

City of Charlottesville
Board of Architectural Review
August 21, 2001

Minutes

Present:

Lynne Heetderks (Vice Chair)
Ken Schwartz
Linda Winner
Preston Coiner
Joe Atkins
W.G. Clark

Also Present:

Tarpley Vest

Ms. Heetderks called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., explaining that she would be acting as chair in Ms. Fenton's absence. She then called for matters from the public that were not on the formal agenda to be presented.

When none were heard, Ms. Heetderks recommended deferring the approval of the minutes until the end of the meeting so the Board could move on to the applications.

The Board first discussed the request to designate Oakwood and Maplewood cemeteries as minor architectural design control districts. Ms. Vest reminded the Board that it had considered proposals raised by citizens and the Albemarle Historical Society to designate the two cemeteries as local minor architectural design control districts in June and July, and that survey research on the cemeteries by Kathleen Durham of the City Staff was available to the Board.

She explained that the Board's formal recommendation would go to the Planning Commission for a public hearing on rezoning; the Planning Commission's recommendation would then go to the City Council, the first Monday in October at the very soonest.

Ms. Vest introduced Pat Plocek of the Parks division. Mr. Plocek wanted to be sure the Board understood that the designation of the cemeteries as local minor architectural control districts would not automatically increase funding for maintenance of the cemeteries.

Mr. Schwartz enquired about the significance of designating a site as a "minor" local architectural control district. Ms. Vest explained that this term referred to individually designated properties, as opposed to major local architectural control districts, which designate a group of properties.

Mr. Coiner asked what area would be encompassed by the designation of Oakwood cemetery. Staff explained that the proposed designation included the main Oakwood cemetery and the old Daughters of Zion Cemetery, but not the privately maintained Hebrew Cemetery.

Mr. Atkins wondered if the Board needed to address the issue of maintenance funding raised by Mr. Plocek, and Ms. Vest suggested that they could indicate in the language of their recommendation that they are aware of the issue.

Mr. Schwartz moved for advancing the recommendation for both properties to the Planning Commission and City Council, seconded by Mr. Clark. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-6-8
Market Street Parking Garage

The Board then took up the Certificate of Appropriateness Application for the renovation of the Market Street Parking Garage for retail uses. Ms. Vest explained that the item had been before the Board in June and July. Both the Board and Staff had been enthusiastic about the design. The applicants now sought approval for the materials to be used for the project.

Mr. Bruce Wardell displayed a sample of the proposed store-front system. A frameless glass system had proved cost prohibitive. The applicants instead favored a Kawneer system with a cover plate on the bottom and top rail. He said they wanted to keep

everything below the canopy as clean as possible; the installation would have insulated glass with the frame behind set between the brick piers of the garage.

The project called for bluestone at the threshold of the doors where they are recessed from the store-front. Lighting would be projected between a double layer of laminated frosted glass. The fixtures would be capped and would comply with the dark-sky ordinance, although the City did not have one.

He explained, displaying samples of each, that the architects preferred a copper canopy, but, at the request of the City, they had also included a cheaper alternative in the bid. The steel framework for the glass would have a dark-grey matt finish.

Ms. Heetderks asked if there were any questions from the public. Hearing none, she called for questions from the Board.

Mr. Atkins asked about the corner where the store-front turned back into the door. Mr. Wardell replied that there was a cover at the exterior corner, but none at the interior corner. This would be the only place with a vertical element.

Mr. Schwartz enquired about the alignment of the canopies along Main Street. Mr. Wardell said they were all low. He added that if the project was continued beyond the four bays then proposed, any further canopies would also be low.

Mr. Clark moved to accept the material palette, stating a strong preference for the copper canopies,

seconded by Ms. Winner. Mr. Schwartz wondered if it would be possible to approve only the copper.

After a general discussion, Mr. Clark entered a new motion to accept the material palette with the requirement that copper canopies be used, seconded by Ms. Winner. It was unanimously approved.

Mr. Schwartz wished to commend Ms. Durham for her research on the designation of Oakwood and Maplewood Cemeteries, discussed earlier; he said she had done a superb job.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-8-19
522 North First Street

The Board then turned to the certificate of appropriateness application for 522 North First Street, one of several examples of Victorian vernacular architecture in the vicinity. Ms. Vest explained that the house had been built in 1889 and undergone major restorations in 1977. The applicants were replacing three levels of wood decks, partially visible from Second Street Northwest, on the rear of the house. They sought approval to build a new roof structure over the top level. The roof-line would be set off slightly, differentiating it from the original structure, which was in keeping with design guidelines, as was the applicants' plan to exactly match the existing materials. Staff therefore recommended approval.

