

MINUTES

BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

JANUARY 4, 1979

7:30 p.m.

Location of Meeting: Basement Conference Room in City Hall

Board Members Present: Mrs. Wadlington, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Ramsey, Mr. Farmer,
Mr. Lay, Mr. Martin and Mr. vanGroll

City Official Present: Mr. Frank Muse

The meeting was called to order by Mrs. Wadlington. She announced that the matter before the Board at this meeting is the revised design for Queen Charlotte Square. Mr. Norris, the architect, was called on to present the revised design.

Mr. Norris presented the design and pointed out the changes and refinements that have been made since the last meeting. The revised model was presented with the qualification that the penthouse floor was missing at that time. Certain discrepancies between the model and the drawings were noted. Mr. Norris assured the Board that the plaza area, in its final form, will be designed by a landscape architect. He advised the Board that most of the plaza level spaces in the building will be offices rather than shops, but that there would be shops near the drop-off area. The demand for office space has been greater than for shop space to date.

Mrs. Wadlington asked about the 2nd Street entrance to the garage level. She noted that the model does not show the complete extent of the arcade outside the plaza level office spaces. Questions about paving, wall material and glass color followed. Brick will be used on the plaza and the walls of the building, including the balcony railings. Glass will be "solar bronze" for energy conservation.

Mrs. Smith questioned the height and configuration of the roof parapet on the High Street projections.

Mrs. Wadlington asked about a lower floor projection at the corner of 3rd and High Streets.

Mr. Norris explained that it is office space.

Mr. Martin asked if there was to be a roof terrace on each of the High Street projections.

Yes.

Mr. Farmer asked Mr. Norris to give his assurances, once more, that a landscape architect would be consulted on the plaza design.

Mr. Norris said again that this would occur.

Mr. Lay asked about the availability of sun and shadow studies to illustrate the impact of sun blockage by the building, particularly with regard to the houses opposite the project on High Street.

Mr. Norris offered information based on sketches drawn by his office. Except for perhaps the shortest day of the year, the shadow will not come to the roof level of the houses across the street. The Synagogue will be the only building in the shadow of the building, he said, and then only in the afternoon.

Mr. Norris discussed the differences in the height of the building now as compared to the earlier design. Due to an error in the height of the first design, he said that what is now seen is not that different (on the High Street side) than before. The trees are shown at actual height on the drawings.

Mr. Muse and Mr. Norris discussed the tree types on the site.

Mr. Lay again raised the question of the building height and the resulting shadows.

Mr. Norris repeated that the only building to be affected is the Synagogue, in the afternoon.

Mr. Lay announced that he had sketched some shadow and sun studies for his own information. Apparently these disagree to some extent with the shadow studies by Mr. Norris. According to Mr. Lay, the buildings across from Queen Charlotte Square on High Street would be in shadow, particularly on December 22, and to a lesser extent during the late fall and early spring. He did not present his studies to the Board. He did state that, while his drawings might not be completely accurate, the situation is "awfully close".

Mr. Lay stated his appreciation for the introduction of sloping roofs, the arcade, and the attempt to open up the volume of the building at the plaza level.

Mrs. Wadlington asked the Board to consider the project in light of the sixteen Savannah criteria.

Mr. Farmer informed the Board that he had met with Mr. van Groll to draw up a framework for discussion of the sixteen criteria, based on the November 21, 1978, memo to the Planning Commission. He stressed that this should be considered as a point of departure and not a definitive statement. Mr. Farmer and Mr. van Groll did not have the advantage of a model when preparing this framework, so they stated that some of the comments contained in the framework might change when considered again. They felt that having a framework to use as a working document would aid the Board in its deliberations.

Mr. Martin asked how the framework could have been prepared without the benefit of a model. He noted that Mr. Farmer and Mr. van Groll had been most vocal in requesting a revised model.

