



City of Richmond

City Hall
900 East Broad Street

Meeting Minutes Commission of Architectural Review

Tuesday, July 9, 2019

6:00 PM

HKS Architects, 2100 East Cary Street

Roll Call

- Present --** 6 - * Commissioner Gerald Jason Hendricks, * Commissioner James W. Klaus, * Commissioner Ashleigh N. Brewer, * Commissioner Sean Wheeler, * Commissioner Lawrence Pearson and * Commissioner Mitch Danese
- Absent --** 3 - * Commissioner Sanford Bond, * Commissioner Neville C. Johnson Jr. and * Commissioner Kathleen Morgan

Call to Order

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

2. Rooftop Additions and Decks

Ms. Jones reviewed the information staff had gathered from the National Park Service and other localities regarding guidelines for rooftop additions and rooftop decks. The Commission members commented that the information did not address rooftop decks on new construction. The Commission briefly discussed height compatibility of in-fill development in historic districts and whether the guidelines adequately address this issue. Members of the public commented that three story new construction in districts experiencing a lot of new construction, namely Union Hill, has the potential to negatively affect the defining characteristics of the neighborhood to the point where integrity is lost. The Commission acknowledged that a variation in height is appropriate in certain districts or blocks but may not be appropriate in others, and each project must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The Commission discussed when it is appropriate to have top-level decks, such as apartment buildings on Monument Avenue and Arthur Ashe Boulevard and when it might not be appropriate and generally agreed that the surrounding context should be considered when making decisions.

The Commission members and staff also discussed if it is preferable to have a three-story building with a rear deck when the surrounding context is two stories, instead of a partial story and front deck. The general consensus was that it should be on a case-by-case basis depending on the surrounding context.

1. Standard Operating Procedures for Monthly Agenda

Ms. Jones explained there have been a number of items on the Commission's monthly agenda recently that are straightforward projects that staff has been unable to place on the Consent Agenda because they require direct public notification. She further stated that the Commission's Rules of Procedure could be amended to allow staff more flexibility in setting the Consent Agenda and presented the proposed revisions. Ms. Jones also explained the benefits of the revision, including streamlining meetings and increasing transparency by reducing the likelihood of changes to the agenda during the Commission meeting. Ms. Jones informed the Commission that she has received comments from the public and applicants expressing confusion over an item being moved to the Consent Agenda. She added that opportunity for public comment may also be missed if an

individual does not arrive at the beginning of the meeting for an item that is listed later on the agenda but was moved to the Consent Agenda and voted on before they arrived. The Commission generally agreed with Ms. Jones' points and added that there is still opportunity for the public to comment on items on the Consent Agenda, as well as the opportunity to remove items from the Consent Agenda for further discussion. Members of the public as well as the Commission made inquiries regarding the public notification process, which Ms. Jones explained. Commissioner Hendricks made a motion to approve the revisions to the Rules of Procedure presented by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearson and all voted in favor.

3. Commission Decisions and Recommendations

Ms. Chen presented a list of Meeting Guidelines that was developed by the Commission in 2011 and 2015. She emphasized the importance of adhering to the Commission's Guidelines when making decisions, stating that staff's analysis and recommendations are based on the Guidelines. If a Commissioner does not agree with a staff recommendation, then the Guidelines need to be directly referenced when making a new recommendation. Ms. Chen stated that this will help make Commission decisions more consistent and defensible upon appeal. Ms. Chen added that another point that the Meeting Guidelines address is the proper deliberation of applications during meetings and stressed that it should not become a conversation between the Commission and an applicant and Commission members should not attempt to redesign the project as presented.

A brief discussion regarding the advantages of a decision of denial versus deferral followed, with the Commission commenting that a deferral needs to include clear direction for revisions to bring a project in alignment with the Commission's Guidelines. Chairman Klaus commented that when staff is recommending several conditions on an approval it may be more appropriate for staff to recommend deferral due to a lack of information, or an application could be considered incomplete and should not be included on the agenda. Ms. Chen stated that the Director of Planning and Development Review, Mark Olinger, is supportive of staff rejecting incomplete applications and not scheduling projects until a complete application is received.

Questions, Comments, Concerns

A member of the public commented that the Commission may wish to reconsider how conceptual reviews are conducted in order to streamline the process and not allow a back-and-forth conversation between the applicant and Commission members. The Commission discussed potential changes to the procedure of conceptual reviews and the advantages of encouraging applicants to work with staff when there are additional questions, rather than addressing questions during meetings. Commission members also stated that if projects do not meet the Guidelines, this should be clearly stated during Conceptual Review and that applicants should be given specific feedback on what does not meet the Guidelines and directed to work with staff before returning for final review.

Adjournment

Chairman Klaus adjourned the meeting at 7:11 pm.