

*****DRAFT MINUTES*****

Alexandria Board of Architectural Review
Old & Historic Alexandria District

Wednesday, September 25, 2013
7:30pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall
301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Members Present: Tom Hulfish, Chairman
Oscar Fitzgerald
Chip Carlin
Wayne Neale
Christine Roberts
John von Senden

Members Absent: Peter Smeallie

Staff Present: Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager
Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner
Tom Canfield, City Architect
Emily Baker, City Engineer

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Chairman Hulfish.

I. MINUTES

Consideration of the minutes of the public hearing of September 11, 2013.

BOARD ACTION: Approved as submitted, 6-0.

On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Mr. von Senden, the minutes were approved, as submitted, 6-0.

II. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. CASE BAR2013-0284

Request for signage at **1129 King St.**

APPLICANT: Cabinet Tile Countertop by Eric Alyatan

BOARD ACTION: Approved, as amended, on the Consent Calendar, 6-0.

2. CASE BAR2013-0292

Request for alterations and signage at **111 South Payne St.**

APPLICANT: Benjamin & Perla Umansky

BOARD ACTION: Approved, as amended, on the Consent Calendar, 6-0.

On a motion by Mr. von Senden, seconded by Dr. Fitzgerald, the Consent Calendar was approved, as amended, 6-0.

III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND ITEMS PREVIOUSLY DEFERRED

3. CASE BAR2013-0210

Request for a comprehensive sign plan at **700 S Washington St & 600 Franklin St.**
APPLICANT: 700 S Washington Acquisitions, LLC by Lisa Cunniff

Deferred prior to hearing due to improper notice.

4. CASE BAR2013-0219

Request for alterations and signage at **801 King St and 803 King St.**
APPLICANT: David Malek, Thompson Hospitality by Rich Markus Architects
BOARD ACTION: Approved, as amended, 4-2.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. That the applicant clarify the outstanding zoning questions during building permit submission;
2. That Staff approve the final entry door information signs to verify compliance with the Board's sign policy; and
3. That the conduit that is utilized for the sconces will be painted to match the adjacent wall color.

SPEAKERS

David Malek, representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application and agreed with the staff recommendations.

John Hynan, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, said that normally color was not an issue until the applicant proposed a bright orange, though now proposed keeping the existing turquoise. HAF had no strong objections to the existing turquoise but supported the staff recommendation of a warm brick red color.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Dr. Fitzgerald liked the suggestion for a warm brick red color for the paint and asked the applicant to consider the change. The applicant said he was unable to agree to that change without consulting with the other owners. He said that they wanted to keep the turquoise after working with staff through the various issues. Dr. Fitzgerald thought that the proposed blue awnings would clash with the turquoise wall color.

Mr. Neale did not support the new blue awning color with the existing turquoise.

Ms. Roberts stated that the turquoise blue building was iconic now and that people had grown accustomed to it. Ms. Roberts made a motion to approve it with the staff recommendations.

Mr. von Senden seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-2, with Dr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Neale voting in opposition.

REASON

The majority of the Board found the application appropriate and consistent with the

Design Guidelines, though two Board members strongly objected to the turquoise painted brick combined with blue awnings.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

5. CASE BAR2013-0320

Request for alterations at **117 South Columbus St.**

APPLICANT: Elinor J. Coleman by Stephanie R. Dimond, Dimond Adams Design Architecture

BOARD ACTION: **Denied, 6-0.**

SPEAKERS

Stephanie Dimond, representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application and provided a presentation on other bay windows throughout the historic district.

John Hynan, representing the Historic Alexandria Foundation, supported the staff recommendation to deny removing the historic windows.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Dr. Fitzgerald stated that the applicant made a good case for the proposed change but noted that this case was different from other applications for bay windows shown on King Street. First, he noted that the buildings on this block were mostly residential buildings that had been converted to commercial. Second, the subject building was in pristine condition. Lastly, he noted that the Board had adopted a very clear Window Policy a few years ago that recommends retaining all historic windows. He suggested the applicant look into obtaining an easement on the historic windows (if removed) that would be recorded as part of the deed.

The Chairman called the question on the application, which the Board denied 6-0.

REASON

The Board could not support the removal of original windows and the installation of new fixed plate glass windows. The Board found the proposal inappropriate and inconsistent with the Design Guidelines and the Window Policy.