Ms. Linda Peacock, one of the applicants, added that they were planning to replace the three decks, but they hoped the materials for the new decks would more closely match the house than those used in the existing ones.

Ms. Heetderks asked if there were comments or questions from the public or the members of the Board. Hearing none, she called for a motion.

Ms. Winner moved to accept the application as presented, seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion was unanimously approved.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 98-11-52
100 West Main Street

The Board next addressed the Certificate of Appropriateness Application for a modified railing design at 100 West Main Street. In introducing the application, Ms. Vest commented that Staff found the railing quite appropriate to the building and the site. Staff encouraged approval of the railings.

The applicant, Ms. Lexie Boris, said that the modified railing would run only along the retaining wall running on First Street. She thought that railing with straight bars might be a little stark in

the context of the adjacent brick walls, and it would be nice to have some curves to soften them.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Coiner moved for approval, seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion was unanimously approved. Mr. Coiner thanked the applicant for not installing the railing before seeking approval from the Board.

As Charles Kabbash, the applicant for a Certificate of Appropriateness regarding 300 East Market Street, was not present, this item was moved to the end of the agenda.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-6-11
120 East Main Street

The Board then moved to the Certificate of Appropriateness Application for a new store front at 120 East Main Street. Ms. Vest explained that the applicant was constructing a store-front for a new restaurant. A small material change had come up during construction. She noted that the architect had submitted the change and it was on file when it occurred, so it had been the architect's intention to seek approval first. Ms. Vest indicated that Staff had no problem with the change, which she described as subtle and barely noticeable.

Mr. Robert Nichols, an architect with the applicant, Framework Design, explained that he also wanted to present plans for an entrance-way to an upstairs office adjacent to the restaurant, which had been an open issue the last time he presented the store-front to the Board.

Regarding the material change, he explained that there had been problems with the lead-coated copper panels originally presented. The architects had recommended that their client use another type of panel instead. These panels were currently in place on the building, but would probably be taken down and put back up because of poor workmanship. The applicants still intended to use this material in that area, but it was a change to what had already been approved.

Mr. Nichols then turned to proposals for the entrance-way to the upstairs office in the adjacent

building. He explained that the wall in front of the entrance to the office would be turned into an aluminum store-front to match that of the restaurant, and using material examples, described the proposed changes to the Board.

He noted that while the pilasters and cornice were yellow, the architects were talking to the owner of the building about painting these to match the existing white trim. He added that the soffit treatment in their entrance would be extended to the adjacent building.

Mr. Clark was curious about what happened to the lead-coated copper, and noted that the current material seemed nailed into place. The applicant replied that it was a matter of cost, and at one point, a dimensional issue as well, with design constraints demanding internal seams in the panels. The replacement material was glued and then crudely screwed in in different locations. This was the primary reason it needed to be reinstalled.

Mr. Clark asked whether glass clips had been anticipated. Mr. Nichols responded that glass clips were required, but chrome ones had been used temporarily because the specified material had been unavailable. The applicants planned to replace them with something less reflective.

Mr. Coiner asked how they planned to treat the screw holes in the seams when the panels were reinstalled. The applicant replied that the seams would remain as depicted, but different fasteners were being investigated. He thought they would end up with fasteners on the surface, visible from the outside, but they would have to be in an orderly pattern. He assured Mr. Coiner they would not use dry-wall screws.

Hearing no further questions, Ms. Heetderks called for comments from the public or the Board.

Mr. Coiner commented that he was surprised at the way the pilasters seemed to be obscured by the cast iron supports, which changed the look in a way he did not expect. The applicant noted that the existing design did this to some extent as well.

Ms. Heetderks commented that she was pleased to hear the cornice and pilasters were going to be painted white.

Mr. Atkins said that it would be nice if there were a way to counter-sink the fasteners with a disc plug. Mr. Nichols indicated that they were experimenting with filling options; he thought disc plugs were their first preference.

In response to a question from Mr. Coiner, Mr. Nichols explained that the contractor had had trouble holding the paneling up with adhesive, and was using screws to clamp it in place until something else could be done.

Mr. Clark suggested looking at mirror hardware for that purpose.

Mr. Atkins commented that the screws made it look temporarily installed. He then moved to approve all of the changes to the palette and the adjustments to the adjacent tenant door and suggested that details of the fasteners could be administratively approved.

Mr. Nichols asked if the Board was encouraging a non-visible fastener solution. Mr. Atkins confirmed this.

