

MINUTES

**HARRISBURG ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
January 3, 2022
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CITY GOVERNMENT CENTER
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeremiah Chamberlin, Vice Chair
April Rucker

STAFF PRESENT: Frank Grumbine, Historic Preservation Specialist and Archivist
Isaac Gaylord, City Solicitor

OTHERS PRESENT: See Sign-In Sheet

CALL TO ORDER: 6:01 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Bennett moved, and Ms. Montgomery seconded the motion, to Approve the minutes from the November 1, 2021 meeting. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote (4-0).

OLD BUSINESS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. 25 North Front Street, filed by Chris Dawson Architect, to install a new fire escape from the fourth-floor rear dormer for fire egress. Installation requires portion of roof to be minimally altered.**

Mr. Grumbine gave a synopsis of the case report, recommending the request be approved with the following condition(s):

1. The existing roof configuration must be appropriately documented and photographed to allow for the change to be reversed for future owners.
 2. All materials including steel and wood shall be appropriately painted or finished.
 3. Any changes to the design or materials of the proposal must be reviewed by the Planning Bureau.
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The case was represented by Chris Dawson with Chris Dawson Architect (the project architect), 300 North 2nd Street, Suite 701, Harrisburg, PA 17101 (aka “the Applicant”).

Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicant if they had anything to add to the proposal. The Applicant stated that the change from the previous design was made after consultation with the Codes Bureau and was necessary to provide emergency egress for one of the proposed new residential units in the building’s attic. He noted that there was an existing fire escape which was visible from River Street, and that the project proposed to extend that to a window in the attic unit. They noted that a small portion of the roofline would have to be modified to provide the necessary clearance for the extension.

The Applicant referenced a photograph they had provided with the Applicant, showing the location of the proposed work. Mrs. Gribble noted that it appeared the location was set far back from the right-of-way and was minimally visible as it was obscured by an existing building addition.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether the Applicant had any concerns about the conditions of approval included in the case report; he responded that he did not.

Mrs. Gribble inquired as to the material of the fire escape; the Applicant confirmed that it would be constructed of metal and would match the existing fire escape design and materials; he confirmed that it would be painted black.

Ms. Tennis moved, and Ms. Bennett seconded the motion, to Approve with Staff Conditions. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

2. 1201 North Front Street, filed by Dimit Architects, to perform various alterations and updates including: new windows, construct a covered pavilion, install new walking path, new site lighting, screen wall and trash enclosures, new signage, and pergola.

Mr. Grumbine gave a synopsis of the case report, recommending the request be approved with the following condition(s):

1. If applicable, the applicant must submit a floodplain development application to the Planning Bureau.
2. The brick on the existing building shall not be stained, painted, or coated to obtain an “updated” appearance.
3. The proposed pergola will not be constructed or its design and materials will be changed to be more compatible with the building.
4. The existing “courtyard” and raised bed design on the eastern elevation of the building shall be preserved.
5. The luminosity of the proposed light poles must abide by the Zoning Code and shall not have an adverse impact on adjacent neighbors or traffic.
6. Any changes or modifications to the final proposal must be reviewed by the Planning Bureau.

The case was represented by Kristin Howard with Dimit Architects (the project architect), 14414 Detroit Avenue, Lakewood, OH 44107 (aka “the Applicant”).

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Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicant to provide more information on the scope of the project; the Applicant stated that there were three components of the proposed work: to address a backlog of outstanding maintenance issues, including replacement of the doors and windows for more energy efficiency; to include outdoor improvements, such as the pavilion, to provide new amenities for residents; and to better design the eastern portion of the site to provide better safety and security for residents.

Mrs. Gribble noted that the project involved replacement of windows and inquired as to the specifics of that aspect of the project; the Applicant confirmed the project would involve in-kind window replacements and would match the kind, color, and framing of the existing windows.

