes

Present: Linda Winner W.G. Clark Jesse Hook Joe Atkins Preston Coiner Lynne Ely Wade Tremblay Ken Schwartz Also Present: Tarpley Vest

Ms. Winner called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m. She asked whether there were any brief items from the public not on the formal agenda to be presented before the Board. No such items were raised.

Ms. Winner asked for consideration of the minutes from the January 16th meeting. No questions, additions or corrections were noted by members of the Board, and the minutes were approved as presented.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 01-2-1 235 West Main Street

Ms. Vest gave a report on the application, including some background on the Omni Hotel. The hotel was built in 1985 on the urban renewal site that had once been Vinegar Hill. The building was a non-historic building located within the historic district. She indicated that the applicant was seeking approval to install new windows along the facade. Staff had reviewed the application in relation to the applicable design guidelines and had recommended approval, finding that, although the proposal was to cut in new windows, the building was non-historic and the new windows seemed in character with the design of the building.

A representative from RBGC Architects, Marte Rowen, spoke on behalf of the absent applicant, the general manager of the Omni. Ms. Rowen noted that the applicant had provided a site location and a series of photographs for members of the Board not familiar with the multi-faceted facade of the building. The context photographs depicted McDonald's and the old IGA. Ms. Rowen stated that the site photographs reinforced the fact that this was, unfortunately, a non-historic context adjacent to the historic site.

Ms. Rowen noted that the applicant had prepared a series of photographs going around the building, starting with the facades in question, on McIntire Road, directly opposite McDonald's and the IGA. The facade was presently completely blank except for the opening for the garage and a hotel sign. A couple of trees were presently in front of this facade. Moving around, the pictures showed an entry point. The piece in question was, as she understood it, built at the time the Omni was built, as a training center for G.E., a use to which it had been devoted until the present time. She indicated that the Omni planned to renovate the area as office space for an office tenant, so there was not a change of use. Because there would be a tenancy, there was a need for more windows: unlike the training center, new tenants would like to be able to put offices in. She explained that, around the corner from the blank facade, there was the present entry to the training center, with a step and small entry courtyard. Turning the next corner, there was another long blank facade length adjacent to the entry drive, the main entrance to the hotel. She referred then to another picture which showed the facade around the more familiar parts of the hotel, including the guest rooms. She stated that the pictures were to remind the Board of the limited window typology that the original architects used, which were basically strip windows set between little chamfered brick

lines which ran around the building. This series of photographs showed the existing windows, which the applicant intended to replicate as closely as possible with regard to material, hopefully even manufacturer, color, and construction detail.

The applicant proposed to punch windows out of the two facades, of the same size as the existing windows, i.e., which were floor to ceiling and fitted between the two existing brick courses which ran around the two facades. The applicant proposed one group of windows similar to the strip windows that ran around the elevation, but was trying to accomplish this in not too aggressive a way, in the attempt to introduce some compositional variety to enliven the facade. To that end, they proposed to set the windows as punched rather than as a strip window. She stated that this would also be more functional from an office layout point of view, and explained that around the corner from this were a couple more punched windows on the entry drive.

Ms. Rowen showed the Board some prospective sketches of what would be seen as one drove down McIntire Road, with McDonald's on the left. Another sketch showed what one would see driving up McIntire from the other direction, with McDonald's on the right.

Ms. Winner asked if there were any questions or comments for the presenter. Hearing none, Ms. Winner called for a motion. Mr. Clark moved acceptance of the application, seconded by Mr. Schwartz. The motion carried unanimously and the application was accepted as presented.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 01-2-2 121 2nd Street NW

Ms. Vest commented that the Board members might have noticed that the building was actually under renovation, but all the work currently going on had been interior work which did not require BAR approval. A few proposed changes would, however, require BAR approval: the reopening of an original doorway giving onto Second Street and the closing up of the current doorway, including the menu board situation; adding awnings; removing the element from the back roof, the stairway element from the back, and repairing the roof. Staff was pleased to see this work done so comprehensively and was enthusiastic about the attention being paid to the building. Staff recommended approval of all modifications.

