



City of Richmond

900 East Broad Street
2nd Floor of City Hall
Richmond, VA 23219
www.richmondgov.com

Meeting Minutes - Draft Urban Design Committee

Thursday, January 9, 2020

10:00 AM

5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall

Call to Order

Roll Call

Present -- 4 - * Jill Nolt, * Andrew P. Gould, * Emily Smith and * Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 2 - * Andrea Quilici and * James W. Klaus

Absent -- 1 - * John Reyna

Vacant -- 2 - * David Johannas and * Sahied Mansaray

Approval of Minutes

It was determined by the Committee Members present at start of meeting that the approval of meeting minutes be postponed to the Other Business portion of the meeting, in case additional Members arrived in the interim.

[UDC MIN 2019-12](#)

Minutes of the regular meeting on December 5, 2019

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-12](#)

The Committee Members present agreed to delay approval of the November and December meeting minutes until the February meeting, at which time a larger cohort were expected to be in attendance.

The approval of the regular meeting minutes of December 5, 2019 were deferred until the February 6, 2020 meeting.

[UDC MIN 2019-11](#)

Minutes of the regular meeting on November 7, 2019

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-11](#)

The Committee Members present agreed to delay approval of the November and December meeting minutes until the February meeting, at which time a larger cohort were expected to be in attendance.

The approval of the regular meeting minutes of November 7, 2019 were deferred until the February 6, 2020 meeting.

[UDC MIN 2019-10](#)

Minutes of the regular meeting on October 10, 2019

Attachments: [DRAFT UDC MIN 2019-10](#)

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt that the minutes of the October 10, 2019 regular meeting be approved. Committee Member Gould seconded, the motion carried by the following vote:

Aye -- 3 - Jill Nolt, Andrew P. Gould and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 2 - Andrea Quilici and James W. Klaus

Abstain -- 1 - Emily Smith

Secretary's Report

UDC Secretary Joshua Son gave an update on Planning Committee approvals. UDC-2019-30, Final location, character, and extent review of the Sludge-Thickening and De-Watering Facility at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, was approved at the December 16, 2019 Planning Commission meeting. UDC-2019-29, Conceptual location, character and extent review of Browns Island improvement plans were also approved at the same meeting, with UDC conditions.

Consideration of Continuances and Deletions from Agenda

There were no items for consideration.

CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items on the Consent Agenda.

REGULAR AGENDA

[UDC 2020-01](#) Final location, character, and extent review of window replacements for Binford Middle School, 1701 Floyd Avenue

Attachments: [Staff Report to UDC](#)
[UDC 2020-01 Location & Plans](#)

The application was presented by Mr. Son.

Mr. Son: Binford Middle School opened in 1915 and still has the original windows on the building. All of the windows are wood and most are in extremely poor condition. RPS is looking to replace approximately 250 windows with a new thermal aluminum single hung window, of which we have a sample here. This will include the Gothic Tracery for the third floor, although for the new windows it will be a new fabrication of the tracery, so it is not like the original tracery.

Richmond Public Schools is proposing to install new Westco Thermal Aluminum Single Hung, White AAMA 2603 Painted Finish, Low-E 270 Annealed Glass, Box Frame windows. The third floor windows will include the UDC desired Gothic Tracery. RPS has agreed with the fourth statement about the existing windows, whereas "It was decided that they look into the cost and practical issues related to restoring and reinstalling all of the windows in one bay (four windows wide in all three stories) on one side to preserve an example of the workmanship and appearance of the original construction."

In summary, the window replacement will create a more secure environment for students and staff during the day and in the off hours when school is not in session. Plus it will greatly improve the appearance of the building, help reduce the cost for heating and cooling of the building as well as keeping with City of Richmond's plan of historic

preservation of the building.

The funding source will be Richmond Public Schools' budget of \$1,000,000.00.

There is no immediate plan to replace the window units but the idea is that in the future, central air will be installed when the budget permits, and then the window units will no longer be needed.

