

**City of Charlottesville
Board of Architectural Review
January 15, 2002**

Minutes

Present:

Joan Fenton (Chair)
Linda Winner
Wade Tremblay
Joe Atkins
Preston Coiner
Lynne Heetderks
Ken Schwartz
Mr. Barton

Also Present:

Tarpley Vest

Ms. Fenton convened the meeting at 5:06 p.m.

She then called for matters from the public which were not on the agenda.

There being none, that portion of the meeting was closed.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION

BAR 01-10-31

322 East Main Street -- Timberlakes Drug Store

Tax Map 28 Parcel 44

Building addition floor

David Plantz, Applicant/Gwyn Gilliam, Architect

Ms. Fenton called on Tarpley Vest to make the staff report. Ms. Vest reported that the building was built in 1896. A third story and mansard roof were removed following a fire in 1909. The applicants made an informal presentation in 2000 to add an additional story to the building. Their follow up to this request in October, 2001, was deferred in order for additional information to be supplied to the Board. The applicants responded to many of the issues raised by the Board in October. Staff reviewed the proposal against the design guidelines. The applicants have responded to the concerns relating to the massing, and they have further developed the fenestrations. Staff support the changes and recommend approval subject to final review of materials.

Ms. Vest then recognized the architect, Gwyn Gilliam. Ms. Gilliam stated that the proposed terrace would be moved back as the Board thought it should be. Further development of the facades will be forthcoming.

Ms. Fenton called for questions from the public and from the Board. There being no questions, Ms. Fenton called for comments from the public. She then called for comments from the Board.

Mr. Atkins stated that he appreciated their willingness to compromise so as to make the urban massing its best.

Ms. Fenton seconded Mr. Atkins statement. The plan is greatly improved and she appreciate the changes which have been made.

Mr. Barton inquired about the materials for the proposed addition. The architect stated that it would be brick as well and similar to the original brickwork. She further stated that she and the applicant are still deciding on wood or clad windows.

Mr. Schwartz sought clarification on whether if there were a motion to approve at this stage, it would still be subject to further review of the window and door selections since that selection will be very important in this project and since there are very specific design guidelines in place.

Upon affirmation of his clarification, Mr. Schwartz then moved to approve the design as presented, understanding that there would be further review of the windows and doors at a later date. Mr. Coiner seconded the motion

Ms. Fenton called for discussion. The architect stated that another thing to be looked at later as well is the gate which will go at the passageway beside the stair.

Mr. Schwartz amended the motion as follows: The motion is for approval of the design as presented with further review at a later time of windows, doors and the gate off of Fourth Street. The amended motion was seconded by Mr. Barton.

In discussion before the vote, Mr. Schwartz encouraged the architect to continue discussing the importance of materials selection with the applicant.

Mr. Barton concurred with Mr. Schwartz and added that the designer's detail of the rail was also critical.

There being no further discussion, Ms. Fenton called for the vote. The motion was passed unanimously.

PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE

632 West Main Street and 622 West Main Street

Preliminary discussion of Expansion of First Baptist Church, including Demolition of 622 West Main Street (known as the Priority Press Building)

Maurice Cox, Architect/First Baptist Church, Applicants

Ms. Fenton recognized Ms. Vest to open the discussion. Since this is a preliminary discussion, there would be no staff recommendation at the time. The two buildings in question are both located in the West Main Street Architectural Design Control District based on the church which is designated on the National Register for Historic Places.

The Priority Press Building has also been known as the Holsinger Warehouse. The church is exploring several scenarios to expand their square footage, to expand their program space. One scenario includes the demolition of the Priority Press Building. Ms. Vest presented the Board with the relevant design guidelines and City Code material to be used in evaluating the proposal to demolish a building.

Mr. Barton recused himself from any further discussion on this topic in part because he is a principle in the firm which is taking this project forward.

Ms. Fenton sought clarification on recusal as to whether the recused individual could make comments or ask questions. Ms. Vest stated that the legal advice was not to make comment, but the recused individual could listen to the discussion.