The applicant, Mr. Lee, stated that when they got into the interior of the building to do structural repairs, there was one portion of the exterior wall along Market Street that was wood frame, and it was totally rotted, as well as a portion of the roof, due to water infiltration over the years. The floor system had also rotted. Accordingly, he needed to replace the one section of wall at the one-story rear portion of the building along Market Street and the adjacent section of the roof, which is about 100 square feet of roof. He asked that, when they replaced that roof, they be able to address getting all of the roof on the same plane and eliminate some ups and downs that were presenting problems. Another item was to resurrect what appeared to be the original entrance along Second Street. He stated

that that would allow him more easily to achieve uniformity in the floor level of the building. He indicated that he was not seeking to change any colors or exterior materials, but he would like to put awnings back on the building, since the building originally had awnings. He referred the Board members to several black and white photographs from ten or twelve years ago that depicted the building with awnings.

Ms. Winner asked for questions from the Board.

Mr. Clark asked the applicant whether, when he mentioned replacing the metal roof, he meant to replace the metal roof with a metal roof. The applicant replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Schwartz observed that the notes on the elevations showed that all the wood windows would remain and be restored. The applicant agreed that that was the plan. Mr. Schwartz asked the applicant to elaborate on the new, white aluminum entrance to be installed once the original doorway was opened up. The applicant stated that this would be a typical storefront type entrance, door and frame.

Ms. Vest commented that the Board members had received black and white photos in their packets, but color photos were being passed around.

Ms. Winner invited further questions.

Mr. Joe Atkins asked if there would be one jumbo awning going all the way across, and the applicant clarified that this was the case and was a slight change from the decade-old photo, where there were two separate awnings due to the fact that the entrance to be resurrected was not being used at that time.

Ms. Winner asked for additional questions from Board members and the public. Hearing none, she invited comments from the Board.

Mr. Schwartz said that it was great to see this building finally under renovation and that it promised to be terrific upon completion. He asked the applicant and Ms. Vest what the design guidelines said about an aluminum storefront door in a building that had wood windows and

wood doors. Ms. Vest said that she believed that the guidelines leaned away from an aluminum storefront. Mr. Schwartz stated that this was the only concern he had when listening to the presentation, and that it seemed preferable to use for the entry door material that was compatible with the rest of the building.

Mr. Clark agreed with Mr. Schwartz's concern and also agreed that he appreciated the job that was being done. He stated that a wood door might be more in keeping with what the applicant was doing with the building.

Mr. Tremblay moved for adoption of the application, subject to a wood door being substituted for the aluminum door noted on the plan. Mr. Schwartz seconded the motion and clarified that, if possible, the door proposal could come back before the Board next month for separate approval.

The applicant agreed and asked if the style of the door shown on the drawing was acceptable. The applicant noted that it was shown as a wide-style door. It was not a solid, recessed-panel door but a glass door. Mr. Schwartz reiterated that he thought the door should come back before the Board because the color, the exact wood, the detail of the handle, the width, and the glass were key issues. He stated that he thought the Board would be very receptive to a nicely detailed and designed wood door.

The applicant asked whether he could proceed with removing the rotten part of the wall. Ms. Vest responded that the Board could issue a conditional permit to do all the other work.

Ms Winner called for a vote on the motion to approve the application with the exception of the entry door. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 01-2-3 New Building at Fifth and Water Streets

Ms. Vest reported that in January the Board had held an informal, preliminary discussion with the architects about the proposed new building at the corner of Fifth and Water Streets, on the site of a current city service parking lot. Ms. Vest summarized the constructive comments and concerns raised by Board members at that meeting.

Concerns included: the scale of the building in relation to the lower-scale historic buildings just to the east of the site; the scale of the entry opening along Water Street, where there was a large garage entry opening; the classical elements of the top level being out of character with the existing building and context; the windows on the fourth story being out of character with the building's overall design; and that the HVAC units would need to be addressed at some point. Several additional items were requested by Board members to help their review: Drawings showing a larger context area, a model, and a section drawing through the mall, neighboring buildings and alleys. She indicated that the architects, rather than going the model route, were going to show a 3-D representation through their paper presentation. Ms. Vest noted that the applicants, at this point, did not seek approval of the final materials or details but sought approval of the overall design concept and mapping so that they could proceed. She stated that several design schemes were presented, the first scheme being the one reviewed by the Board in January. This evolved into schemes 2A and 2B. Scheme 3 was the one for which the applicant sought approval.

