

MINUTES

**HARRISBURG ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
May 2, 2022
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CITY GOVERNMENT CENTER
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Trina Gribble, Chair
Bruce Henry, Assistant Codes Administrator
Camille Bennett
Kali Tennis

MEMBERS ABSENT: April Rucker

STAFF PRESENT: Geoffrey Knight, Planning Director
Stephen Ekema-Agbaw, Senior Deputy 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 minutes from the April 6, 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.**

The case was represented by Matthew Long with Harrisburg Commercial Interiors (the project contractor), 311 South River Street, Harrisburg, PA 17104 (aka “the Applicant”).

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 proposed signage will be in conformance with the applicable regulations of the Zoning Code; if not, the Applicant will submit a zoning relief application and secure approval from the Zoning Hearing Board before installation.
2. The building will utilize brick façade materials on the side and rear elevations, as well as historically-appropriate materials for the signage board, window headers, and cornice; the Bureau would not recommend the use of Dryvit or similar products such as EIFS for these features.

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3. The Applicant will utilize a historically-appropriate material for the windows; the Planning Bureau would recommend wood or wood composite material.

Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicant whether he wanted to elaborate on the information provided in the case report; he noted that the first floor would accommodate a community center for the neighborhood and the upper floors would accommodate twelve apartment units. The Applicant confirmed that the windows on the floors would be Anderson Fibrex windows and stated that the requirement for a brick façade would be acceptable.

The Applicant noted that they were proposing to use Dryvit for the cornice work and a precast band between the floors; he requested approval from the Board for use of the material due to the fact that the material would be elevated on the structure out of the “touch zone” and the high cost of precast concrete. The Applicant confirmed that the proposed canopies along the sidewalk would be constructed of aluminum structural elements with tempered glass.

Mrs. Gribble noted that the elevation plans indicated that Dryvit material would be used for the window lintels and asked whether that was still the intention; the Applicant confirmed that the plan sets were inaccurate and that the material would not be used for the windows. Mrs. Gribble noted that the plans also indicated that a Dryvit soldier brick band would be installed on the façade; the Applicant confirmed that notation was also an error and that the architect had erroneously indicated that the façade would be comprised of Dryvit, and that the façade would be comprised of real brick. He noted that they were requesting use of Dryvit material for the band behind the “Midtown Community Center” sign and an upper band on the structure. The Applicant clarified that the elevation drawing in the upper right of the submitted plans was accurate, while the other elevation perspectives had errors.

Mrs. Gribble asked whether there were any questions or comments from the other Board members. Ms. Tennis asked the Applicant had renderings of the proposed cornice; he stated that the only drawings were in the elevation plans he had previously referenced. He noted that because it was precast Dryvit, it would come pre-browncoated with a factory-applied finish. Ms. Tennis noted that her documentation was from February 2022 when the case was first put on the agenda, and asked whether there were any proposed changes since the project was first introduced. Mr. Knight stated that there were no proposed changes, and the Applicant concurred. Mr. Tennis asked for clarification on whether the façade would be actual brick or faux brick; the Applicant confirmed that the façade would be comprised of real brick.

Ms. Tennis asked whether the project incorporated three parcels total; the Applicant clarified that the overall project involved the consolidation of 21 parcels into 9 parcels. Ms. Tennis asked how many façades would be constructed along North 3rd Street; he stated that there would be one building, constructed across four parcels, that would front North 3rd Street.

Ms. Tennis asked whether all the entrances to the building would be onto North 3rd Street; the Applicant confirmed that there would be an entrance on the northern elevation fronting the Harrisburg Improv Theatre, noting that a mid-block pathway would run from 3rd Street, between the buildings, and extending to 4th Street. Ms. Tennis asked whether an easement would run between the buildings into the middle of the block. Mr. Knight stated that it would depend on how

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the walkway was intended to be used; since the property was intended for community use, it might be necessary to establish a public access easement, although that might be unnecessary if it was clear that the public had access to the entire building and the interior of the block. The Applicant reiterated that it was a publicly-accessible building, so that there would be no restrictions on access to the proposed walkway.

Mrs. Gribble inquired about the proposed Dryvit cornice and asked whether the Applicant had considered using pre-cast concrete; he responded that that material had not been chosen due to the cost of the product and the overall lead time in ordering it. The Applicant noted that the project was a wood-framed structure and stated that the entire building would need to be redesigned to support the weight of that material. He also noted that the Dryvit material would feature a “finesse” finish which was more fine-grained than the traditional finish; Mrs. Gribble noted that this would make the product appear more like limestone than the usual Dryvit product. She asked whether the material would be painted, and the Applicant confirmed that it would be factory-finished in a beige or light tan. Mrs. Gribble stated that if the Board approved the Dryvit material, it should utilize a light color as the exterior would fade over time.

