

MINUTES

HARRISBURG ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD REGULAR MEETING

April 4, 2022

**THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CITY GOVERNMENT CENTER
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Trina Gribble, Chair
Bruce Henry, Assistant Codes Administrator
April Rucker
Kali Tennis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Camille Bennett

STAFF PRESENT: Geoffrey Knight, Planning Director
Stephen Ekema-Agbaw, Senior Deputy City Solicitor

OTHERS PRESENT: See Sign-In Sheet

CALL TO ORDER: 6:07 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ms. Tennis moved, and Ms. Rucker seconded the motion, to Approve the minutes from the February 7, 2022 meeting without corrections. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote (4-0).

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. 1627 & 1629 North 3rd Street, filed by Harrisburg Commercial Interiors & Associates, Inc., to construct a four-story, mixed-use building featuring an awning over the primary entrance; the structure will feature a brick masonry façade, floor-to-ceiling, storefront windows along North 3rd Street, a large sign illuminated by sconces, and a substantial metal-and-glass awning over the main entrances.**

Mr. Knight noted that he did not see the Applicants in attendance, but that he had communicated with the Applicants, who confirmed they would be at the meeting; he suggested that they might be running late and noted that the Board could push that application back to later in the meeting in case they showed up. Mrs. Gribble recommended that the Board vote to Table the application review until the end of the meeting. Ms. Rucker moved, and Ms. Tennis seconded the motion, to Table the review. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

After the final project under New Business had been reviewed, Mrs. Gribble noted that the Board had Tabled the proposal until the end of the meeting in case the Applicants showed up, but noted that no applicants for other cases appeared during the meeting. She asked whether the Board should Table the review until the next meeting. Mr. Knight stated that he advised the Board to Table the review for one more meeting, since the Applicants had gone through the processes of receiving

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the necessary zoning and land development approvals, and that this was the final step in having the project approved. He expressed some surprise that the Applicants were not in attendance, as he had conveyed the importance of attending the current meeting after they had not shown up to the February 2022 HARB meeting. Mr. Knight stated that the Planning Bureau would not approve any work on the portion of the project fronting 3rd Street, which was the portion in the Municipal Historic District, until HARB granted approval; he noted that the overall design seemed appropriate from an historic preservation perspective, but noted that it required HARB approval regardless.

Ms. Tennis asked whether there were protocols for Board action on cases in which applicants failed to appear. Mr. Knight stated that he was not aware of any, but noted that it had been approximately three years since he had last attended a HARB meeting, and was unsure whether the policies had changed. Mrs. Gribble stated that the Board usually only tabled reviews once. Mr. Knight noted that in his time staffing Planning Commission and Zoning Hearing Board meetings, cases could sometimes be continued for several months due to a variety of factors, such as needing additional documentation or encountering opposition from the public.

Mr. Knight noted that applicants for HARB cases rarely needed continuances as they were reviewing design elements and often did not discuss such contentious issues as density or parking, so he was not sure why the applicants would not be attending the meetings. He stated that he believed the applicants should be given one more opportunity to attend a meeting, and if they failed to attend the next one, they would have to ascertain how to move forward without HARB approval.

Ms. Rucker moved, and Mrs. Gribble seconded the motion, to Table the review. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

NEW BUSINESS:

- 2. 109-119½ Linden Street, filed by Westley Enterline with Chris Dawson Architect, to develop the properties as an accessory surface parking lot to the proposed redevelopment of the adjacent building at 100 North 13th Street; there will be associated lot access and site improvements. The lot will be enclosed with a 42-inch-high, black chain-link fence with a motorized gate.**

The case was represented by Westley Enterline with Chris Dawson Architect (the project architect), 3045 Gloucester Street, Lancaster, PA 17601; and Christ Dawson with Chris Dawson Architect, 153 Maple Avenue, Hershey, PA 17033 (aka “the Applicant”). The Applicants provided hard copies of the updated plan set to all of the Board members and City staff in attendance.