Ms. Vest continued that Staff had reviewed the proposed Scheme 3 against the design guidelines for new construction and concluded that overall the guidelines were met at the design level. Staff was supportive, noting that Scheme 3 was developed in response to the specific concerns raised by the BAR at its last meeting.

The applicant stated that the illustrations he was displaying showed the evolution of the plans in response to the Board's comments at the January meeting. The applicant explained how they had addressed the Board's concerns about the garage opening and the fourth and fifth floor. They had noted that the predominant pattern on Water Street was one of vertically proportioned buildings. They therefore introduced to the proposed building some

niches, running vertically, to break the building up into four bays; this resulted in proportions similar to the other buildings, particularly the older brick buildings along Water Street. In addition, they had remodeled the fifth floor and introduced some hip roofs and further stepping of the mass, in order to break down the mass of the building and introduce some clearly recognizable residential elements, since this had a residential use. Finally, they had re-thought the garage design and determined that they were able to get the cars in the garage area without having to cross the floor plate, allowing them to bring the street level windows across the facade and create a more appropriately scaled entrance into the garage.

The applicant stated that the materials they proposed were brick as the primary material, some cast-stone

trim for copings and parapets, and aluminum metal type windows with perhaps copper spandrels to help

tie in the copper roof proposed up on the hips. He then invited questions.

Ms. Hook asked if the windows continued around on Fifth Street, and the applicant answered that the windows did continue on Fifth Street, the east side, and the north side; however, the pattern changed and became more of a punched opening type of window arrangement, similar to the kind of buildings seen along Fifth Street.

Mr. Atkins asked about a distortion he observed in the applicant's context section drawing, and the applicant explained that the drawing was produced by taking some digital photographs of each building, clipping them, stretching them, and scaling them to the plans of Water Street. That process introduced some errors, in that the heights on those buildings were in error in the range of ten to fifteen percent, so that the proposed building appeared to be worse than it was.

In response to a question from Ms. Hook, the applicant stated that there would be six condos in the building. The first four floors were office and professional space; the ground floor was to be retail or commercial.

Ms. Winner asked if there were any additional questions. Hearing none, she called for comments from the Board.

Mr. Clark expressed some disappointment with the new design, commenting that he felt the applicant's original design had better reflected the warehouse appearance of surrounding buildings and that the design had lost ground in that regard, because it no longer recalled any scale of anything vaguely reminiscent of a warehouse. Mr. Clark acknowledged that he could not argue that one must have an office building represent a warehouse, but if one were trying to achieve that, it seemed to him that the original plan achieved it better. He felt that the new plan seemed to introduce new materials and to pavilion the top floor residential structures to a greater degree, resulting in an appearance which he thought was a little silly. Mr. Wood also expressed disappointment that a model had not been provided as requested, particularly for such an important building in the city, with acknowledged problems of adjacency, particularly to the east, with the little buildings that it adjoined. He stated that it would be worthwhile to produce a physical model, especially since the drawings were inaccurate.

Mr. Schwartz noted that the Board had not seen the north and east windows before and that he was comfortable with the windows of these two sides. He also felt that the new design for the windows of the Fifth Street side was an improvement. As for the Water Street side, he observed that the Board had never really talked about dividing up the building into four articulated pieces. He commented that this articulation was not a development that interested him, either: it took a building that had a particular identity related to some of the large brick buildings in that part of downtown Charlottesville, along the railroad tracks primarily, and made it more domestic or modified to look like a twenty-five-foot parallel wall building, which it was not. Looking at the different versions, Mr. Schwartz preferred several of the other options which presented the building as a mass, which it was, with a minor event occurring at the corner. His main concern on the first plan had related to how the applicant would develop the industrial language of the curtain wall, and the "zipper" going along the top of the fourth floor. On Scheme 3, there were a lot of fairly small-scaled windows without the same kind of joined expression seen on the first plan in January. Mr. Schwartz concluded that Schemes 1, 2, and 2A were all more successful because they addressed many of these qualities which the Board had supported in January.