Committee Members Gould and Nolt requested clarification as to what parts of the windows would be replaced – whether it would be just the sashes, or the frames as well. Mr. Son stated that to his understanding it would be primarily sashes and window panes being replaced, with the frames being retained as much as possible, and repaired and painted. The project had originally called for the frames to be wrapped in aluminum, which Preservation staff had expressed concerns about.

Committee Member Nolt asked if the 250 windows being replaced constituted all the windows of the school building with the exception of the preservation bay. Mr. Son stated that he believed the 250 figure represented the majority of the windows, including the preservation bay. Mr. Son stated that the project plan was to move any windows which were in exceptionally good condition to the preservation bay.

Committee Member Nolt asked what criteria determined which bay had been selected for preservation purposes. Mr. Son stated that the side selected was less exposed to sun and thus less prone to wear. Committee Member Nolt asked if all the windows would be operable. Mr. Son confirmed that they would be, and that staff had been adamant on this point.

Mr. Son: Since opening in 1915, Binford Middle School has retained its original windows, making them over 100 years old. The applicant has listed several issues with the existing windows, citing safety, environmental, and energy concerns. RPS has a budget of \$1M, and explored an add-alternate for the project which would have consisted of cleaning and painting the existing wood frames. According to a national commercial window consultant, the cost of this alternative was estimated to be \$400,000.

The reason staff considered this a significant building was due to the school's prominent location and influence on the character of the surrounding community. We were concerned about the fine architectural details that may be negatively impacted with the renovation as initially proposed, which is why we speak to having one bay preserved, along with longer term issues that may arise in the future.

Staff requested comment from the Commission of Architectural Review, which provided more insight into possible options for preservation as well as potential cost savings: windows can often be repaired without a wholesale replacement; storm windows can provide the same amount, if not more, energy efficiency as new windows.

Compromises to address Staff concerns are: third floor windows will include Gothic Tracery similar to the original windows but will not produce shadowlines like the originals. It was also agreed that the applicant would preserve one bay of original windows on the west side of the building. The applicant also stated they will not wrap the window frames in vinyl.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval as submitted.

Committee Member Almond asked if the condition of not wrapping the windows in vinyl meant that there would be no wrapping of any kind. Mr. Son confirmed this, stating that

instead of being wrapped the windows would be repaired. Ms. Almond suggested that a condition of approval be that there would be no wrapping of the windows with vinyl or any other material.

Committee Member Nolt asked about the exact location on the window of the Gothic Tracery, and asked if it would include the vertical element in the original windows. Mr. Son stated that this would not be included. Mr. Dandridge stated that there had been a financial consideration and that originally the applicants had proposed 1/1 windows and that the tracery over the top had been a compromise between applicants and staff.

Ms. Nolt asked about the role of the Commission of Architectural Review in regard to this project. Mr. Son stated that the project was shared with CAR for comment, but that it falls outside their purview as the address is not in a City Old and Historic District. James Klaus, Chair of the CAR, had located a historic photograph of the school building which showed 1/1 windows. Ms. Nolt pointed out that the windows which had been referred to as "original" currently on the building all appeared to be 2/2. Mr. Son stated that the 2/2 windows may have been added over the course of time.

Ms. Carey Jones, Secretary to the Commission of Architectural Review, introduced herself and stated that CAR staff had looked at this application when it initially came through, due to their experience with historic windows and historic restoration. Ms. Jones stated that the building had a combination of 1/1 and 2/2, which is often seen with historic buildings partly because the 1/1 windows were usually more in the front of the building, being bigger and more expensive, while smaller windows with smaller panes would be in the back and sides. Then over the passage of time windows can be swapped out and replaced, thus resulting in a combination of light configurations, with for example 1/1 and 2/2 windows next to each other. For this reason, Commission staff were less concerned about maintaining the 2/2 divide for the tracery, as there are also extant examples of an undivided tracery on the building.

Ms. Nolt summed up by stating that the staff recommendation was to have 1/1 windows with the tracery on the top light. Mr. Son stated that this was the compromise arrived at with the applicant.

Committee Member Gould asked if there was any plan for the industrial-looking windows at the top of the building, at the back. Mr. Son stated that the rear windows were beyond the scope of the project, and that the focus had been on the front and the east and west sides of the building.