Mrs. Gribble referenced the proposed pergola addition on the eastern side of the structure, and noted that the Historic Preservation Specialist had indicated this was a specific issue of concern; she asked the Applicant to discuss that element. The Applicant stated that the intention was to provide a more resident-focused site design, noting that the outdoor seating area was often used by non-residents; she stated that the pergola, walkway, and lighting improvements were meant to make residents feel safer using the space.

Mrs. Gribble asked how many entrances were in the building; the Applicant confirmed that there were four main entrances, including two entrances to the main lobby on the first floor and two entrances to stairwells on the sides of the building.

Mrs. Gribble read through the conditions of approval, and noted that one of the conditions related to the treatment of the brick on the façade; the Applicant stated that the intention was to improve the exterior of the building by staining portions of the brick. She stated that they had confirmed that the proposed brick stain could be removed with a product by the stain manufacturer, if it became necessary to remove it after treatment. The Applicant stated that it was only an aesthetic upgrade and would not provide any additional façade protection. She referenced samples she had brought to the meeting, showing stained and unstained brick samples. Mrs. Gribble asked for confirmation that the stain was a topical treatment and would not etch or impregnate the brick; the Applicant confirmed that was the case. The Applicant confirmed that the stain was impervious to weathering and that it would allow the brick to “breathe.”

Mrs. Gribble asked whether the other Board members had questions or concerns about the proposed brick stain. There were no questions or comments. Mrs. Gribble asked whether there was a visual illustration of how the building façade would look after the application of the stain treatment. Ms. Montgomery noted that the Applicant had provided a rendering in the submittal packet. The Applicant confirmed that they had provided various coloring templates showing how stain would be applied to recessed elements between windows around the façade of the building. Mrs. Gribble asked again whether any of the Board members had questions about the stain; there were no questions.

Mrs. Gribble read through the Planning Bureau’s conditions of approval, and noted the reference to modifying or removing the pergola around the eastern stairwell entrance. Mr. Grumbine noted that he had addressed the reasons for his opposition to the pergola later in the case report, and that the opposition to this element was based on the Secretary of Interior’s Standards, which

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recommended against new construction that was visually-incompatible with the character of the original building. Mrs. Gribble noted that the pergola featured open rafters and would not have any solid covering; she inquired as to how it would be anchored. The Applicants stated that they would be pouring concrete foundations for the support posts, but would not be affixed to the building.

Ms. Tennis asked for clarification on whether they were discussing the pergola adjacent to the side entrance, or the proposed pavilion in the southwestern corner of the site; Mrs. Gribble noted that they were discussing the pergola on the eastern façade. Ms. Tennis inquired as to what external structures were being proposed; the Applicants confirmed that project involved two new structures and two new signs. Ms. Tennis asked whether they would be new signs; the Applicants confirmed that there were two existing signs that would be replaced with new ones.

Ms. Montgomery asked whether there were renderings of the proposed structures; the Applicants confirmed that the submittal packet included visuals of the new pavilion and pergola. Mrs. Gribble asked Mr. Grumbine whether the Planning Bureau objected to the standalone pavilion or just the pergola; he stated that design and relationship of the pergola to the principal structure on-site made it not recommended.

Ms. Tennis asked which structure encroached into the floodplain; Mr. Grumbine confirmed that the footprint of the pavilion in the southwestern corner was located in the floodplain and thus had to conform to the applicable regulations. Ms. Tennis requested confirmation on the location of new exterior structures included in the proposal. Mrs. Gribble and Mr. Grumbine clarified the location and type of new structures. The Applicant referenced the site plan submitted with the application; they also referenced the redesigned seating along the eastern side of the property. Mrs. Gribble noted that a new path would connect the seating area to the sidewalk along North 2nd Street. The Applicant noted that the project also proposed replacing the existing trash enclosure on-site as well.

Mr. Grumbine clarified the Planning Bureau's opposition to the pergola was based on the design, and that an accessory structure with more compatible design and materials might be appropriate for that elevation. Mrs. Gribble asked whether a canopy design that more closely matched the main entrance along Verbeke Street would be appropriate; Mr. Grumbine confirmed that it would be. The Applicant stated that they were willing to redesign the pergola on the eastern entrance as a more horizontal feature of the building. Mr. Grumbine stated that that approach would better reference the horizontal and vertical lines of the building, and would better blend into the building façade.