Mr. Farmer said again that the comments prepared for use as a starting point were just that, a place to begin. You can tear them apart, he said. If these comments would be considered prejudicial, we will not present them. The Board can then start from scratch.

Mrs. Wadlington said, "We've got to start somewhere."

Mr. Martin again asked Mr. van Groll and Mr. Farmer how they made preliminary comments without a model.

Mr. Farmer repeated his earlier statements.

Mrs. Ramsey requested that the Board start its deliberations by using the framework comments assembled by Mr. van Groll and Mr. Farmer.

Mr. van Groll said, "This is a framework, nothing more."

Copies of the framework were distributed to the Board members. Mr. Farmer announced that the November 21, 1978, memo would have to be used in conjunction with the framework comments. He suggested that the Board members read the comments in their entirety before starting a discussion.

Mr. Farmer noted that the minutes of the meeting on December 20, 1978, needed approval.

Mr. Lay suggested that this should follow the Board's discussion of Queen Charlotte Square.

After the Board members read the comments by Mr. Farmer and Mr van Groll, the Chairman asked for discussion on a point-by-point basis.

1. Concept of Mixed Uses: The change from shops to offices on the plaza level was discussed. Mrs. Ramsey said, "You have to build for your market."
2. The Building Concept: Mrs. Wadlington questioned the use of "less interesting" and stated that this phrasing does not describe the change. She noted that, while the building is more massive on the High Street side, it is lower than before elsewhere.

Mrs. Ramsey noted that the design appears to be locked in with numbers. The mass cannot change, or can it?

Mrs. Wadlington asked that we specify how the mass has changed.

Mr. Martin offered the opinion that the mass has not changed, but has been reshaped.

The Board decided to delay a discussion of Concept #3 for the time-being.

Mrs. Wadlington asked for discussion of the sixteen criteria as presented in the November 21, 1978, memo and as proposed for revision by Mr. van Groll and Mr. Farmer.

1. Height: Mr. Martin and Mrs. Ramsey preferred the earlier wording. The other Board member accepted the new wording with the substitution of the word "desirable" for "appropriate".
2. Mr. Martin asked for an explanation of the new wording. Mr. van Groll suggested coming back to this category later.
3. The new wording was accepted.
4. Mr. Norris pointed out that in most cases, large trees stood adjacent to the blank walls.

Mr. Martin asked for an explanation of "the attention required at the pedestrian level."

Mr. Farmer responded, using the Monticello Hotel building as an example.

The new wording was accepted.

5. Mrs. Wadlington asked for a discussion on the limitation of this comment to High Street. Some members viewed comment #5 as a value judgement. The majority held that it was merely an observation and not a comment on worth.

Mr. Martin found it difficult to address the project in these terms. He thought that Jefferson Street should be included. The three-story wing on Jefferson Street and the small projections on High Street do the same things for their respective elevations, he said.

Mr. Lay suggested striking the words, "High Street".

Mr. Martin suggested adding the words "Jefferson Street". If it is good, say so; if it is bad, say so.

Mr. van Groll and Mr. Martin engaged in a discussion of this issue.

Mrs. Wadlington asked if, "Jefferson Street" is to be included. The majority opinion held that it should not be included. Mr. Martin cast the only vote in favor.

6. Mr. Martin and Mrs. Wadlington questioned the term, "verticality."

Mr. van Groll suggested that the Board refer to Criteria #16.

Mr. Lay suggested deletion of the last portion of the new wording. The suggestion carried. A new sentence was inserted to compliment the arcade development.

7. The new wording was rewritten to delete references to "stone" and "curtain wall" as stated in the earlier comments, and to make it clearer.

Mrs. Ramsey and Mr. Martin expressed concerns about energy conservation.

8. The comments of November 21, 1978, were accepted.

9. Delete references to stone. Comment on metal roof color. The new wording was accepted as revised.

10. The new wording was accepted.

11. The new wording was accepted.

12. Mr. van Groll was called upon to explain the comments about "walls of continuity". He discussed the design relationships that the walls of a building have to each other and the relationship that these walls have to the building itself.