Ms. Tennis noted that many of the properties on the block had decorative cornices, but that the proposed design featured a simple, flat fascia. The Applicant stated that the top would feature an alternating convex/concave pattern with a flat band. Ms. Tennis asked whether there would be any other ornamentation, such as dentils; the Applicant confirmed that there would be no other details. Mrs. Gribble noted that while the cornice would have a relatively thin profile, it would project out a bit from the building façade. Ms. Tennis asked whether the submitted elevation plans were true to the actual colors of the materials; the Applicant confirmed that they were, and noted that the cornice would project approximately 16-18 inches from the building face. Ms. Tennis asked whether the cornice would run along the perimeter of the entire building; the Applicant stated that it would run along the front and sides of the building atop parapet walls, which would hide a sloped roof that drained toward the back of the building.

Ms. Tennis asked what type of windows were proposed for the upper floors and noted the simulated divided lite screens; the Applicant confirmed that they intended on installing six-over-six, colonial-style Fibrex windows. Ms. Tennis noted that the other properties on the block featured one-over-one, double-hung windows, and stated that she felt that pane configuration was more appropriate for residential developments; Ms. Bennett and Mrs. Gribble agreed, and the Applicant confirmed that those would be acceptable as well. He also noted that the windows would feature a composite material casement.

Ms. Tennis noted that the elevation plans showed the awnings over the front entrances, as well as commercial lamps illuminated the proposed signage, and requested additional information on those components. The Applicant confirmed that there would be three canopies in total, with one on the side, and that there would only be sconces above the signage on the front elevation and as required along the side elevation above the proposed walkway; he noted that they were working on developing a proposed photometric plan to be submitted with the final plan sets.

Ms. Tennis noted a discrepancy in the first-floor design between the renderings and the elevation plans, with one showing storefront windows across the front and the other showing storefront

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windows separated by brick columns, and inquired as to which design was accurate. The Applicant confirmed that there would be brick sections between the storefront windows, and clarified that the windows would be approximately nine feet of the overall eleven-foot-high first floor. He noted that the first floor would be open plan to allow the most flexible use of the community center space.

Mrs. Gribble re-read the conditions in the case report; she noted that Condition #1 appeared to be straightforward and did not need additional discussion.

Mrs. Gribble noted that the Board had discussed Condition #2, which addressed utilizing brick façade treatments on all elevations of the property. The Applicant clarified that there would be Dryvit bands between the floors and behind the proposed signage as had been previously discussed. Ms. Tennis asked for clarification that the Dryvit would have a limestone finish; the Applicant confirmed that was the case. Mrs. Gribble noted that the elevation plans did not show whether there would be headers above the windows; the Applicant confirmed that there would be a “wide profile brick mould” around the windows. He stated that the lintel would sit above the trimwork, but stated that it would not be visible.

Mrs. Gribble noted that she generally took issue with the use of Dryvit and had recommended denial of its use in other projects, because she felt that it was a material that was not appropriate for historic districts and was more representative of suburban architecture; however, she stated that because it would only be used for façade ornamentation, it might be more acceptable. Ms. Tennis stated that she agreed that it was appropriate in this instance, since the location of use was out of the “touch zone.” Ms. Tennis noted that the band behind the signage was fairly wide, and the Applicant confirmed that it would be approximately 16 inches in height. Ms. Tennis asked whether the Applicant had considered precast concrete for these elements, and he reiterated that the cost and lead time to order the material was prohibitive. The Applicant noted that they had been working on the project since 2018, and that the price of the construction had doubled during that time; Ms. Tennis reminded him that the building would be there for far longer and thus required consideration of the request to use the Dryvit. The Applicant stated that the lead time on ordering materials was approximately 4-6 months. Mrs. Gribble asked the other Board members had questions or comments on the use of Dryvit; they replied that they did not.

Mrs. Gribble noted that there was a consensus to retain Condition #1 and modify Condition #2 to state that brick siding would be used on side and rear elevations, but not include the references to historically-appropriate materials for the signage, windows, and cornice. The Applicant requested clarification on where brick façade would be required. Mr. Knight confirmed that the Planning Bureau’s case report stated that the façade should be real brick on all four sides of the building to ensure a consistent appearance; he stated that the intention was to avoid “Disneyfication” which described buildings that appear to be of good, historically-appropriate design and materials on the front elevations, with cheap design and materials on rear elevations.