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the case report recommending the request be Approved with the following condition(s):

1. The Applicant will ensure that any conditions included in the February 2021 Zoning Hearing Board approval of the zoning relief requests, and the pending City Council approval of the Lot Consolidation & LDP, that relate to the proposed parking are reflected in the final design.
2. As referenced in the site plans included with the Lot Consolidation & LDP application, the parking spaces will feature pervious paving.

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3. The Applicant will construct the sidewalk along Linden Street fronting all properties involved in the project.
4. The Planning Bureau would recommend that the Applicant consider a different fence; either a decorative solid metal fence design, or a wooden stockade fence that is commonplace in rear yards throughout the neighborhood.

Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicants to provide a summary of the project. They stated that they had been working with the Applicant and City staff to guide the project through the necessary zoning and land development review processes, and that they had been finalizing the project design in recent months. They noted that they expected to have a Building Permit submitted within approximately a month. The Applicants noted that the primary issue had been the amount of off-street parking provided on-site, that they had attempted to maximize the amount of parking, and that the final proposal was approved by the Zoning Hearing Board.

The Applicants noted they wouldn't normally proposed a chain-link fence in an historic district, but that there was a significant amount of investment going in to rehabilitating the building, and that the developer was looking to save a bit of money in other aspects of the site development. They noted that the location was along a rear alley, and that the "black out" fence design was intended to reduce light spillover onto adjacent residential properties along Walnut Street. They noted the HARB Guidelines did not appear to explicitly prohibit chain-link fences, although it discouraged them, and that this proposal was a starting point requested by the client. They noted that if a different material or design was required by HARB, it would not delay the project.

Mrs. Gribble referenced the conditions in the Planning Bureau's case report. She asked whether the Applicants intended to utilize pervious paving for the parking spaces, per Condition #2 in the case report; they responded that the civil engineers (K&W Engineers) were aware of the requirement and were confirming that it would be appropriate for the site.

Mrs. Gribble noted that Condition #3 addressed the construction of a sidewalk along Linden Street, and noted that she did not see it indicated on the plan set; the Applicants noted that it was illustrated graphically but was included in the call-outs. Mrs. Gribble asked why the condition was included and inquired as to whether there was an existing sidewalk at this location. Mr. Knight confirmed that the existing sidewalk was in a severely deteriorated condition, and stated that he hadn't seen this condition included in either the zoning relief or land development plan approvals, and thus wanted to ensure it was included in one of the case reports so that the Applicants were aware of the necessity to include it as part of the project. He acknowledged that HARB did not have purview over right-of-way issues, but noted that owners were responsible for sidewalks along the frontage of their properties and reiterated that he wanted to ensure that was included in one of the Planning Bureau's case reports and thus a resolution formally adopted by a Board.

The Applicants noted that the property owner had purchased and consolidated many of the properties along the block, and stated that if the current project was successful, they might be interested in new development in the vacant lots along Linden Street and in that case, would certainly want there to be sidewalks around the block. Mrs. Gribble noted that there were some existing paving stones comprising a sidewalk at the corner of Linden Street and Calamus Street.

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Mrs. Gribble noted that Condition #4 recommended that the project consider the installation of more appropriate fence styles or materials. Mrs. Gribble asked the Board members for their thoughts on the proposed fence. Ms. Rucker stated that she liked the proposed design, and that she felt it was a good design to provide security. Mrs. Gribble noted that she was concerned a chain-link fence with metal slats might set a bad precedent for other such proposals in historic districts. Ms. Tennis noted that the project included an automated access gate, which might limit the type of fence material that could be used. The Applicants stated that they couldn't do a wooden stockade design for that reason; Ms. Tennis whether they had considered alternative metal fence designs and they confirmed that they had.

Ms. Tennis asked whether the privacy screening was an important aspect of the fence design. The Applicants stated that the developer was attempting to be a good neighbor, and noted that the City had recommended its use. Mr. Knight noted that the Planning Bureau had initially recommended fewer spaces in the accessory lot, which would have permitted the installation of required landscape screening around the parking lot to prevent spillover from vehicular headlights into surrounding residential properties; however, the twelve spaces required by the Zoning Hearing Board required construction into setbacks and meant that such screening could not be installed. Thus, the parking lot required a solid fence design to prevent light spillover.