Mr. Grumbine stated that he did not have issues with the design of the proposed pavilion, as it was disconnected from and did not have a direct relationship to the principal building. Mrs. Gribble asked whether other Board members had thoughts on Mr. Grumbine's statements regarding the pergola. Ms. Tennis stated that she concurred with Planning Bureau staff in that the disconnected siting of the pavilion from the principal structure meant the design could also be differentiated. Ms. Montgomery concurred and stated that she felt the pergola should be redesigned.

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Mrs. Gribble asked whether the Board wanted they wanted to have the pavilion design incorporate aspects of the principal building on-site. She noted that it did not reflect the vertical and horizontal design elements of the main building, and asked whether the Board wanted to incorporate that as a condition of approval. Ms. Tennis stated she would support such a condition. Ms. Montgomery asked what type of changes she was considering; Mrs. Gribble stated that they might want to consider including horizontal aspects of the redesigned pergola, so that the pavilion referenced that new element as well.

Mr. Grumbine noted that there were two options to address the conditions discussed by the Board: the Applicant could submit a revised design for Planning Bureau consideration and administrative approval if it met the conditions discussed at the current meeting; or the Applicant could submit a new Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) application for HARB consideration and review. He stated that the latter approach may be more appropriate given the discussed revisions, and because he would not be in his position in the future, as he was leaving for a new job, so that any staff reviewing the proposal in the future would not have the benefit of the discussion at the meeting. Mrs. Gribble stated that it seemed like a reasonable approach to addressing the issues discussed by the Board.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether the pavilion was on the same timeline as the work on the rest of the building and site. The Applicant stated that they needed approval of a Building Permit, and that they were waiting to submit that document until after they had received HARB approval. She stated that they were hoping to begin the project in the spring. Mrs. Gribble stated if a new COA application was submitted for the revised design, the Applicant would have to appear before the Board at their February 7th meeting. Mr. Grumbine noted that the submission deadline for that meeting was upcoming; he also noted that the Board could Table their review to allow the Applicant to coordinate with Planning Bureau staff and submit a revised design that was more appropriate for the historic district. Mr. Gaylord recommended against having the Board review any revised designs in a non-public setting.

Ms. Montgomery noted that it sounded like the Applicant wanted to submit the Building Permit to get that review started, and asked whether they would be permitted to do that while the design was being finalized. She noted that the Applicant may be able to submit two permits: one that addressed aspects of the project not subject to HARB review, which could be administratively approved, and then one that included the aspects of the project subject to historic district review and approval, which would be held until HARB made a final determination. The Applicant stated that the project could proceed through that process.

Mrs. Gribble referenced the proposed changes outdoor seating area along the eastern side of the property, and asked how the project would address that; the Applicant stated that it would be demolished to accommodate a new walking path from North 2nd Street. Mrs. Gribble asked whether it was possible to maintain that landscape element; the Applicant confirmed that it was and referenced a proposed raised seating area near the pavilion on the other side of the property. The Applicant noted that the existing planter area along North 2nd Street was made of wood and was deteriorating, and that it would be reconstructed with brick and flagstone caps.

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Mrs. Gribble asked whether the Board members had thoughts on that proposal. Ms. Tennis asked whether the existing wooden planter boxes would need to be demolished regardless; the Applicant confirmed that was the case. Ms. Montgomery asked Planning Bureau staff whether that proposal would be appropriate; Mr. Grumbine confirmed that it would be. He stated that the landscape design was significant to the overall site, as it was original to the property. He noted that it was often easy to overlook landscape design when considering historic preservation, but noted that the current design was reflective of 1970s/1980s era when the building was constructed. Mr. Grumbine stated that the Applicant's reconstruction proposal was compatible with historic district guidelines.