Mr. Coiner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-8-21

416 West Main Street

The Board next considered the Certificate of Appropriateness Application for a new store-front at 416 West Main Street, the old McGregor Motors building. Ms. Vest explained that although the Board had looked at a more elaborate proposal in the past, presented by a different architect, to construct a second story and redo the store-fronts, the applicants were presently seeking approval just for the store-fronts along West Main Street. Finding that they were in accordance with the design guidelines, Staff recommended approval.

An architect from Framework Design explained that the design included two openings, one existing and one proposed, on the east and west facades of the

building in addition to the store-fronts. These would serve as entrances to a market-place gallery being developed within the building.

The architect indicated that she had only rendered what they were proposing as the new store-front. Pointing to existing features of the building, she indicated that they proposed to mirror them, filling in between them with structural glass set in a concealed aluminum store-front system. She indicated that on the east and west facades, at the very end, there was a half-Quonset hut, clad in corrugated

metal. The applicants proposed that three new openings be put in that part of the facade. One would be an overhead glass garage door, the other two, fixed glass with a strong, colored frame. They also planned to redo the corrugated metal. She then described plans for the new garage door and two large off-set glass doors with an aluminum frame.

Ms. Heetderks asked if there were any questions from the public or members of the Board. She asked whether the awning over the entrance on the left of the Main Street facade would remain. The applicant replied that it would.

Mr. Coiner was curious about the reason for having one large one and one small window in the Quonset hut section on the west elevation. The applicant explained that while it was partly composition, it was also functional. The large window would open onto a two-story space that would serve as a fishmonger's processing area and would allow in a lot of light. The smaller window opened onto a small office and needed to be kept above desk level.

Ms. Winner wanted to know what would be involved in redoing the corrugated metal. The applicant explained that they were going to replace it with new metal.

Ms. Heetderks asked if there were any further questions. Hearing none, she called for comments.

Mr. Clark commented that it was a pleasure to see such investment in the design of small things. He said the applicant had spent as much time on that door and its threshold as time had been spent on some five story buildings that had been presented to the BAR.

Ms. Winner moved to accept the proposal as presented, seconded by Mr. Clark. The application was approved unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-8-22

122 East Main Street

Ms. Vest reviewed the history of the site. The building was built in 1897. The section in question had been used as a grocery store and a drug store for many years. The current owner wished to install a door to the second floor, immediately to the west of the existing store-front on West Main Street. The door would replicate one of the two main entrance doors. She said Staff recommended approval, pointing out that entrances of that nature were common on the downtown mall, and that it seemed in keeping with the rhythm of the mall. She then introduced the owner, Hal Brindlay.

Mr. Brindlay explained that he was faced with the difficulty of separating the upstairs from the downstairs, so he could lease the upstairs. The current entrance to the upstairs was through the back end downstairs, which would be the back end of the shop. He said he had looked around the mall at what other people had done to come up with his design.

Ms. Heetderks asked if there were any questions from the public or the Board. She then enquired exactly where the door would be. Indicating the location on a photograph, Mr. Brindlay explained that it would be inside the inset, and gave further details.

Mr. Brindlay added that, although not part of the proposal, there was an old Coca-Cola sign on the side of his building, probably last painted in the 1920s. He was interested in preserving it. He asked the Board for ideas.

Ms. Heetderks suggested the Board address the door issue before returning to that concern.

Mr. Coiner moved to accept the proposal as presented, seconded by Mr. Schwartz. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Heetderks, commenting that she had given tours of

ghost signs on the downtown mall, agreed that it was terrible that the sign was fading away, but thought it would not be good idea to repaint it. She wondered if the architects could suggest a way to stabilize it.

Mr. Clark suggested the Prosoco company, a manufacturer of concrete and masonry coatings.

Mr. Brindlay added that he probably would return the Board with a proposal to restore the old 14-foot ceilings in the building and three eye windows on the side.

Mr. Schwartz thought the BAR would favorably receive the sort of restoration the applicant was proposing if the materials used were similar to those used elsewhere on the mall.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-8-23

101 East Jefferson Street

The Board next considered the Certificate of Appropriateness Application for a new addition and entrance at First United Methodist Church at 101 East Jefferson Street. Ms. Vest reminded everyone that in July 1999, the Board approved a design to make the church more accessible, with conditions that the final materials be resubmitted. Because twelve months had passed since the project's initial approval, the applicant was required to re-submit the project for approval, as well as the final materials.