Mr. Knight noted that the properties were vacant lots which did not have any historic character or value, the location was a secondary aspect of the overall project site, and the project site was located in an Architectural Conservation Overlay District (ACOD) as opposed to a Municipal Historic District, and thus an approval would not create a precedent for other such proposals elsewhere in the city's historic districts. He stated that, despite these considerations, he didn't feel comfortable recommending approval of a chain-link fence and felt that it should be left to the Board to determine the appropriateness of the proposal.

Mr. Henry stated that he felt his questions and comments were covered by the other Board members and City staff.

Ms. Tennis noted that, due to the automated gate providing access to the parking lot, the only other way to provide security and the required screening would be to have a solid metal fence. She asked the Applicants to provide comments on that from their architectural background. The Applicants stated that a significant amount of investment was going into developing new units in the primary building on-site, and that it required tradeoffs in investment in the rest of the site. Ms. Tennis noted that the building on-site was beautiful and that it was in really good shape despite being vacant for several decades. The Applicants noted that while it needed new windows, the brick was in very good condition. Ms. Tennis stated that she appreciated the condition of the architectural details such as the downspouts.

Mrs. Gribble stated that she struggled with the issue of the proposed chain-link fence; she noted that while the automated gate was reference as a justification for the chain-link material, a mechanized gate was not actually required. Ms. Rucker asked how the gate would be moved, and Mrs. Gribble noted that it would slide to the side on rollers; she noted that a fence panel could be mounted to a frame and moved under the same system.

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Ms. Tennis stated that she understood the concerns about setting a precedent for the use of chain-link fences, but also felt as though it was important to support investment in the neighborhood. She stated that she appreciated the owner was looking to direct much of the investment in the project into the building itself, and that the fence would only be enclosing a parking lot.

Ms. Tennis asked whether it was possible that the Summit Terrace ACOD would be upgraded to a full Municipal Historic District status in the future, and thus whether the approval of a chain-link fence would establish a bad precedent in that case. Mr. Knight stated that there was always the potential for districts to expand or be upgraded in the future, although any work that was conducted prior to such an expansion would not be subject to new regulations or standards. He stated that he didn't get the sense from the neighborhood association that they were interested in adopting a municipal historic district designation; he noted that they appreciated their role in providing cursory reviews of projects in the neighborhood, without having the additional regulations inherent in a full historic district.

Mr. Knight noted that the fence could be easily replaced in the future if the property owner or the neighborhood felt strongly about its appearance detracting from the quality of the neighborhood, but that it was most important to ensure the project could move forward so that a high-profile, vacant property could be brought back into productive reuse. He stated that the priority was ensuring that the overall project could move forward.

Ms. Tennis moved, and Mr. Henry seconded the motion, to Approve with Staff & Additional Considerations; the additional condition was that Condition #4 from the case report would not be included. The motion was adopted by a majority vote (3-1).

3. 211 Verbeke Street, filed by David Leaman with Renovations Company, to install four, double-hung Fibrex windows with wooden headers and lintels along the eastern side of the structure fronting Charles Street.

The case was represented by David Leaman with Renovations Company, Inc. (the property owner), 2429 North 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 (aka "the Applicant").

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the case report recommending the request be Approved.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether the Applicant had anything to add to the Planning Bureau's case report; the Applicant responded that he did not.

Ms. Tennis asked for confirmation that the proposed changes would be installed only along the façade fronting the enclosed parking lot; the Applicant confirmed that was the case.

Mrs. Gribble inquired as to the material of the headers and sills for the proposed windows; the Applicant confirmed that they would be constructed from wood, to match other aspects of the property.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether there were any other questions or comments from Board members; there were none.

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Ms. Rucker moved, and Mrs. Gribble seconded the motion, to Approve. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

4. 930 North 2nd Street, filed by Richard Katsifis, to replace the existing standing seam metal roof with Atlas Pinnacle Pristine asphalt shingles.

The case was represented by Rich Katsifis (the property owner), 2 Riddle Road, Camp Hill, PA 17011 (aka “the Applicant”).