Ms. Tennis inquired as to the proposed siding for the rear elevation; the Applicant stated that they were considering the use of cementitious fiberboard to cut down on cost, but that brick was a viable option as well. Ms. Tennis stated that she would prefer that the façade be brick. Mrs. Gribble asked the other Board members whether they had thoughts on the two types of siding, noting that she felt

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brick was more appropriate as well given the design of the rest of the building. Mrs. Gribble stated that she felt Condition #2 should be modified to indicate that brick should be used on all elevations of the building, except for the Dryvit ornamentation elements of the cornice, signage, and banding, which could be approved as proposed, and Ms. Tennis agreed.

Mrs. Gribble noted that Condition #3 addressed the proposed window materials, and that the wood composite or Fibrex material recommended had been authorized by HARB as administratively approvable; Mr. Knight concurred.

Mrs. Gribble noted that the proposed canopies were an aluminum pre-fabricated design and asked whether the Board wanted to discuss that aspect. The Applicant confirmed that the material of the proposed awnings was aluminum and not steel. Ms. Tennis asked whether the awnings extended across the entire frontage of the building; the Applicant confirmed that the center would be storefront windows below the building signage, and that the awnings would be installed above the two entrances to the left and right. He noted that the project originally intended a single entrance centered on the front façade, but that they determined that multiple entrances would allow more flexibility in the configuration of the interior space. He also confirmed that an awning would be installed over the side entrance as well.

Ms. Tennis asked how far out over the sidewalk the awnings would extend; the Applicant stated that it had not been determined, but that they were anticipating a three- to four-foot projection over the sidewalk. Ms. Tennis asked Planning Bureau staff whether there were standards to which the awnings would have to conform, and Mr. Knight noted that any projection into the public right-of-way had to file an Easement and receive approval from the City; he noted that the Applicant had already filed that application. Mr. Knight noted that he was awaiting HARB approval to begin processing the Easement application. The Applicant stated that they would be “extending” the width of the sidewalk by approximately one foot.

Mrs. Gribble stated that she didn’t have any issues with the proposed awning, noting that the regular requirement to mount such features through mortar joints did not apply since the project was not a historic building with historic materials.

Ms. Bennett moved, and Mr. Tennis seconded the motion, to Approve with Staff & Additional Considerations; the additional conditions were that Condition #2 from the case report would be modified to require real brick façade on all sides of the building with non-historic materials approved for use in the cornice, banding, and wall sign, and that Condition #3 would be modified to require one-over-one, double-hung, wood composite windows. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0).

NEW BUSINESS:

- 2. 27 North Front Street, filed by Karen Cullings with the Dauphin County Library System, to construct a fire escape connection from the third floor of the rear of the property 27 North Front Street to the existing fire escape at the rear of 25 North Front Street, including the modification of the existing casement window to meet egress requirements.**

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The case was represented by Karen Cullings with the Dauphin County Library System (the property owner), 101 Walnut Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 (aka “the Applicant”).

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 permanent anchors through brick façade on the building will occur through the mortar joints, and not through the brick façade.
2. All materials including steel and wood shall be appropriately painted, stained, or otherwise finished.
3. Any changes to the design or materials of the proposal must be reviewed by the Planning Bureau.

Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicants if they had any information to add to the Planning Bureau’s case report; the Applicant noted that the project was a minor modification to a stairwell which had previously been approved for the adjacent property at 25 North Front Street, and included a small landing and set of steps to connect to that fire escape.

Mrs. Gribble asked the Applicant whether they had any issues with the conditions noted in the case report; the Applicant responded that she did not.

Mrs. Gribble confirmed that the Board had previously approved the referenced fire escape and noted that the plan sets submitted with the application showed the previously-approved fire escape which would be extended to the third-floor window of the subject property. She asked whether the fire escape would be constructed of steel and the Applicant confirmed that was correct. Mr. Knight stated that he assumed that whatever material had been approved by the Board for the previously-approved fire escape would be utilized for the extension as well.

Mrs. Gribble asked the Board members whether there were any additional questions; there were none.

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

OTHER BUSINESS:

3. Discussion of Board vacancies

Mr. Knight noted that he had begun reaching out to individuals previously contacted for vacancies by Mrs. Gribble, and noted that one of them had moved out of the City’s historic districts and thus was ineligible. He stated that he had also contact HHA to see whether they were aware of any interested individuals.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:37 PM

Mrs. Gribble moved, and Ms. Bennett seconded the motion, to adjourn. The motion was adopted by a unanimous vote (4-0); the meeting adjourned at 6:37 PM.