6. CASE BAR2013-0327

Request for re-approval of previously approved plans at **735 Bernard St.**

APPLICANT: Warren Almquist

Deferred pending zoning compliance.

7. CASE BAR2013-0327

Request for an accessory structure at **735 Bernard St.**

APPLICANT: Warren Almquist

Deferred pending zoning compliance.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

8. An informal work session with public testimony regarding the proposed development at 220 South Union Street

SPEAKERS

Ken Wire, representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application and responded to Board questions.

Mark Orling, representing the applicant, spoke in support of the application, gave a presentation of the proposal, and responded to the Board's comments and questions.

Andrew MacDonald, 217 North Columbus Street, spoke in opposition and noted that the proposal was too big and not tied into the waterfront. He stated that the proposal had historic scale and mass features but that we should not be replicating warehouses and requested a better design.

Van Van Fleet, 26 Wolfe Street, thought the proposal was too large for the site and that no action should be taken on this project until the Robinson Terminal site designs were shown.

Christine Merdon, 116 Waterford Place, spoke in opposition stating that the mass was too large and expressing concerns regarding traffic and the financial viability of an underground garage.

Dino Drudi, 315 North West Street, spoke in opposition stating that the design had many obnoxious features, should not look like a warehouse and should look to the future. He believed that the developer should mitigate potential adverse effects to neighbors.

Yvonne Waight Callahan, 735 South Lee Street and President of Old Town Civic Association, spoke in opposition and stated that the model should be the benchmark for the design. She favored a 19th century load bearing masonry character with punched windows.

Kathryn Papp, 504 Cameron Street, spoke in opposition to the project citing it as too massive. She stated that Old Town is authentic and one of a kind. The design should be more playful and have decorative flourishes.

Robert and Margaret Pringle, 216 Wolfe Street, stated that the project was too big for a small area and found the mansard style roof to be out of character with Old Town.

Dennis Auld, 215 Park Road, spoke in support of the application, finding the proposal consistent with the Design Guidelines and small area plan. He noted that Carr had addressed the previous concerns.

Lynn Hampton, 215 Park Road, spoke in support of the application and looked forward to having a hotel and restaurant on the waterfront.

Katy Cannady, 20 East Oak Street, stated that the project did not meet the small area plan objectives and that the proposal did not re-create the historic alleys and connections to the river. She expressed concern regarding the size of the project. She noted that the applicant has not returned to the Archaeology Commission.

Kirk Rowdabaugh, 523 South Lee Street, asked what design features would handle stormwater management and requested that the project be in compliance with environmental regulations.

Linda Couture, 505 Duke Street, expressed concern regarding the location and maintenance of the trash at the hotel.

David Arnaudo, 413 South Fairfax Street, spoke in opposition stating that the proposal was not in scale with the townhouses on Union Street. He suggested reducing the scale, using stucco rather than metal panels, and revising the fenestration.

Poul Hertel, 1217 Michigan Court, said that the BAR's Design Guidelines and the Waterfront Master Plan and model called for a warehouse motif. He advocated returning to the intent of the model and designing a singular masonry building mass with punched windows. He provided an example of a warehouse converted to hotel in Copenhagen.

Tim Elliott, 422 South Fairfax Street, spoke in opposition stating that the proposal does not meet the public access intent of the Waterfront Plan and that it is a monolith, not a boutique hotel.

Randy Randal, 3 Franklin Street, expressed concern about the ability to comply with floor plain requirements and the ability to do underground parking.

Michael Hobbs, 419 Cameron Street, spoke in opposition to the project stating that the scale and mass were wrong. He said the project should celebrate the east-west alleys and improve access to the waterfront.

Barbara Corcoran, 507 Braxton Place, stated that the City's historical integrity is being destroyed and the architecture has no redeeming qualities.

Beth Gibney, 300 South Lee Street, spoke in opposition to the project, finding it to be a mediocre pseudo-Colonial design that was massive and had not been broken into small warehouses. She also expressed concern regarding trash removal and parking.

David Olinger, 100 Prince Street, expressed concern about the size of the proposed hotel and the warehouse style.

Mark Mueller, 414 South Royal Street, spoke in opposition and reviewed how the design did not meet the Design Guidelines and not an identifiable style. He recommended the architect look at the Morrison House hotel as a historically compatible design.