Mr. Martin said that he would not want to see the walls alike on all sides.

Mr. van Groll stated that this is not what is meant by "walls of continuity". The walls of the new project should pick up and/or reflect architectural details in the area, he said.

There was a discussion of building elements, which included references to sculptural works of art in relationship to the walls and overall perception of a building.

Mrs. Smith observed, as she has before, that a building has to "work" all around, just like a piece of sculpture.

Mr. Martin felt that the differences as one goes around the building are pleasing.

The new wording was accepted.

13. Sentence #2 in the first set of comments was deleted. The other new wording was accepted.

14. Mr. Martin objected to the new wording as being too specific.

Mr. van Groll and Mr. Farmer explained the comments. The new wording was revised and accepted.

15. The word "refined" was substituted for "addressed." The new wording was accepted as revised.

16. Mr. Martin asked for an explanation of the new comments in this category, especially for a clarification of "other elements."

These new comments were discussed including the reference to the uniformity of the apartments as reflected on the exterior.

Mrs. Smith offered the opinion that directional emphasis should not be too strong in a building of this size.

Mr. Farmer gave additional explanation to the phrase, "uniformity of apartments." He noted that if there was a certain (perhaps random) variation in a few of the apartment plans, this would be reflected on the exterior and result in a less regular exterior.

There was a discussion of the directional expression of other buildings in the neighborhood.

Mr. Martin said that something should be emphasized.

Mrs. Wadlington suggested a non-directional building as a preference.

Mr. Martin saw a strong emphasis on the vertical direction of the project.

Several buildings in the neighborhood were mentioned as examples of vertical directional expression. Mrs. Smith noted that directional expression is quite varied in the neighborhood, and said that Queen Charlotte Square should not have too strong an expression of itself in any one direction.

The Board decided that the first part of the new comments listed under #16 was acceptable.

Mr. Martin said that the language was difficult to understand. The word "regularity" was substituted for "monotony" in the draft statement of the comments.

The Board returned to a discussion of Concept #3--the Architectural Concept. (Refer to page 1 of the November 21, 1978, memo and to discussion recorded earlier in these minutes.) There was some debate about the use of the word "ameliorative" as written in the draft comments.

Mr. Martin requested a simpler wording. "If we mean piecemeal, then let's say it.", was his opinion.

The word "ameliorative" was retained for use in the comments.

The Board turned briefly to the closing paragraph and then resumed a discussion of Concept #2--the Building Concept. (Refer to page 1 of the November 21, 1978, memo and to discussion recorded earlier in these minutes.) The words "more static" were substituted for "less interesting."

Mrs. Smith stated that she appreciates the open space of the plaza less now that the building is the same height all around.

Mr. Lay discussed the siting of the building and the resulting 3rd Street side in particular. In viewing the building, there is some difficulty in deciding if it is symmetrical but "trying not to be," or a "little bit symmetrical and a little bit asymmetrical." The building is now somewhat caught in between these two ideas. He found himself somewhat in a quandry that may be resulting from the design process undertaken for this building. The design has now turned into a curious problem of symmetry here versus asymmetry there, perhaps amplified by the uniform height. (He reminded the Board that he spoke about this "in between" feeling at an earlier meeting.) It is hard to resolve the conflict in words without actually designing the building, he said.

Mrs. Smith said that, in her opinion, the Special Permit should not be granted. The designer should start over.

Mrs. Ramsey remarked that it was a little late for that.

Mrs. Wadlington felt that the building worked better from the angle of Lee Park, and not as well from the High Street side.

Mrs. Smith said that a greater setback from 3rd Street, which would reduce the plaza space, might provide some relief to the static condition of the building's design. She emphasized that it was not her intent to design the building, but to present ideas that might help.