Mr. Samuel Darnell, the architect, told the Board that the plans called for a new stair on the corner of the church to connect the lower level to the front vestibule, now accessible indoors only from the sanctuary. The new stairway would use the same construction, materials and details as the church's existing terrace stairway. He then presented material samples to the Board for the other features of the church previously approved.

Stan Tatum, the landscape architect for the project, explained that the only changes from the original rendering had been the addition of a couple of trees in the central island to help control traffic by emphasizing it as central point. He described the church as having a strong landscape presence already,

and said that they didn't want to overpower the space.

Mr. Coiner informed the rest of the Board that since he attended the church in question, he had contacted the City Attorney to find out whether he needed to abstain from voting on this application. He had been told he could vote as long he did not have any gain or loss. He commented that he hoped to gain spiritually, but the State Code did not appear to cover that.

Mr. Coiner also asked Ms. Vest why the Director of Planning did not grant an extension on the building permit. She explained that the BAR's approval expired after 12 months unless a building permit had been obtained and work had begun on the site. He lacked the authority because work had not begun.

Ms. Winner asked when the project was expected to be completed. Mr. Darnell replied that most contractors he had talked with expected it to be a 15-to-18-month project.

Mr. Coiner asked if there would be a new curb cut on Second Street. Mr. Tatum replied that there would be.

Ms. Winner moved to accept the proposal, seconded by Mr. Coiner. It passed unanimously.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION 01-8-20
300 and 308 East Market Street

Ms. Vest explained that the applicant was building a second story porch joining the two buildings, and at this point was seeking approval on two changes:

reconstruction of the inset door-frame and installation of a bronze gate over a recessed entrance to improve security. Ms. Vest pointed out that the design guidelines recommended avoiding colonial decorative elements, which the applicant sought to comply with by bringing the door-frame design back its original condition. Concerning the bronze gate, Staff felt that it was definitely called for and that the bronze material was appropriate and attractive.

Ms. Winner asked what the gate would look like. Ms.

Vest showed a drawing of the gate.

Mr. Coiner moved that the Board accept the gate as presented, seconded by Mr. Atkins. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Atkins moved to approve the change in the door, seconded by Ms. Winner. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Heetderks commented that this was the first BAR meeting in her memory where every motion had passed unanimously.

Ms. Heetderks pointed out that the Board still needed to address the issue of Preservation Awards. Ms. Vest said that Staff had not been able to get a report to the Board on the history of Eugene Williams. She hoped to do so in September.

Mr. Schwartz said he would like to have more information. Mr. Coiner said he would like to see it come as a report. Ms. Heetderks suggested the Board wait till September.

Mr. Schwartz raised another issue. He had read in the American Institute of Architects newsletter that the City of Charlottesville used uninsurable contracts. He had placed a phone call to the Mayor and sent a letter to the City Manager asking if the report was true, and, if so, why the contracts were used. Acknowledging that he did not know all of the

issues and wanted to learn more, he had informed the Mayor that if the City did use uninsurable contractual instruments, and planned to continue to do so, he would resign from the BAR and would share the information with other architects.

Mr. Clark agreed that it was a serious issue. He pointed out that if reputable firms were unable to contract with the City, the City was apt to contract with firms that were not insured or were not paying attention.

Mr. Schwartz commented that the Mayor had not been aware of the situation, and he was suitably concerned and supportive of his writing a letter to the City Manager.

Ms. Winner asked what could be done about the

problem. Mr. Schwartz explained that the AIA contracts were the industry standard. The alternative contract that was used by the City, which was unacceptable to the two largest insurance companies in the United States, was written by a contractors' and owners' association.

Both Mr. Clark and Mr. Schwartz pointed out that design firms which were very qualified and interested in working for the City might find out, after making a considerable investment and being selected, that they could not accept the contract.

Ms. Winner asked Mr. Schwartz if he had read the report in a national newsletter, and if other cities had been named. Mr. Schwartz replied that it was a state newsletter, but that this was specifically a Charlottesville issue.

Ms. Winner wondered what the motivation for using this contract might be. Mr. Schwartz commented that the decision might have been made on a bureaucratic level and might have been well intentioned.

Mr. Clark introduced another issue. He had agreed to sit on the selection committee for the urban design

study, which would be taking a serious look at the Downtown Mall and its associated streets, but he had discovered that he would be unable to attend because of a conflict with his teaching schedule. He said that Mr. Tolbert had asked the Board to nominate a replacement, preferably another architect. After a brief discussion, Mr. Schwartz agreed to take his place.