Mr. Tremblay also recused himself. However, since he has managed this particular property since the early '80s, he felt he may have to help with factual information.

City Councilman Maurice Cox recused himself from making the formal presentation to the Board. Church members would take the lead instead. Jeff Evans would be available to answer technical questions.

Bruce Beard, pastor of First Baptist Church, spoke on behalf of the applicants. The current First Baptist Church building has been on that corner since 1883, with its construction completed in 1887. It has been an institution in the community in a prominent way. Over the last few years there has been a dramatic increase in the numbers of persons coming to the church. The vision of the church has also grown. That vision includes education programs and community outreach programs. For that reason, the Church bought the Priority Press Building which has not proven sufficiently big enough to meet current and anticipated needs. The church members began to explore the possibility of expansion. They considered what could be done on-site and the possibility of leaving the West Main location. While that is not the preferred solution, with the help of the architect, nine locations within the city to build a new church and a community center. Seven of the sites would mean leaving West Main Street. The church would like a building which could serve the church and the community. 622 West Main Street is not conducive to putting a full sized gym, a large meeting area or an area for an after school program or other programs the church would like to have available at West Main Street. For these reasons they seek to demolish the current building and build a new building that would resemble the church. For a mixed-use building, they either need to put up a building that will house that kind

of program, or they will have to abandon the vision for the church, or abandon the West Main Street site altogether. While the church members appreciate the historical presence of the existing building, obviously their concern is for souls and for people.

Ms. Patricia Edwards, of 212 Sixth Street NW, presented information given by the architect to the church committee. The request for demolition is based on Article II, the public necessity of the proposed demolition, which is based on the retention of a significant African-American institution. Space needs cannot be accommodated on the site with the existing structure. Proposed spaces will be available for use by the general public. The church does not own other adjacent properties for possible expansion. Surrounding property owners have expressed no interest in selling in the foreseeable future.

Another basis for the request is Article VI, whether or not the proposed demolition would affect adversely or positively other historic buildings or the character of the historic district. The current basic mercantile structure does not contribute to the character of the church.

The last basis is in response to Article VII, whether or not there has been professional, economic and structural feasibility study for rehabilitating or reusing the structure, and whether or not it's findings support the proposed demolition. There was a walk through inspection. For the purposes of large assembly spaces and non-residential uses, the existing structure is not economically feasible to reuse or rehabilitate.

Since this was a preliminary conference, Ms. Fenton called for questions and comments.

Mr. Atkins asked about whether the Board should consider two of the three alternatives presented in the Board member's packets since, based on the verbal discussion, they did not seem viable. The architect explained that the first alternative keeps the building in question and builds in the slot in between the two buildings. This plan does not allow for building a gym and new sanctuary. The second alternative suggests reusing the building. Again, there is not enough space available for the gym. The three long-span spaces the church requires cannot fit on-site in these alternatives.

Mr. Atkins queried further about whether the inability of long-span uses in alternative two was a significant problem. For the church to get usable spaces, they would have to gut the entire building and drop a new building inside.

Mr. Atkins further stated that the descriptions given earlier gave the feeling that rejection of alternative three would prompt the church to leave and go to a different site. Reverend Beard answered that they would consider it but it would probably prompt them to leave.

Ms. Winner sought clarification on the queries made to owners of adjacent properties. Ms. Edwards replied that it was their understanding that the owner was not interested in selling at this point in time.

Ms. Fenton stated that one of the things that makes a building historic is the use of the building. If the church has been in continuous use by the same congregation, then that has priority as well

as preserving another building. The historic fabric of that building is also the people in it. Preservation should also be the preservation of this congregation and the continuous use of that building.

Ms. Heetderks queried if alternate three gutted the sanctuary to turn it into a fellowship hall. The architect responded that they would not be gutting the sanctuary, they would remove the existing pews and use the space.

Ms. Heetderks then inquired of Ms. Vest if there were a legal definition of "Public necessity." Ms. Vest responded that she would need to further explore that concept with the City Attorney.