Mrs. Gribble requested clarification on the location and nature of the proposed seating area redesign. The Applicant confirmed that a redesign would maintain the existing walkway path from North 2nd Street, but would incorporate a raised planting bed area in the same general location. Mrs. Gribble asked if there were any questions or concerns from the Board members; there were none.

Mrs. Gribble suggested that the Board modify Condition #4 from the Planning Bureau's case report to allow the existing courtyard and raised planter bed to be preserved or replaced with a brick-and-flagstone design as shown for the other seating area in the southwestern corner [note; this is on page 5 of the plan set submitted by the Applicant].

Mrs. Gribble referenced the proposed lighting elements on-site; she asked what type of lighting would be used and how tall the proposed poles would be. The Applicant stated that they were proposing lower, bollard-like designs; she stated the project engineer could develop a lighting plan to illustrate the impact of proposed lighting on the project site and adjacent properties. The Applicant noted that the bollards were approximately three to four feet tall, but that there would also be taller lighting poles installed throughout the site as well. Mr. Grumbine noted that the lighting poles were only identified in the sketch plan drawing.

Ms. Montgomery noted that there appeared to be four total light poles on-site; Mrs. Gribble confirmed that there were only two light poles on the eastern side of the site. Mrs. Gribble inquired as to how tall the poles were; the Applicant stated that they would match the existing light poles in finish and height, and would be approximately 30 feet tall. The Applicant reiterated that they weren't sure how much coverage there would be from the lights, but that the project engineer would provide a lighting plan.

Ms. Tennis stated that she was concerned about the commercial appearance of the proposed design, specifically referencing the proposed lights and free-standing signs. She noted that the neighborhood was primarily residential, and that she felt the proposal was a significant departure from that character. Mrs. Gribble concurred about the design of the lights and noted that the intensity and color of the light might be inappropriate. Ms. Tennis noted that the Applicant had referenced crime prevention as a reason for the new lighting and noted that she lived nearby and frequently traveled around the property; she stated she didn't think all the proposed lighting was necessary and did not think that more lighting would be an effective crime deterrent. Mrs. Gribble stated that was not opposed to the bollard-style lights, but had concerns about the taller lights. She stated that if the Board was going to make conditions on the pergola and pavilion, they should include more residential-scale lighting fixtures on-site.

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Mrs. Gribble asked if there was anyone from the public wanted to speak for or against the project. Mr. Franklin Harris identified himself as the President of the Greater Harrisburg NAACP; he noted that the discussion had not addressed the police or ambulance calls to the building, or the constant disinfecting in the kitchens, bathrooms, and walls. He stated that a new pavilion without fencing would become a place for smoking and the congregation of unauthorized, non-residents on-site. Mr. Franklin asked what good the exterior improvements would be if the interior building issues were not also addressed; he noted that a significant number of complaints had been reported to the City. He asked the Applicant to do something for the residents of the building, and improve the interior conditions, noting that residents were not in attendance to air their concerns.

The Applicant stated that residents of the building had been notified of the meeting ahead of time. She noted that the reason the Board had not discussed the interior aspects of the project was that HARB only reviewed exterior alterations to properties in historic districts. The Applicant stated that they would be making significant improvements to the interior of the building. Mr. Franklin asked whether the exterior work would be performed first; the Applicant stated that the work would be done at the same time. The Applicant stated that the City required exterior work to be approved before a Building Permit could be approved; Mrs. Gribble confirmed that HARB approval was necessary before the entire project could move forward. She noted that the Board's review included all aspects of the project that were visible from a public right-of-way, and that she was unsure of what interior work was being proposed.

The Applicant inquired as to whose responsibility it was to review interior work; Mr. Grumbine confirmed that was the Codes Bureau's responsibility.

Mrs. Gribble asked if there was anyone from the public wanted to speak for or against the project. An individual who did not provide his name stated that Mr. Franklin had covered most of his points, and stated that there was a lot of mold in the building. The Applicant stated that interior work would be done on the building, but clarified that she was not part of the ownership team and was part of the architecture firm that had been hired to redesign the exterior and site elements. She stated that all the building units and all the common areas would be fully gutted and rehabilitated, including the installation of new elevators.

