

**MINUTES – HARB Regular Meeting
October 4, 2021**

MINUTES

**HARRISBURG ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
October 4, 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM PLATFORM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Trina Gribble, Chair
Camille Bennett
Anne Montgomery, Assistant Codes Administrator
Kali Tennis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeremiah Chamberlin, Vice Chair
April Rucker

STAFF PRESENT: Frank Grumbine, Historic Preservation Specialist and Archivist
Tiffanie Baldock, City Solicitor

OTHERS PRESENT: See Sign-in Sheet

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Tennis moved, and Ms. Bennett seconded the motion to Approve the September 13, 2021 minutes. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote (4-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 512 & 514 North 2nd Street, filed by Chris Dawson Architect, to demolish the existing buildings to construct a new contemporary five story mixed use building.

Mr. Grumbine gave a synopsis of the case report recommending the request be Tabled for the following reason(s):

1. The existing buildings have been approved for demolition by the HARB in July of 2018. This is the first a realistic and high impact project has been proposed for new construction. The buildings are derelict, in poor condition, and have been vacant for several years. The proposal would have a positive impact on the neighborhood once concerns of architectural compatibility, particularly on the 2nd Street elevation, are evaluated and addressed.

2. The concept of the primary façade was drafted to be intentionally differentiated from the existing building stock as it is an “expression of contemporary design.” As proposed, the proposal would likely visually distract from the existing integrity of the streetscape. The degree of articulation on the primary façade with the deep break of the façade plane to

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accommodate the balconies is not compatible or consistent with the existing continuity of façade planes along the historic streetscape. Although the incorporation of porches, verandas, or balconies on primary facades does occur within the historic district and even on the same block; the proposed balconies do not reference or utilize historical designs to “blend into the existing built environment” as recommended by the Historic District Design Guidelines.

3. The proposed ratio and density of glazing to solid exterior materials on the primary facade on the balconies, “bay” projection, and storefront system disrupts the typical rhythm and ratios found elsewhere along the historic streetscape. Although a different fenestration pattern can be appropriate, the proposed ratio of fenestration to solid exterior material on the facade is much greater than that of surrounding architecture. Some elements of historic storefronts could be incorporated at the street level or incorporating more solid exterior material along the balconies may balance these proportions. The Historic District Design Guidelines state “The existing ratio of fenestration to solid wall creates a rhythm of solid to void that should be considered in the design of new architecture.”

4. The Historic District Design Guidelines state that “Generally it is more important to have the building compatible with the historic neighborhood than it is to ensure intentional differentiation.” Replication or reproduction is not the goal with new infill construction but the retention of character and continuity of the existing fabric is important to preserve the feel, character, and experience of the historic district. The current proposal is more differentiated than it is compatible and it is recommended that the design is amended to ensure more contiguous architectural harmony with surrounding buildings.

The case was represented by Chris Dawson and Allison Krichman, 300 North 2nd Street Harrisburg, PA (aka “the Applicant”).

The Applicant stated that he respects the Planning Bureau’s concerns but disagrees. The Applicant stated that they attempt to be very contextual but designs architecture that is honest and representative of its period. The Applicant explains that he was unable to attend the last meeting and did not change the proposal but is open to changing certain aspects of the balcony system. The Applicant explains that he feels that the building is contextual to the district while being a contemporary design. The Applicant explained that he felt that the previous claims of vagrancy and problems at the properties are unsubstantiated.

Mrs. Gribble asked about the materials being used for the new construction. The Applicant stated that the materials will be composed of brick, which is contextual to the area, as well as glass and black metal, and a glass storefront system on the ground floor. The Applicant continued and stated that the windows on the northern elevation will require an easement in-case that parcel is developed at some point in the future. The Applicant stated that the site is long and skinny which is the reason there is so much glass to ensure that natural light penetrates into the building and explains that there is a functional aspect more so than aesthetic. Ms. Montgomery asked about the size of the balconies on the front of the building and feels they are rather large. The Applicant stated that they’re probably around sixteen by five feet. The Applicant stated that there are two units per floor and one unit on the top floor and that it was difficult to design the interior space to maximize the space. The Applicant stated that they could construct a building 75 feet by right and

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that they're trying to be contextual and respectful of the massing and scale of the neighborhood. The Applicant stated that the balconies are wide but not very deep. The Applicant stated that he feels that the differentiation of the architecture of this proposal compared to the buildings to the south allows for the historic architecture to stand out more so than normal.