Ms. Winner clarified that Scheme 1 was the original plan presented to the Board in January. The applicant stated that the additional schemes presented reflect their response to the Board's January comments but that they would take the present comments to heart. The applicant asked if 2A and 2B better addressed the Board's comments, and Mr. Schwartz suggested that the rest of the Board comment.

Mr. Atkins stated that he was not present for the January presentation and was looking at the application from a fresh perspective. He referred to the overall horizontal emphasis of the first scheme, with the band at the retail or main street level, before all of the windows started, and then the two stories, and then the added story with the condominiums pulled back. He stated he was trying to figure out if those design elements were disappearing altogether except as they would be seen from Belmont Bridge.

The applicant replied that, yes, the "pavilions" were being pulled back at least six feet to allow for balcony and outdoor space. From the street, he said, they would be essentially invisible.

Mr. Atkins remarked that from the first three comments, there seemed to be consensus that the way the recesses accentuated the vertical aspect of this very tall building was objectionable. In the original design, the horizontal lines at street level and even the treatment of the fourth story helped make the building respond to the basic one-story retail and two-story buildings down the street. He stated that he would feel more comfortable if the recesses went back a way and a horizontal band was added, possibly where the awning was, to check against making the building seem taller than necessary. He approved of the changes made to the garage and voiced a general concern about the floor plate getting too thin at the span. He added that he appreciated the small end-piece as an entry, and seconded the need for the pitched roofs up on the top, stating that those might be more simple penthouses.

Mr. Coiner agreed with the comments about the fifth floor, noting that it looked like an afterthought and that he could not visualize it.

Mr. Tremblay commented that he felt out of his element when discussing architectural details, but that he kind of liked the little roof lines.

The applicant stated that one of the reasons they were introducing the hip roof was to further allow the massing to recede from the front of the building, so that everything seemed to set back, with the front facade along Water Street, the plane of the condominiums on the top floor set back eight to ten feet, and then from that, further receding, the hip roofs, to try to break up and further recede the top floor.

Mr. Tremblay stated that, as designed, that element would become almost invisible. The applicant stated that, as one Board member had mentioned, the only place from which it could be seen was the Belmont Bridge. He observed that they had misunderstood the Board's comments regarding the fourth floor at the January meeting. They had interpreted the comments to mean that the horizontality was not viewed favorably, and this understanding was part of the reason they wound up where they did on the other schemes, though they had perhaps reacted excessively to the Board's concerns regarding the fifth floor. They were trying, he said, to set up a very simple coping detail for the top of the parapet walls. He then asked if he were interpreting the Board members' comments correctly.

Mr. Schwartz stated that, when he made the comment about the fourth floor, he was actually responding to the fact that it looked like a foreign element in the context of the larger-grouped sets of windows, which looked like the industrial warehouse aesthetic the Board had supported. So, the issue for the fourth floor was to discover what other strategies there might be to develop the fenestration at that level on Water Street that could better respect the elements introduced on the building. Mr. Schwartz stated that he could understand how the applicants could have interpreted that as a concern about the horizontal nature, but for him, it was more an issue of how those windows meshed with the other windows, the three big fields. He recalled that they had discussed the Temple Beth Israel building and its windows: a large expanse of curtain wall glass that has a very delicate level of detail, which works in

its historical context very well. Mr. Schwartz stated that he did not have a specific solution to the fourth floor in mind, but the overall horizontal swipe of windows was a concern because it was foreign to the other strategy that the applicant introduced.

Mr. Schwartz commented on Scheme 2A, saying he could understand the strategies where a punched window was introduced, which followed what Joe Atkins had said earlier about getting a bottom, a middle and a top. Also, he said there could also easily be a strategy where floors 2, 3 and 4 were all grabbed as one coordinated system of curtain wall that occurred three times over the breadth of the building.

The applicant stated that that sounded to him like Scheme 3 minus the reveals.