Mr. van Groll observed that Mrs. Smith is really asking for design alternatives from the architect. He reminded the Board that alternatives had been promised, but were never delivered. "The architect, in an informal meeting with Mr. Lay Mrs. Wadlington, Mrs. Carter and Mr. Huja, agreed to submit alternative solutions to the problem of putting these building masses on this lot," he said.

Mr. Martin objected to the judgemental tone of the discussion. "Everyone has opinions on how to design a building!" he said. "We can't ask for an endless number of designs."

Mr. van Groll observed that at this point it may be too late to ask again for alternatives. He noted that we have seen only the "L" shaped building from the very beginning. We all realize that this is a very difficult problem, he said. The developer and his architect knew from the start that it would not be easy. They knew that this building site is in the Historic District. We must demand the best.

Mrs. Wadlington commented on the total involvement required of an owner and an architect to design a house.

Mr. Martin observed that the Review Board's role is outside the owner-architect relationship.

Mr. Farmer commented on the height as being excessive for a building of this mass or ground coverage in the Historic District. He made reference to Mrs. Smith's earlier comments.

Mr. Martin said the mass has not changed--it has just been reshaped or rearranged.

Mrs. Wadlington read the closing paragraph of the November 21, 1978, memo to the Planning Commission. She asked the Board, "Shall we retain it as written or shall we alter it?"

Mr. Martin said the Planning Commission may have misunderstood the intent and meaning of the closing paragraph as originally written.

Mr. Farmer asked him to explain.

Mr. Martin said that some members of the Planning Commission, reading between the lines, were of the opinion that the Board of Architectural Review would like

to give the owner an opportunity to develop the property, i.e., grant the special permit. He asked, "was that the intent of the Board?" The Planning Commission may have misunderstood.

Mr. Farmer interpreted the closing statement of the November 21, 1978, memo to mean exactly what is said and nothing more. It is an expression of hope (or faith) that the design will be developed acceptably if the special permit is granted, he said. It does not say whether or not we think the special permit should be granted.

Mr. Martin felt that the special permit should be granted.

Mrs. Wadlington wondered about the height of the building on the High Street side. What will be the impact of its shadow?

A discussion of the closing paragraph followed. It was decided that the entire first sentence could be deleted, along with the word "however" in the second sentence.

Mrs. Smith read Section 31-140.1(b)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance:

"...provided, that: (2) City Council finds that such additional height is appropriate to the particular location in question, does not have an undue adverse impact on the scale and architectural harmony of the Architectural Design Control District, and permits adequate sunlight and open air on the adjacent streets, and..."
(Emphasis by Mrs. Smith.)

These are our concerns too, she said.

Mrs. Ramsey suggested deleting "...a sufficient number of..." and keeping the rest for a concluding statement.

Mrs. Wadlington stated that our comments based on the sixteen criteria are the basis for making a judgement.

Mrs. Smith suggested that a summary statement should include a direct quotation from Section 31-140.1(b)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Mrs. Ramsey said that it was dangerous to quote part of the Ordinance.

"But", said Mrs. Smith, "we shouldn't be vague, and the ordinance is not vague on this matter."

Mrs. Smith reminded the Board that the sixteen Savannah Criteria had been ranked by the Board in order of importance to the Charlottesville Historic District.

Mr. van Groll suggested that the closing paragraph should include this ranking of the criteria and conclude with the statement that the project is not appropriate and does have an undue adverse impact on the Historic District.

Mrs. Ramsey objected by saying that the special permit should be granted. It is not a bad design, she said, and we shall still get another crack at it.

Mr. Lay asked the Board to let the comments on the sixteen criteria go forth as they stand. If our comments are clear, then they are clear enough without a concluding statement.

Mr. Martin asked, "Is anyone other than Mrs. Ramsey and me in favor of a special permit?"

Mr. van Groll and Mrs. Smith were opposed to the special permit.