Ms. Heetderks asked if, based on a previous Board decision about proposed demolition on the Downtown Mall, it had been decided that all nine criteria for demolition had to be met for a building to be considered. Ms. Vest stated that it was the Board's role to interpret that.

Mr. Schwartz stated that this was a contributing building in the West Main Street Design Control District. He then asked about the other name by which the building was sometimes know, the Holsinger Warehouse. Ms. Vest told him that the staff files were not extensive on the history of the building. For that reason, she would like to get more information on the history of the building. The original owner of the building was listed as Rufus Holsinger. Mr. Schwartz then asked who Rufus Holsinger was. Ms. Vest stated that he was best known as a photographer who documented the City of Charlottesville.

Mr. Schwartz expressed an interest in the public necessity consideration in light of the fact that the church is a private entity. He feels the Board needs more clarity on this topic.

He then commented on Article VII, not economically feasible. He would like more information on that concept and the data on the comparison between gutting the existing building versus demolishing it and rebuilding to suit needs. He requested more information from the church.

He then stated that the BAR looks at this proposal independent from all of the very important issues facing the congregation in terms of expansion. The role of the BAR is to uphold design guidelines, however any decision of the BAR can be appealed to the City Council which can consider issues above and beyond the Code which governs the BAR.

Mr. Coiner stated that previous BAR policy was not to consider what would replace a demolished building.

Mr. Atkins expressed appreciation for Mr. Schwartz's comment about looking at this from the available guidelines. He also had a question for the church as to whether its members would be comfortable with the reuse of the existing church sanctuary as a fellowship hall. Ms. Edwards responded that any discomfort would be outweighed by the church's mission and vision. Reverend Beard stated that due to congregation size, they have to have two services and are considering having a third.

Mr. Schwartz asked if anyone from the church had contacted the congregation Beth Israel regarding the expansion process it had undergone since it may have faced similar challenges.

Mr. Coiner asked if someone from the Historical Society could determine if Holsinger worked in that building or if he had only owned it.

Ms. Fenton then reiterated the concerns and comments thus far and to assure the applicants that the BAR was not the final ruling voice. The applicants have the right to lobby City Council. The Board would like more research on the significance of the building before making a decision.

The architect asked that, as the research was being done by staff in regards to Article II, the applicants be told when and how that clause comes into play. Mr. Schwartz stated that he could speculate that one would be a public safety issue.

Mr. Schwartz expressed appreciation for the work of the church committee.

The applicant queried what research they needed to do on the importance of the building. Ms. Fenton informed him that the BAR would have the research done.

Ms. Winner queried whether the criteria used previously to determine if a building was contributory or non-contributory was the same for this. Ms. Vest read the criteria which included the site's historic significance, architectural significance, cultural significance; inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places; inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register; the site's association with an historic person, historic event, renowned architect, master craftsman.

The architect queried about the time limit for appeal to the City Council. Ms. Vest told him there was a ten day time limit to appeal in writing after refusal by the BAR.

Mr. Atkins stated that prior to hearing the applicants' position he was leaning toward the second alternative. Ms. Winner clarified that that would not give the applicant the gymnasium. The architect stated that it also would not provide the larger sanctuary needed. The architect reiterated the previous mention of Article VI in which the current building would continue to look like a mercantile building.

Ms. Fenton called for any further questions or comments. Ms. Edwards thanked the BAR for what they do and for the questions and ideas they have given the church.

Ms. Fenton asked if there were any other business.

Mr. Schwartz gave advance notice that the graduate class he teaches at the University of Virginia School of Architecture should be attending the March 19th meeting.

Mr. Coiner queried where the previous meeting's minutes were. Ms. Vest told him she had not had them in time to place in the packet therefore there would be double minutes to review.

Mr. Coiner also mentioned that there were new media shows on WINA which could promote the BAR.

Mr. Barton moved for adjournment. The motion was seconded by Mr. Atkins. It was passed unanimously, therefore the meeting adjourned at 6:04.