Scott Conley of Daikin introduced himself as well as Arthur Mendez of Joseph'son General Contracting and Rick Owen of West Window, and stated that applicant Bobby Hathaway was on his way to the meeting.

Mr. Mendez stated that the industrial windows in the back of the building were for the gym area of the school and were not being addressed at present. He also stated that there were some historic leaded glass windows at the front of the building, windows above the doors, and other narrow windows which would not be replaced, although the wood would be refinished. Other than this, all double-hung windows on the building would be replaced. The 6-pane windows would be replaced with 6 windows with the Gothic tracery.

Mr. Mendez provided the totals of 240 window replacements, 12 windows being restored, and other architectural [ornamental] or industrial windows would not be addressed at this time. Only the wood around the leaded-glass windows would be restored, and these are in fairly good condition.

Ms. Nolt asked if there were screens being provided along with the windows. Mr. Mendez

stated that there were not.

Ms. Nolt asked to see the preservation bay. The slide indicated that the bay would include all 3 floors of the building. Ms. Nolt asked about the light configuration, to which Mr. Mendez said he did not know but that the best existing windows from the building would be collected and placed in the bay. Ms. Nolt suggested that they should be consistently of one light configuration, either 1/1 or 2/2. Ms. Smith stated that it would be useful to research what light configuration was originally on that side. Mr. Gould stated that if, as it appeared, the originals were 2/2, this would contrast with the planned window replacement configuration of 1/1.

Ms. Almond asked if there was any public comment on the project. There was none.

Ms. Almond summarized that the Committee seemed generally supportive of staff recommendations, but with the additional concern that the applicant research the historic light configuration of the windows in the designated preservation bay.

Ms. Nolt stated that, although the building is not in a City Old and Historic District, it is historic and could potentially be added to the National Register Historic District at some point. This would limit what types of renovation could be done to it, which the City might or might not be in a position to deal with, financially.

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt to recommend approval of UDC-2020-01, with staff and Committee recommendations: that the third floor windows will include Gothic tracery similar to the original windows but will not produce shadow lines like the originals; that the applicant preserve one bay of original windows on the west side of the building; that the applicant not wrap the window frames in vinyl or any other material; and that the preserved bay of original windows follow the historic light pattern, as determined by photographic research about the west side of the building.

A motion was made by Committee Member Nolt, seconded by Committee Member Smith, that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following conditions:

- That the proposed preserved bay of windows on the buildings southwest corner be restored to have a light configuration that matches the original light configuration, based on any existing historic documentation of the western facade

It should be noted a quorum consists of five members of the committee. Procedural guidelines state that the meeting may be held and the recommendation forwarded to the Planning Commission as long as the Planning Commission is advised of the (Urban Design) Committee's attendance.

Aye -- 4 - Jill Nolt, Andrew P. Gould, Emily Smith and Chair Andrea Almond

Excused -- 2 - Andrea Quilici and James W. Klaus

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Son stated that there are currently three vacant seats. Ms. Almond stated that the designated Planning Commission dual member position should be filled soon, with Max Hepp Buchanan taking on that role. Mr. Son stated that this left a citizen-at-large position and the Static Arts position vacant.

Mr. Son provided a handout of ten position descriptions and stated that the Committee had decided to add an eleventh position. Two positions would be city-appointed

citizens-at-large, and the Static Arts position would be modified to be for an Urban Design specialist or an Urban Planner.

Mr. Gould asked if there was a rule forbidding city employees from serving on the UDC. Mr. Son stated that he did not believe this was allowed, in contrast with Planning Commission, on which a CAO and another city staff member have positions. The Planning Commission is also different in that it is an approving body, whereas the UDC is an advisory committee.

Ms. Almond pointed out that another proposed UDC position change that had been made was the one for a business executive, which would instead be reserved for a member of a community non-profit organization.

The Urban Forestry-related position was discussed. Ms. Almond pointed out that this was left in as an "in case" for when and if the Urban Forestry Commission, currently inactive, becomes active again.