Mr. Schwartz answered that Scheme 3 minus the reveals had one significant difference as compared with Schemes 1, 2 and 3, which was that the green spandrel panels introduced yet another material, another color and a totally different reading for that building. He stated he was not comfortable with Scheme 3 because it was producing some of the qualities mentioned by Mr. Clark at the beginning; he was more comfortable with Scheme 1, 2 or 2-A, since all of those expressed the building in a more coordinated way as a monolithic brick building along Water Street, like others already there, albeit one that was being built in 2001 or '02. He thought that on the fifth floor, a simple flat roof system with a simple parapet articulation was a very consistent way to go in the context of overall building strategy, and that as to the other elements, he thought this was an improvement from the fifth floor they had seen

a month ago, but it would be even better if the penthouses became less like little classical pavilions on the roof and more like penthouses on top of the building. He noted that they would be great apartments, with incredible views.

Mr. Clark suggested that if they took Scheme 1, given the expressed concern about the single long, unbroken window area, which was beginning to look better to him as time went on, they could break that window into three parts. He said it seemed a very sudden jump from the conditions of Scheme 1 to the things which followed it, and there might be something between 1 and 2 as a compromise.

The applicant remarked upon their strong reaction to the January comments, which they had interpreted to indicate that the horizontal nature of the window was not favored.

Mr. Schwartz replied that following Mr. Clark's last comment -- the same window strategy, but stopping at the line of each brick tier -- could actually be a viable strategy as well.

Ms. Winner asked if there were any additional comments.

The applicant asked about possible change of material in a spandrel which was shown in the window grouping in Schemes 1 and 2 and illustrated in a dark tone. He wanted to know if the objection to Scheme 3 was to the change of material or to the spandrel element itself.

Mr. Clark remarked that the spandrel was getting deeper and deeper, and that on the applicant's first design, there appeared to be an attempt to suppress the reading of the spandrel. He

mentioned that that could be done in several different ways, for instance taking a floor slab and making it thinner as it approached the wall. He stated that they didn't have to register full duct and ceiling dimensions with the spandrel because it could be held back from the edge of the glass. He said he admired the scale and direction of the first drawing and knew that trying to suppress something like that was hard work. He thought they could do it even more, to the benefit of the building.

Mr. Clark made a motion that they not accept the project as presented to them that evening and that they ask the applicants to return to the Board next month with further study, particularly of the Water Street facade.

Mr. Schwartz asked if that was a motion for deferral, and said he would be happy to second such a motion.

Mr. Clark moved for deferral, seconded by Mr. Schwartz. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 01-2-4 208 South Street

Ms. Vest reported that this building was built in 1899 and was now listed in the historical files as the Carol Higgins House. It had recently changed owners, and the new owner was modifying the existing house to enlarge the kitchen and bathroom. The two addition elements would go onto the rear of the house and would be largely invisible from the public right of way. She indicated that there were certain angles from which they might be visible, however, and therefore Staff had reviewed the application against the design guidelines for new additions. She pointed out that the additions complied with the guidelines in terms of location, in terms of not destroying historic material which characterized the property, and in terms of the new work being differentiated from the old and being compatible with massing, size, scale and architectural features, and Staff therefore would recommend approval.

Mr. Anderson said they had brought a larger set of elevations for the Board to look at if they wanted to. He noted that it was a fairly clear-cut, simple addition, and that he had nothing to add to what Ms. Vest had said, though he would be happy to answer questions.

Ms. Winner asked if there were any questions from the Board.

Mr. Devins, the adjoining property owner, asked if the additions were on the left, the right, or both as one faced the rear facade. He also wanted to know if there would be windows, as his bedroom was only about eight feet away from one of the walls.

Mr. Anderson responded that the additions were on both sides, and indicated on the plans where they were located. He also indicated the location of the two windows, stating that one matched an existing window, and the other was just to allow light into the area it served rather than provide any kind of view.

Mr. Devins also asked about whether they were building out to the farthest corner, noting the closeness of the center portion of the building to the property line, which was defined by a tall fence. He wondered what would happen during construction and how the applicant planned to maintain the property. He also enquired if they would use a higher rated material for fire safety because of that wall's proximity to the next structure.

Mr. Anderson replied that the wall in question was about two feet from the property line, and that the material included a rated sheathing. He had not been personally tracking the Code issues on this, he said, but someone else was doing it.

Ms. Winner called for additional questions, or comments from the Board.