An individual who did not provide her name stated that she had lived in the building for eleven years and that the mold in the building had exacerbated her respiratory issues. Mr. Franklin stated that the Black community had been overlooked in the city for four decades, and that he believed that once the interior and exterior improvements were made, the new ownership would evict the current residents. He stated that he had spoken with the new Mayor and expected that the issues he raised would be addressed.

Mrs. Gribble summarized the discussion at the meeting, referencing the conditions proposed by the Planning Bureau and the modifications to those conditions discussed at the meeting. She noted that Condition #3 would be modified to require the pergola and pavilion be redesigned to be more compatible with the architecture of the building, and then be resubmitted for HARB review. She noted that Condition #4 would be modified to allow the planter and seating area to be preserved or replaced with brick and flagstone materials similar to the seating area near the proposed

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pavilion. Mrs. Gribble noted that Condition #5 should be modified to require a more appropriate design and size of the light poles, as well as a lighting plan for the site. She noted that Conditions #1, #2, and #6 should be fine. Mr. Gaylord noted that so long as the proposed lighting was in conformance with the Zoning Code, the Board could not require the Applicant to change the luminosity.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether there were any concerns with the conditions. Ms. Tennis noted that proposed signage was fairly large and was much more conspicuous than the existing signage on-site. Mrs. Gribble asked her to clarify which signs on-site she was addressing; Ms. Tennis stated that she wasn't sure which signage it was on the plan, but that it was a substantial deviation from the existing signage on-site. Ms. Bennett asked whether they were referencing making the existing signage on-site larger.

The Applicant confirmed that there were two types of signage being proposed: double-sided signs around the driveways onto the site, and a larger free-standing sign in the northwestern corner at the intersection of Front Street and Verbeke Street. Ms. Tennis noted that there was other signage proposed for the building, but that she wasn't able to determine the size of the wall signs from the renderings and elevation plans. The Applicant confirmed that there were existing wall signs on the building; Ms. Tennis noted that the newer signage appeared to be larger than the existing signs.

Ms. Bennett asked whether the proposed signage would be illuminated; the Applicant confirmed that the proposed free-standing signs would be illuminated. Mrs. Gribble asked how the proposed signage would be mounted; the Applicant stated that they would be dark bronze letters to match the existing signage and pin-mounted to the wall.

Mrs. Gribble concurred that the wall signage would be fairly large compared to the existing window sizes and appeared to be about 18-24 inches tall; the Applicant stated that the signs would be 12 inches tall. Ms. Bennett inquired about the height of the existing signage lettering on the building; the Applicant stated that she was unsure of the height, but confirmed that the existing wall signage was pin-mounted to a backer board, and confirmed that the existing lettering was smaller than the proposed signage.

[Note: the audio recording of the meeting ended at this point; the Board's decision, noted below, is based on the meeting notes kept by Mr. Grumbine. Any discussion that occurred after this point is not known to remaining City staff, although it should be noted that the final case for review by the Board was withdrawn from consideration at the Applicant's request.]

Ms. Gribble moved, and Ms. Bennett seconded the motion, to Table the review until the following month's meeting, to allow the Applicant to redesign the proposal to redesign the pergola, pavilion, and lighting to be more compatible with the existing building design, and to address issues with the signage and lighting being too "commercial" in appearance. The motion was adopted with a unanimous vote (4-0).

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- 3. 1917 North 2nd Street, to install a wheelchair lift on the southern elevation; remove two double-hung windows and fenestration to install steel door for entry; install concrete ramp up to lift.**

The day of the HARB meeting, the Applicant submitted a formal request to withdraw their COA application. The Planning Bureau notes that the Applicant resubmitted a revised site design that will be heard at the February 7th HARB meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS: N/A

ADJOURNMENT: 7:21 PM

Ms. Montgomery moved, and Ms. Tennis seconded the motion, to adjourn. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0); the meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.