

# City of Richmond

*City Hall  
900 East Broad Street*



## Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, January 10, 2023**

**6:00 PM**

**Quarterly Meeting**

**5th Floor Conference Room of City Hall**

**Commission of Architectural Review**

[PDRPRES  
2022.096](#) Public Access and Participation Instructions - CAR

**Attachments:** [Public Access and Participation Instructions -COMMISSION OF  
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW](#)

## Call to Order

This meeting was called to order at 6:02pm.

Alex Dandridge read the announcement for virtual public meetings.

Commission members are present in City Hall.

Staff present: Alex Dandridge, Samantha Lewis, Jackie Stephens, Kim Chen, Kevin Vonck

## Roll Call

**Present --** 7 - \* Commissioner Ashleigh N. Brewer, \* Commissioner Coleen Bulter Rodriguez, \* Commissioner Sean Wheeler, \* Commissioner Kathleen Morgan, \* Commissioner Lawrence Pearson, \* Commissioner John Grier and \* Commissioner Mitch Danese

**Absent --** 2 - \* Commissioner Neville C. Johnson Jr. and \* Commissioner Andrew Moore

## REGULAR AGENDA

### 1. Substitute Material List

Alex Dandridge introduced the proposed substitute materials list for the Commission to review.

Commission Chair Wheeler asked if the list will be presented to the public.

Mr. Dandridge said it will be used as a helpful reference for applicants and may be uploaded onto the city website. The economics of a substitute material should be considered as some are more cost-effective than others. However, Mr. Dandridge questioned how the Commission would determine the economic hardship of an applicant and if the Commission has the authority to do so.

Commissioner Pearson pointed out the hardiplank seems to be the most cost-effective materials. What are the downsides to using hardiplank?

Mr. Dandridge noted that hardiplank is thinner than wood and the shadow lines that are produced could be slightly off. This width difference is most noticeable if only part of a façade is replaced with hardiplank on a building that has wood siding. The trim pieces around windows protrude out and additional trim may need to be added to make up for it.

Commissioner Morgan arrived at 6:18pm.

Mr. Dandridge said that the most important factor in choosing a substitute material is if installation or materials will cause damage to existing historical features.

Pearson suggested making the constraints of each material clear on the list.

Ms. Lewis asked how long dried kiln or marine treated materials would last and if they can be recycled. It's concerning to recommend chemically treated wood that may need to be thrown into a landfill and leaching chemicals in a few decades.

Commissioner Danese said the lifespan is around 40 years. The materials contain copper which is how it's treated. Copper doesn't necessarily need to be recycled.

Wheeler said the document shouldn't be too wordy.

Morgan said a caveat of "these are suggested as of this date" should be included within the document. What's more important is saying that approved substitute materials shall embody certain characteristics as outlined in the document. Does Siewers Lumber & Millwork have a substitute material list?

Mr. Dandridge will check on that.

Commissioner Rodriguez suggested a spreadsheet would be better.

Commissioner Brewer concurred.

Rodriguez asked if there are metal products that are okay for fence replacements that could substitute the type of fences that were previously there like wrought iron or cast iron.

Mr. Dandridge doesn't know what types of metal substitutes are out there. Preference would be given to denser or more solid-appearing metal materials. The type of fence in a front yard, on Monument Avenue for example, would likely need to be made of a heavier, denser metal material.

Commissioner Grier has noticed that newer districts feature a more eclectic range of materials and things that clearly don't comply. In that context, does and should the Commission have more flexibility?

Mr. Dandridge typically refers to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties which state that the best practice would be bringing a material that would be appropriate for the district. However, he believes the Commission should focus on being more equitable. If substitute materials have been installed pre-district designation, flexibility has typically been exercised and replacing that material can potentially be considered an in-kind replacement. In some cases, the original historic material has been gone for years.

Morgan concurred and noted that flexibility should be exercised especially in cases with emergency repairs.

## 2. 2022 Year in Review

Mr. Dandridge presented a slideshow of updates from past projects that the Commission approved and a summary of CAR decisions in 2022.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if it is concerning that 2022 CAR COA review numbers are lower than previous years despite a perceived uptick in citywide construction.

Mr. Dandridge said no. He is active in the community and keeps in touch with community members in historic districts and notices any major changes.

The Commission discussed the difference in what was presented to the Commission and the final construction at 3135 W. Franklin Street. The actual structure is taller than what was shown in the application materials.

Commissioner Pearson is concerned and thinks it's misleading. Maybe the Commission should require streetscape elevation plans for context, detailed measurements of the planned structure, and estimates of adjacent structures.

Commissioner Danese questioned why the plan reviewer didn't pick up on the difference. There's a variance between what is shown in the plans and what the permit approved.

Mr. Dandridge thinks the applicants didn't take the grade change into consideration. Staff should be more proactive in looking out for these sorts of cases.

The Commission discussed new construction that has painted masonry and whether that would set a bad precedent.

Morgan and Danese are indifferent. They don't understand why somebody would use brick just to paint it.

Commissioner Brewer pointed out a duplex in Jackson Ward that was previously approved by the Commission but only one half got built.

Mr. Dandridge recalls there may have been a disagreement with the previous owner about the second half that was to be built. There is potential for the Commission to request that any major design changes, such as the removal of half of a duplex be sent to the Commission or staff for review.

Pearson worked on that project and said the problem was that it was two attached dwellings that should have been presented to the Commission as two separate properties.

### 3. 2023 Goals - Public Outreach

Planner Kim Chen approached the podium and shared updates about the City's preservation plan. The City of Richmond is partnering with Historic Richmond and the VA Department of Historic Resources. Commonwealth Partners out of Virginia Beach are the hired consultants. The first half of the project will include community outreach and looking at what is already in place, where it works, where it doesn't, and introducing city staff to the plan. The second phase of the project will include a written plan created by the consultants. This project is part of the Richmond 300 master plan requirement for a preservation plan. It would be great for Commissioners to serve on the advisory committee for the project.

Commissioner Morgan asked what Chen is hoping to get out of the plan.

Chen wants an outside perspective on what the city is doing well and where there are gaps for improvement. There are some parts of the city where it's clear there is little to no cultural and historical protection. There may be preservation tools that can be used to protect the quality of certain neighborhoods that also supports the need for affordable housing in the city.

Commissioner Grier noted that homes from mid-century modern era may not be considered historic, but he feels it is emblematic of that era and should be viewed as historically significant.

Chen said that historic preservation standards and trends seem to be headed that way. DHR is managing the preservation project for the city which is a boon due to the lack of preservation staff in Richmond.

Mr. Dandridge presented 2023 public outreach strategies to the Commission for feedback. Staff have previously sent postcards out to City Old & Historic Districts which could be replicated but with updated designs. Monthly property transfer letters are currently sent out each month to new owners. Civic associations have asked about materials they can send out to residents such as a one-pager. A newsletter sent out to the City Old & Historic Districts mailing list can share preservation efforts, district history, and highlight specific properties or plans. There is also potential for a standing meeting where members of the public can come and ask staff and Commissioners questions. Overall, there isn't a strong preservation group or voice in City Old & historic Districts. There may be a way to include plans for an overarching preservation advocacy group into the larger preservation plan.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if all neighborhoods have active civic associations.

Mr. Dandridge said he doesn't know but it may be worth emailing civic associations to gauge their level of activity.

Morgan suggested making one of the CAR quarterly meetings an open meeting for civic associations to come speak and express concerns.

#### 4. Questions

There were no questions from the Commission.

### Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned at 7:39pm.