Mr. Atkins asked for clarification concerning whether the addition on the right in the rear elevation would be filling in the space of the existing porch on the right-hand side, with the stairs projecting out slightly farther. Mr. Anderson confirmed this.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Ms. Winner called for a motion.

Mr. Clark moved the proposal as submitted be accepted, seconded by Mr. Schwartz, who commended the owner, Mr. Devins, and the architect for their very sensitive and thoughtful proposal, saying it was great to see another house being lavished with care and attention along with the others which had been so beautifully restored on South Street. The motion carried unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION BAR 01-2-5 500 Park Street

Ms. Vest passed around a color photograph of the site. She reported that the carriage house predated the church itself, having been a carriage house to the residence which stood on the church property. The church was built in the 1950s, and she stated that the historic files contained very little information about the previous residence or its carriage house. She commented that if anyone had uncovered anything pertinent, the Staff would like to add it to their files. She reported that they had reviewed the proposed rehabilitation against the guidelines and had found that the proposed new materials, essentially new windows and doors, were very appropriate to the period and style of the building. She enthusiastically recommended approval of this renovation, saying they were glad to see this being done, as the carriage house was such a unique historic resource on Park Street.

On behalf of First Presbyterian Church, the applicant, Ms. Nancy Roach, voiced her church's happiness that the restoration was being done. She added that the carriage house had been built at a later time than the house it had originally served, and she did not know that the two had been really architecturally compatible. There truly were no pictures, and very little information, she said. She assured them that they had tried to be very careful and sensitive in bringing the building back to an appropriate look, true to its original appearance.

Ms. Winner invited questions from the Board.

Ms. Hook enquired if there were access to the second floor or attic from within the building, or only from the exterior steps.

Ms. Roach replied that they did not know what the original access had been. From what they had seen, they thought there were not original stairs. There had been a temporary stair, she said, which had at some point also been removed.

Ms. Hook asked if the space upstairs was utilized a lot.

Ms. Roach answered that it had served as space for the former Train Club. She said it was a wonderful space, some 31' by 11' in size, for which they had no immediate plans, but felt it had potential for the future, and they needed safe, good stairs to get to it. To the comment that the present exterior stairway was not particularly attractive, she responded that their plan was to make it nicer-looking, which was why they were turning it to go back away from the building and away from Park Street, and then bringing it back. She added that they hoped the shrubbery planned would also screen it somewhat.

Ms. Winner asked how the space was currently used.

Ms. Roach replied that the two main rooms would be assembly rooms, hopefully for people in the community. It was not possible at this stage, she stated, to say what their use might be, but there would be two rooms approximately 24' by nearly 15'.

Ms. Winner asked how the space was heated and air conditioned.

Ms. Roach indicated it would be heated by gas, forced air, and would have central air conditioning. There had been gas heaters in there, but they would all be replaced.

Ms. Winner invited other questions or comments.

Mr. Coiner remarked that he believed Ms. Roach was ten years off on the demolition.

Ms. Roach responded that as she had noted previously, they had scant information concerning the previous structure; they had assumed the demolition occurred fairly shortly prior to the construction of the church but that might have been in error.

Ms. Vest said she thought that house had been taken down about 1965, and Ms. Roach commented that she had been ten years off the other way.

Mr. Clark mentioned that increasingly they saw people coming before the Board and wanting to downgrade roofs because upkeep and maintenance on a roof system as rich and important to the building as the one in the present case was, was very expensive. He remarked how pleasing it was to see someone caring enough to keep and maintain it.

Ms. Winner saluted the church for the fine volunteer effort, saying that the Board appreciated that. She called for further comment.

Mr. Atkins remarked that the craft that had gone into the renovation was appreciated, mentioning specifically the doors that faced Park Street.

Mr. Schwartz added to the praise for the project, saying it was great to see the church doing this and also wonderful to see the volunteer work going into it. He remarked that the proposal was easy to understand and that it was heartening to see all the work that was going into it. He wished them good luck.

Ms. Winner invited a motion. Mr. Coiner moved approval of the project, seconded by Mr. Clark. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Winner asked if there was any other business to come before the Board. Hearing none, she called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Tremblay so moved, seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion carried unanimously.

Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.