Mr. Gould questioned whether the current proposed title and description for the community non-profit organization position was too exclusionary, and asked if this could instead be a citizen-at-large, with committee wishes for the nature of the position expressed to those making selections. Ms. Almond pointed out that the Committee itself has little control over selection, and this is the reason for the specificity of position descriptions.

Mr. Gould asked who selects new UDC members. Ms. Almond stated that this is done by a City Council committee. Mr. Gould suggested that the UDC could influence the selection by making sure that desired candidates apply for the positions, since he doubted that there was a significant backlog of candidates.

Ms. Nolt asked Mr. Son how many candidates for UDC were currently in the selection pool. Mr. Son stated that he was not sure and would check. Mr. Son pointed out that applications are retained on file by the Clerk's office for 6 months, after which time if they are still interested they must re-apply.

Mr. Gould stated that it would be good to know what was causing a delay in filling positions – whether this was due to a lack of applicants or that applicants in the pool were not being chosen. Mr. Son stated that there are currently very specific conditions, with several Committee Members leaving in quick succession and a recent staff change-over in the Clerk's office. The hiring process goes through the Land Use and Housing Committee and applicant-vetting process, which is time-consuming also.

Mr. Gould suggested that the UDC brainstorm about people and organizations that would be desirable to have, and encourage them to apply. Ms. Almond stated that this may tend to bring in more members with architectural and design backgrounds, and the UDC already has designated positions requiring architectural and engineering backgrounds. Mr. Gould suggested that people with urban forestry and design backgrounds could also be encouraged to apply.

Mr. Son stated that interested applicants contact him, he sends them the application link, and any who are qualified can apply. City Council then decides who to select, but UDC can send a note giving their input about applicants. Ms. Nolt stated that the process seems obscure, and that both the work of UDC and the need for positions to be filled should be better publicized.

Ms. Smith asked for clarification regarding the vacant position designations. Ms. Almond

stated that the Urban Forestry position was meant to be a dual position, with someone who also sits on the Urban Forestry Commission, which is not staffed currently. Ms. Nolt suggested that this position definition could be broadened to be for an arborist, not necessarily on the Commission.

Mr. Son explained that the Urban Forestry Commission does not currently have a secretary, and thus is not operational. Ms. Nolt and Mr. Gould stated that the dual position should not exist if Urban Forestry is inactive; Ms. Almond pointed out that the position has already been assigned with that description. Mr. Son suggested that language could be inserted to the effect that, at such time as the Urban Forestry Commission becomes active again, this would be a consideration for the position, but that in the interim it be held by someone with arborist or urban forestry experience.

Ms. Almond stated that she did not wish to have one UDC position dedicated to an arborist/urban forestry background, and that the point of the dual role had been more to establish communication between the UFC and the UDC. Ms. Nolt suggested that the dedicated UDC member could become a member of the UFC when and if it becomes active again.

Ms. Smith stated that the options are to either leave the position as is but vacant, or to modify it so it can be filled. Mr. Gould stated that he would be fine with leaving it vacant. Ms. Nolt stated that she would like the position changed so that it could be filled sooner, with a description calling for an arborist or horticultural background, or else simply a citizen-at-large.

Ms. Smith stated that having an arborist has been helpful in the past, and that as long as it would not preclude that position having a seat on the UFC as well, when it becomes active.

Mr. Son stated that it might be that the person in this designated UDC role would have to finish their term and then be replaced by someone on the UFC, but that it is difficult to predict as there are many possibilities.

Ms. Nolt suggested that the relationship be set up as it is with the Public Art Commission: that a member of UDC liaises with the UFC, not the reverse.

Mr. Son references the Public Art Commission and the Citizen at Large position on the UDC. Ms. Almond stated that Public Art Commission's member list states that one spot shall be filled by a member of the UDC, without specifying the background of this person. Planning Commission is in the opposite direction: a member of Planning Commission sits on UDC. The point initially was to get someone from Urban Forestry so that UDC could have that expertise, as opposed to a non-arborist person from UDC attending UFC meetings. However, not every position on the UFC itself calls for an arborist/urban forestry position; some are citizen-at-large positions. Mr. Son stated that hopefully, from being on the UFC, a person would develop some expertise.