Bert Ely, 200 South Pitt Street, expressed concern about the proposal, finding it too large and lacking connectivity to the waterfront. He said there should be a service alley internal to the block and had concerns regarding the engineering.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Mr. Neale recused himself from the item.

Chairman Hulfish reminded the BAR members that they were to make comments to the applicant but that there would be no formal action taken.

Ms. Roberts asked why there was a fence in the alley. Mr. Orling explained that it was to screen the transformer and that they were working with Dominion Virginia Power to relocate it elsewhere on the site. Ms. Roberts expressed concern with the proposed building height and said it should not go above four stories and 45 feet. She found the building overly large and massive. She found the design to be incoherent with too many changes on the street elevations. She noted that the historic photos showed symmetry which was not evident here. She thought the use of metal was inappropriate and that the roof form should be revised. She expressed concern with waterfront access for the public. She thought 110 South Union was attractive and successful newer construction. She noted that this building will be a vanguard building for the waterfront. Mr. Orling responded that 100 South Union Street was modeled after the Corn Exchange and was a higher style. He explained that he had been told the hotel should have a historic warehouse character and not high-style.

Mr. von Senden observed that a lot of comments had been made and that it was important to get the first new development on the waterfront “right.” He said that the basic form and massing of the historic warehouses and the model had been replaced with a convoluted box. He expressed a desire to simplify the scheme to achieve a more coherent design. He observed that gambrel roofs were historically appropriate as they had been found in Alexandria as early as 1749. He advised looking at the overall massing and simplifying the east-west approach. He noted that the height and L-shape were still of concern. He supported the use of a metal or Kalwall for the hyphens but preferred the previous scheme showing fieldstone as a plinth rather than the entire first story on the Strand. He also preferred the previous fenestration on South Union Street. He said the transformer needed to be removed from the alley as it entirely blocked access to the waterfront. He noted that the concerns regarding trash collection were valid and could be problematic facing a residential street. Mr. Orling responded that they would look into ventilating the trash room now shown within the building.

Dr. Fitzgerald also expressed concern about getting it “right” but then asked what is “right”? He thought that there had been too much input into the design—the model, various design guidelines, regulations, the Waterfront Plan, the BAR and the general public. He noted the architect tried to create a warehouse character but was told to reduce the mass which is why the design was broken up—to visually reduce the overall mass. He stated that a camel had been created by all of the regulations and at this point no one was happy. He observed that Alexandria was a port city with large, simple warehouses. He offered concrete suggestions to the applicant: emphasize the entrance; the height was acceptable; make the windows on Duke Street more in keeping with the warehouse vocabulary; remove transformer from alley; and keep the fieldstone at first entire floor on the strand. He observed that no design will make everyone happy.

Mr. Carlin noted that he knew and respected many of the speakers and realized that they were speaking from the heart. He has been interested in a plan for the waterfront for decades and remembers looking at the 1983 waterfront plan. He was moved by the waterfront model when he first saw it because it was finally coming to fruition. He acknowledged that it was impossible to please everyone. He agreed with the comments already made by the other Board members and noted that the architect was pulled in many directions. He stated that Mr. Orling had done a good job trying to respond. He expressed concern with the overall massiveness of the project, though he observed that it was much more open than the existing one story brick warehouse on this site. He credited the architect with using numerous components of the design to reduce the mass. He stated that there was no reason to rush this application. He advised the applicant to: 1) reduce the mass to respond to the majority's comments; 2) simplify the building form, as that was the general consensus; and 3) use the above to refine the general architectural character.

Chairman Hulfish noted that 20 of 22 people spoke about concerns with the proposed mass and scale. He noted that the building turned its back on Duke Street which was problematic. He thought the trash, loading and garage should be accessed via a service alley. He proposed turning the courtyard to face Duke Street. He advised the applicant to slow down the process and work with the property owner to the north and with Robinson Terminal South, both of which are slated for redevelopment. He expressed concern about what would happen to the foot of Duke Street if both adjacent properties use it as service space. He said the applicant is creating something that may not work with the new park and two adjacent redevelopment properties. He noted that this hotel could be the jewel of the waterfront but that it was currently too big and too much. He, again, suggested waiting to work with the other development projects.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Hulfish adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:35pm.

Minutes submitted by,

Catherine Miliaras, Preservation Planner
Board of Architectural Review