Mr. Knight gave a synopsis of the case report, recommending the request be Approved. He stated that the proposal was a unique situation, in that the Planning Bureau was generally not supportive of proposals to replace significant historic elements such as metal roofs with modern materials such as asphalt shingles; however, he noted that the abutting structures on either side of the subject property had been significantly altered, including the use of historically-inappropriate siding materials and the removal of features such as windows. Mr. Knight also noted that both properties had asphalt shingles installed as far back as 2008, per review of Google Streets View images.

Mr. Knight noted that he was hesitant to recommend approval of the proposed work, but recalled a similar project at 1322 Susquehanna Street in a similar contextual setting from 2014. He noted that the Board at the time determined that there was not much historic integrity to maintain in the subject property, and that the Board felt that requiring the property owner to retain a small vestige of the property, when the subject property and adjacent properties had been significantly altered in the past. Mr. Knight noted that the Board in the previous case was concerned that their decision not be used as a precedent upon which other alternate roofing projects would be approved, but noted that the current proposal was very similar to that case in both the proposed project being proposed and the setting of the property amongst altered structures. Mr. Knight noted that he had reviewed properties in the surrounding blocks and, while there had been a HARB-approved project on Boas Street in which real slate shingles were replaced by synthetic slate shingles, many of the gable roofs were clad in asphalt shingles. He stated that he didn’t believe it was reasonable to hold the Applicant to a strict standard for a small portion of the roof when so many similar roofs had been replaced with asphalt shingles.

Mrs. Gribble stated that the Planning Bureau’s reasoning was sensible, but that the Board’s concern was the longevity of the building, and noted that there was a significant difference between metal roofs and asphalt shingles. The Applicant stated that the current metal roof had reached the end of its useful life and noted that when his neighbor had installed the asphalt shingles on their roof, they had driven nails through his metal roof which caused substantial interior leaks. He stated that he felt the asphalt shingles with provide a longer life and that the proposal would match the existing shingle roofs on both of the neighboring properties.

Mrs. Gribble stated that she didn’t have a specific issue with the current proposal, but that she wanted the Board to clearly understand that there were substantial differences in longevity between asphalt roofs and metal roofs, with the latter lasting significantly longer than the former. She stated that she was struggling with the justification that just because the neighbors had clad their roofs in asphalt shingles, the current proposal to use asphalt shingles should be approved. Mrs. Gribble

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stated that there were similar contextual situations all over the city, with properties in varying states of historic integrity being located adjacent to one another, and she stated that the Board would have to figure out where that line was drawn.

Ms. Tennis stated that she felt it was unreasonable to ask the Applicant to replace their existing metal roof with a standing seam metal roof, which was the only modern equivalent material. She stated that since the subject property would have to install a conspicuous transition at the edge of the roofs of the adjacent properties, which would serve to draw attention to the differentiated condition of the adjacent roofs. She agreed with the Planning Bureau's determination that the context of the row of buildings supported the proposal.

Ms. Tennis inquired as to whether the water leaks referenced by the Applicant were still a consideration; the Applicant confirmed that they were and noted that he had received quotes for both a metal roof and a shingle roof. He stated that the contractor had informed him of the difficulty in installing a transition between a metal roof on his property and the shingle roofs of the adjacent properties. Ms. Tennis stated that she supported the proposal due to the challenges in installing a metal roof, the conspicuousness from the street of the roofs across the attached properties with similar roofs, and the context in which the building was located.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether there were any other questions or comments from Board members; there were none.

Ms. Rucker moved, and Mr. Henry seconded the motion, to Approve. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

OTHER BUSINESS:

5. Discussion of Board vacancies

Mr. Knight stated that he had not yet developed a list of candidates for the Board vacancies, but noted that Mrs. Gribble had provided communications to interested parties from when the issue was last addressed in 2020, and stated that he would be reaching out to those individuals to gauge their interest. He noted that he had reached out to a Mr. Hixenbaugh, who had expressed interest in the past, but that that individual did not live in the city and thus was not eligible to serve on the Board.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:57 PM

Ms. Tennis moved, and Ms. Montgomery seconded the motion, to adjourn. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0); the meeting adjourned at 6:57 PM.