Mrs. Gribble raised her concern of having floor to ceiling glazing on the balconies and that there is no precedent for this use in the neighborhood. The Applicant stated that the neighboring building to the north has heavy use of glass with many mullions and divisions and the proposed use of glass is no more than the existing use in the AFL-CIO/Gannett Fleming Building. The Applicant also explained that the heavy use of glass maximizes the view of the Capitol Building. The Applicant states that they have not proposed the ultra-contemporary use of minimal butt glazing and mullions and that the owner likes the use breaks in the glazing systems. Mrs. Gribble stated that she has concerns about the northern elevation and that the existing parcel with the parking lot may not be buildable in the future. The Applicant stated that they are working to have an easement with the neighboring property owners if it were to be developed the windows would have to be infilled and that code requirements would not be impacted.

Mr. Bennett stated that she feels that the proposed massing of the building over powers surrounding buildings to the rear of the site. The Applicant stated that there is parking to the north and there is the rear of the church behind the site. Ms. Bennett stated that she feels that the proposal is too modern and does not belong in the context of the historic neighborhood. The Applicant stated that he said he does not understand the idea that the proposal is overshadowing surrounding area. Ms. Bennett asked if the proposed building is larger than the existing buildings. The Applicant stated that the proposed building is taller than the existing buildings. Ms. Bennett stated that the proposed construction will overpower the structures to the west of the parcel.

Ms. Tennis asked if any other members of the Board conducted a site visit. Several members stated that they did perform a site visit. Ms. Tennis states that often times the concepts and renderings are often projected in a way that is squashed and stretched giving it proportions that don't actually exist and feels that the matter is quite subjective. Ms. Tennis stated that she wants to make sure that the Board is being objective about these decisions and that she feels that the proposal both blends into and distinguishes itself in its setting. Ms. Tennis stated that most cities have contemporary architecture blended into its historic fabric and will be representative of this period of time in the future.

Mrs. Gribble stated that its important that it is distinctive but in harmony with its environment which is of course extremely subjective. Mrs. Gribble claimed that the district and neighborhood have a unique blend of building styles which don't necessarily occur in other districts and feels that its material and other aspects are appropriate. Mrs. Gribble stated that it is difficult to blend the styles of buildings compared to the Second Empire buildings to the south and the large building to the north. Mrs. Gribble stated that she does have issues with the ratio of glazing to solid material but acknowledges that it is very difficult to design something to span these various architectural styles. Ms. Montgomery specified that the design seemed odd to her because of the open corner but also feels that the applicant makes a good case for the new design.

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Mr. Grumbine states that if the primary issue is the depth of the balconies in relation to the building to the south then asked the Applicant if the building façade could be inverted to have the balconies on the north end of the façade. The Applicant stated that the egress corridor for the building would be impacted and that if the northern parcel were to be developed then there may be issues with the balconies in relationship to any new development to the north. The Applicant stated that the bay window next to the buildings to the south would be harsher aesthetically. The Applicant also stated that neither of the neighbors have not had objections to the proposed design and feels that designing faux historic architecture is inappropriate.

Mrs. Gribble stated that she thinks she has a good understanding of where the Board stands on the project and recommends that a vote be taken. Mrs. Gribble asked if there should be any conditions of approval considered. Mr. Grumbine stated that he would recommend a condition of approval to be that if there are any changes or alterations to the proposed design that it is reviewed by the Planning Bureau to determine if review by the HARB is necessary. Mrs. Gribble agreed.

Ms. Gribble moved; Ms. Tennis seconded the motion to Approve with Condition(s). The motion was adopted with a majority vote with Ms. Bennett dissenting (3-1).

NEW BUSINESS: N/A

OTHER BUSINESS: N/A

ADJOURNMENT: 6:46PM

Ms. Tennis moved, and Ms. Bennett seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote (4-0) and the meeting adjourned at 6:46 PM.