Ms. Heetderks announced a lecture on African-American burials and a tour of Maplewood cemetery on November 16, sponsored by the Historical Society, Preservation Piedmont, and the African-American Genealogy Group.

Mr. Coiner said that he and Mr. Atkins had met several times to review the City Code as it applied to the BAR. He had a number of questions for Ms. Vest concerning the application procedure. Ms. Vest explained that the applicants first went to the Board's staff person.

Some applicants came to her office having found out about the process when applying for a building permit. Some applicants familiar with the process

dropped off their application on the day of the deadline. Others who hadn't previously worked with the BAR came in early to discuss the process, pick up an application, and find out what they needed to submit. Some regular applicants also came to her office in advance to make sure they were on the same page about what they needed to submit. She described the first two types of applicants as more common, adding that the applicants were not formally required to meet with the staff person.

Mr. Coiner and Ms. Vest both recalled past projects where the applicant or architect seemed not to have looked at the guidelines before submitting.

Mr. Coiner asked whether Ms. Vest could see or suggest ways to improve the process. She indicated that while the theory behind the extended deadline was to allow the applicants more time to work with Staff, some applicants submitted only a basic

proposal by the deadline to hold a spot on the agenda and stalled on submitting additional materials. She hoped to work with her supervisors to develop guidelines clarifying what could be submitted after 21 days. She suggested mass-mailings to architects and contractors and posting the guidelines on the web.

Ms. Winner commented that if she were an architect, she would want to have the guidelines handy.

Ms. Vest added that some other offices had the guidelines, but this didn't necessarily work in the Staff's favor because it could encourage last minute drop-offs.

Mr. Coiner said he and Mr. Atkins wanted the BAR to avoid being in the position of acting on an application that the guidelines said the Board shouldn't be involved with.

In response to what Mr. Coiner called "his monthly question," Ms. Vest promised to have signs posted on the sites two weeks in advance of the September meeting.

Ms. Heetderks said Ms. Fenton and herself, together with Maurice Jones, had decided to issue a press release after every BAR meeting. She would be drafting the body of the releases and sending them to

Mr. Jones, who would send them out on City of Charlottesville letterhead.

Mr. Schwartz voiced his support of the idea.

Mr. Coiner asked Ms. Vest to furnish him with a current copy of the City Code as it applied to the BAR.

Ms. Schwartz liked the idea posting the guidelines on the web and a mailing to architects, developers and contractors telling them where to find the information. He thought it could be a good public relations gesture as well.

Ms. Winner added that they could mention it in their press release once it was posted on the web.

Mr. Schwartz suggested that Ms. Vest might be able to get help from the local American Institute of Architects.

Mr. Coiner commented that page 12 was missing from his copy of the minutes, and he would abstain from voting on them.

Mr. Schwartz said that, other than the missing page, the minutes looked fine and he would be glad to offer a motion for approval, with the addition of one comment. He noted that, according to the minutes, Orbit Billiards was planning to come back before the Board. Ms. Vest reported that the metal-smith for Orbit had informed her that he planned to return to the BAR with the applicant, Andrew Vaughn, during the public comment period, but they had not shown up.

Mr. Schwartz said he wanted to get something in the current minutes about that situation before voting on last month's minutes.

Ms. Winner wanted to know when the metal-smith was supposed to come back. Mr. Schwartz said no time had been specified in the minutes.

Ms. Heetderks offered two corrections to the minutes. She pointed out that Kathleen Durham's name had been incorrectly noted as Kathleen Jerome throughout the minutes. Second, in the last paragraph on page 21, she suggested that the phrase, "Monticello roof," be changed to "Monticello Hotel roof."

Mr. Coiner asked if Mr. Barton had been present at the previous meeting. Several Board members recalled that he had been absent, and therefore should not be listed in the minutes.

Mr. Schwartz wanted to add to the minutes that he believed that a metal worker's explanation of why it would be difficult to install something on the inside

of the Orbit would not be germane to the Board's purview. He moved that in regards to the deferral of the Orbit Billiards' application that the Board expected them to return next month.

There was a general discussion about what the applicants should do when they returned. Mr. Schwartz let the motion stand at the expectation of their return next month.

Mr. Coiner added that he had received a call from the black-smith who said that he could not devise a way to put the metal sculpture inside. He had urged him to contact Ms. Vest and come to the public session of the meeting.

Mr. Coiner then seconded Mr. Schwartz' motion. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Schwartz moved to approve the minutes with the changes suggested by Ms. Heetderks, seconded by Ms. Winner. The motion passed with the abstention of Mr. Atkins.

Mr. Schwartz then made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Coiner.

Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.