Mr. Lay and Mrs. Wadlington said that they could go either way.

Mr. Farmer did not comment.

A brief discussion of the relative importance of the criteria followed.

Mr. Martin reminded the Board that it must comment on the concept and, later, on the site plan.

A motion was proposed (either by Mrs. Ramsey or Mr. Martin, and seconded by the other) to structure the concluding paragraph as follows (working from the concluding paragraph of the November 21, 1978, memo to the Planning Commission):

1. Delete the first sentence.
2. Delete "however" in the second sentence.
3. Delete "...a sufficient number of..." in the second sentence.
4. Add the following sentence: This Board requests that the Planning Commission give a favorable recommendation to City Council on the application for a special permit, so that the owner will have an opportunity to further develop the plans.

5. Delete the last two sentences.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Farmer offered a substitute motion, as follows: I move that the BAR present its comments to the Planning Commission under the sixteen Savannah Criteria and let them stand without a concluding paragraph. Following the comments, we should simply rank the criteria in order of importance.

Mr. Lay seconded the motion.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Martin was opposed to the substitute motion, saying that a definite conclusion is called for.

Mrs. Ramsey said that it would be hard to rank the criteria in numerical order.

Mr. van Groll was opposed to the motion.

Mr. Farmer reminded the Board that the criteria had already been ranked in order of importance at the BAR meeting of November 3, 1977. At that time, the Board was only planning to use the criteria for making judgements on applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. Now, we are using the same system to provide comments to the Planning Commission, he said.

Mr. van Groll pointed out the fact that the change in the Zoning Ordinance, making Queen Charlotte Square a possibility, occurred after the adoption of the sixteen criteria by the BAR.

Mr. Martin reminded the Board that he was a new member of the BAR and had not been aware of the criteria ranking. He accepted this procedure as valid.

Mrs. Wadlington and Mrs. Smith reviewed the ranking of the criteria in order of importance and read the first nine as follows:

1. Height
2. Scale
3. Rhythm of Spacing of Buildings on Streets
4. Relationship of Materials
5. Relationship of Textures
6. Relationship of Colors
7. Relationship of Architectural Detail
8. Relationship of Roof Shapes
9. Relationship of Landscaping

Mrs. Wadlington noted that in Savannah the height of a building must be within 10% of the average height of the existing adjacent buildings. This is mandatory in Savannah, she said. A new building must meet at least six of the sixteen criteria to be acceptable in Savannah. She noted that the Charlottesville Board had not set a definite number of criteria that must be met, but had listed the criteria in order of importance.

Mr. Lay said that all of the criteria are important, but that height is the most important one.

The substitute motion failed on a vote of 4 to 3. In favor: Mrs. Wadlington, Mr. Lay, Mr. Farmer. Opposed: Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Ramsey, Mr. Martin, Mr. van Groll.

The original motion was then called to a vote. It failed 5 to 2. In favor: Mrs. Ramsey, Mr. Martin. Opposed: Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Wadlington, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Lay, Mr. van Groll.

The Board, according to its earlier discussions, decided to alter the final paragraph of the November 21, 1978, memo by deleting the first sentence; deleting the word "however" in the second sentence; deleting the phrase, "... a sufficient number of..." in the second sentence, and deleting the last two sentences.

The suggestion to list the sixteen criteria in order of importance was accepted.

Mrs. Ramsey suggested adding a sentence that reads as follows: The minutes of this meeting shall become a part of the Board's official comments to the Planning Commission."

The formula for the concluding paragraph, as described above, was put into a motion by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Lay.

There was no further discussion.

The motion passed on a 6 to 1 vote of the Board, as follows: In favor: Mrs. Wadlington, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Ramsey, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Lay, Mr. Martin. Opposed: Mr. van Groll.

Mrs. Smith reminded the Board of her concern for sunlight and fresh air on the streets adjacent to the project.

There was no further business to come before the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John B. Farmer, Jr.
Secretary