



City of Richmond

City Hall
900 East Broad Street

Meeting Minutes Commission of Architectural Review

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

6:00 PM HKS Architects, 2100 E. Cary St, Richmond, VA 23223

Quarterly Meeting

Call to Order

Chairman Klaus called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Roll Call

Present – 6 - Commissioner James W. Klaus, Commissioner Neville C. Johnson Jr., Commissioner Kathleen Morgan, Commissioner Sean Wheeler, Commissioner Ashleigh N. Brewer, and Commissioner Gerald Jason Hendricks

Absent – 3 - Commissioner Sanford Bond, Commissioner Lawrence Pearson, Commissioner David C. Cooley

Staff Present – Carey L. Jones, Secretary; Chelsea Jeffries, Senior Planner

1. Commission of Architectural Review meeting procedures for public comment

Ms. Jones presented the idea of new, more defined meeting procedures for public comment, including time limits of five minutes for the applicant and three minutes per person for public comment. Ms. Jones also proposed saving questions until the end of the application presentation. In addition, Ms. Jones proposed that conversations with people in the audience not occur.

2. City Old and Historic District Guidelines: Outbuildings and Garages

Ms. Jones presented the topic and raised related questions about both existing and new outbuildings, including partial and total demolition guidelines; how an area's architectural history should inform new construction; and what design details are necessary to maintain an urban look and feel.

Commissioner Johnson pointed out that the Commission can expect to see more of these kinds of applications. He and Commissioner Wheeler asked about who sees these first, whether it is Zoning or CAR. Ms. Jones responded that often developers started with zoning to see what is allowed and the Commission staff encourage developers to meet with zoning and Commission staff before they design the project. Ms. Jones also stated that projects that require a Special Use Permit will not be granted in a City Old and Historic District without a Certificate of Appropriateness being issued first.

Chairman Klaus stated that the Guidelines are lacking on the topic of historic building patterns and what they should mean for new outbuilding construction. Commissioner Morgan raised the question of whether a first floor should look like a garage if it is not,

and also stated that the applicants generally supply much less information about construction of new outbuildings than they do about a single-family house, and that more information should be requested so the Commission can look at the design in the neighborhood context and get a sense of scale.

Chairman Klaus stated that it is possible to make subsidiary construction look like a garage without using large modern door openings.

Commissioner Morgan stated that it is not desirable for new subsidiary construction to mimic the house it goes with; rather, it should be treated like any other new construction.

Chairman Klaus raised the question of how the Commission should respond if everyone in a City Old and Historic District decides they want an accessory dwelling unit or other large outbuilding. Commissioner Hendricks stated that this is part of the natural progression of a neighborhood, and that he is amenable to the construction of new two-story structures if there is a historic precedent; but that he has problems with demolishing a garage in order to build a new one.

Commissioner Wheeler asked if the staff consult all available Sanborn maps when reviewing applications. Ms. Jones and Ms. Jeffries stated that they do. There was general discussion about the historic reference materials available to staff, and the present state of historic files and photos.

Ms. Jones suggested that perhaps the Guidelines need a new section on Accessory Dwelling Units, with guidance on how to design in a manner that protects the urban look and feel of the districts. Commissioner Morgan stated that there can be flexibility about materials used for constructing ADUs. Chairman Klaus questioned whether such buildings need to or ought to look old if they are in fact new construction. Commissioner Morgan stated that this is a period of transition and that it would be good to have flexibility in the Guidelines for new subsidiary construction. Chairman Klaus said that there is an issue with designers attempting to make such buildings look historic, and it would be better to state that if they are new construction, this should be visually discernible.

3. Proposed Administrative Approval Guidelines

Ms. Jones presented new proposed administrative approval guidelines for removal of non-historic elements, and for reconstruction of historic elements.

Chairman Klaus stated that he had no problem with the proposed guidelines. He mentioned that the removal of signage under 50 years of age was concerning, but that this was covered by the additional language stating that removal of items that had gained historical significance over time would not be administratively approved.

Commissioner Wheeler clarified that the historic elements, such as decorative wrought iron columns, would not be applied. Ms. Jones clarified that historic wrought iron columns, such as those found in Jackson Ward, are not included, but instead, later replacement columns would be included.

A motion was made by Chairman Klaus, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, to approve the new guidelines for administrative approval of removal of historic elements. All present voted in favor.

Questions, Concerns, Comments

Ms. Ann Wortham, a resident of a City Old and Historic District, spoke regarding follow-up on outstanding violations on Venable Street in Union Hill. Ms. Wortham expressed concern, and asked if there were ways the Commission could better support staff efforts in this area. She stated that violations continue to happen, and nothing is stopping them.

Chairman Klaus stated that outstanding violations become a legal case, that Commissioners and staff have met with the City Attorney and that he has to take action. Ms. Wortham asked why it takes so long. Ms. Jones stated that the Code Enforcement and Zoning divisions seem to fare better with such cases than do Preservation staff and that Preservation staff is working with these divisions on enforcement cases.

Ms. Nancy Lampert, resident of a City Old and Historic District, asked what could be done about repeat offenders. Commissioner Hendricks recommended regularly recording and reporting on properties in violation.

Commissioner Klaus recommended bringing these matters to Council meetings also. Ms. Jones asked that

Ms. Lampert to continue to bring violations to the attention of Commission staff, and that the Planning and Preservation division is attempting to work with other divisions in order to get results.

Chairman Klaus stated that he realizes the Commission needs to do more about enforcement, and that some cases will be selected to take through a legal process.

Ms. Ruth DeBoer, resident of a City Old and Historic District, asked if it is possible to get a building permit without a Certificate of Appropriateness. Ms. Jones responded that Commission staff reviews all buildings permits to determine if a COA has been issued and if not, what level of review is needed: administrative approval or a COA from the Commission.

Ms. Lampert asked if something could be added to the Commission Guidelines about lighting on commercial properties. Chairman Klaus stated that this would be covered in the Guidelines of the Urban Design Committee.

Commissioner Wheeler stated the availability of newer window materials. Ms. Jones asked the he send additional information to her for review and distribution to the other Commissioners.

Commissioner Morgan suggested the Guidelines include information about other uses for secondary buildings and structures such as bike storage units.

Chairman Klaus adjourned the meeting at 7:23 pm.