Ms. Jones recommended that the language for the position be very specific so that City Council understands what is desired. Ms. Jones stated that the Commission of Architectural Review has two positions which are specified as members of professional organizations, so this could be a useful example and precedent if the UDC wishes to ensure membership from specific fields.

Ms. Nolt stated, in regard to the possible issue of placing limitations on the community-affiliated position description, that perhaps it need not include non-profit

involvement, but have the community connection be the priority – for example a small business owner with a commitment to the city. Mr. Gould suggested that the term “owner” be left out in order to be more inclusive. Ms. Almond suggested the phrasing “member of a community-focused organization or business.” Mr. Son said that this description seemed good, and that in order to give the sub-committee a clearer idea it might be advisable to provide more detailed descriptions for the other UDC positions as well.

Mr. Gould requested that Mr. Son investigate the current candidate pool to find out if a selection is being delayed for some reason. Mr. Gould suggested that current UDC members could assign themselves a specific vacant position to research and recruit for.

Ms. Almond suggested that the position description for the seat currently taken by Ms. Smith be revised to include instructors from art institutions other than VCU. Mr. Son stated that he had attempted to research how specific this description was meant to be, but results were inconclusive. Ms. Nolt stated that she liked it being specifically for VCU or VUU, as these institutions have significant acreage in and commitment to Richmond. Ms. Almond stated that this position had been revised to include design as a discipline.

Mr. Son asked that Ms. Almond read out the revised descriptions, for the record.

Existing language:

The Committee shall consist of ten (10) members who either reside in the City or have their primary place of business in the City. Members shall be appointed by City Council.

- one (1) of the members of the Committee shall be a registered architect;
- one (1) shall be a member of a recognized local organization in one of the various fields of static arts;
- one (1) shall be a member of the faculty of the arts division of a local college or university;
- one (1) shall be a registered professional engineer;
- one (1) shall be a business executive or professional;
- one (1) shall be a registered landscape architect or a person having demonstrated talent in landscape design;
- one (1) shall be a member of the City Planning Commission;
- one (1) shall be a member of the Commission of Architectural Review;
- two (2) shall be citizens of the City appointed at-large; and
- one (1) shall be a member of the urban forestry commission, whom the urban forestry commission shall nominate.

Proposed language Option:

The Committee shall consist of eleven (11) members who either reside in the City or have their primary place of business in the City. Members shall be appointed by City Council.

- one (1) of the members of the Committee shall be a registered architect;
- one (1) shall be a member of a community-focused organization or business;
- one (1) shall be a member of the faculty of a design or arts division of a local college or university;
- one (1) shall be a registered professional engineer;
- one (1) shall be an urban designer or urban planner;
- one (1) shall be a registered landscape architect;
- one (1) shall be a member of the City Planning Commission;
- one (1) shall be a member of the Commission of Architectural Review;
- two (2) shall be citizens of the City appointed at-large; and

one (1) shall be a member with horticulture expertise OR a member of the urban forestry commission, whom the urban forestry commission shall nominate.

Mr. Son recommended, and Ms. Almond agreed, that a letter be drafted and sent to Council explaining the reasoning behind the proposed changes. Mr. Son asked if the plan was to have this ready for the next [January] Planning Commission meeting, which Ms. Almond confirmed. Mr. Son stated that he would double-check but that he believed the review sequence would be 1) Planning Commission; and then 2) City Council subcommittee.

Ms. Smith asked if the time to advertise for new positions would be after the new descriptions are approved. Mr. Son cautioned that the proposed language might be modified by the Council, so caution would be advisable in advertising.

Ms. Almond asked Mr. Son to follow up with the Clerk's office about the applicant pool. Mr. Son explained that there was a time-consuming process to deal with the resignation of the applicant, Mr. Mansary, who was accepted and then resigned. Ms. Almond asked if the process was as ponderous for the Commission of Architectural Review. Ms. Jones stated that it was somewhat less so due to differences in the makeup and selection process.

Adjournment

Committee Chair Almond adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.