

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

Members Present

George Davis
Andrew Hessler
John Ranson
Adam Jones
R. J. Lackey
Peyton Keesee
Courtney Nicholas

Members Absent

Staff

Lisa Jones
Shanika Williams
Ryan Dodson
Bart Nuckols

Mr. Davis called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING – OLD BUSINESS

1. *Certificate of Appropriateness request PZ22-155 at 231 Main Street for a retaining wall and fencing.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Shanika Williams with the City of Danville Planning Department stated I spoke with Economic Development a little earlier today because no one could be at the meeting. They have an initial timeline for demolition starting in November and asbestos and abatement will start next week.

Mr. Davis stated the demolition will not start until November. Mr. Lackey does that bring a smile to your face?

Mr. Lackey stated we still have an open meeting and yes it does.

Mr. Rod Thompson stated me and my wife own Me's Burgers and Brews. I know the date is November 1, and they are talking about taking care of the asbestos before, our concern as a business down there is the parking lot in between Lou's and Me's. If that access not just the parking spaces but the accesses are fenced off during the removal of the asbestos that will hurt us immensely with VIR season not ending until the middle of October. This starting November 1, the timeline that I was hoping to see was when they would go ahead and close off that access of the parking lot. Before then would seriously hurt Me's and it's not about the parking spaces it's the access. We would lose about 25% as far as people being able to come in. We know that it has to be done and that it is going to look awesome afterwards. It's just time wise it couldn't come at a worse time. That access, people from out of town come in and it's those out-of-town

dollars that keep us afloat right now. They're not going to be able to find us and by the time that they get past us even with signage they are going to be on the bridge already, and then they will move on to the next place. The IDA has already worked well with us, and they helped us when we expanded the sidewalk, and we are grateful for that. If we can just make sure that the parking lot is not blocked off until then.

Ms. Courtney Nicholas arrived at the meeting at 4:17 pm.

Mr. Davis stated how many people do you estimate that come into your area through that parking lot?

Mr. Thompson stated the majority. The lower lot will remain open primary during the day; it is occupied by Spectrum employees and visitors. Then at night that is pretty much where everyone will park in order to go ahead and come inside. It is also a mixed source of Jerry's business that we share throughout the day. It provides a lot of access just for citizens going and playing at the fountain, and it is used a lot throughout the day. That access even if somebody would go ahead and park in the parking garage and try to find their way over it really becomes an issue. To put a detour there before you go across the one-way bridge to show people to hey park in this lot that you really can't get out of. I mean it's going to hurt this project is supposed to be a minimum of fourteen weeks and typically things go longer, and it is extremely necessary but it's going to hurt. We will not make money in those months I assure you. It is just best if it happens in the winter. The smart thing to do for us would be to close during that time but we have twenty-three people that work with us, and they can't close. We have a responsibility to our employees, and it is a big deal.

Mr. Davis stated Bart, when they start removing the asbestos from that building, according to what we have in front of us here, we are supposed to be talking about a retaining wall and fencing. If they are removing the asbestos out of that building and no demolition until November, I wouldn't see any reason why that lot would need to be closed, do you?

Mr. Thompson stated I wouldn't either, but I don't know what Griffin has planned. I don't know if they have a plan to go ahead and throw up a gate and use that as a staging area or a place to park all of the contractors' trucks, because we know there will be a lot.

Mr. Nuckols stated looking at the minutes and if you have a copy, it is page 4 of last month's minutes where Mr. Perry stated they would leave the area open for walk through traffic. That they would not be closing that area off until the actual demolition was to take place. That is the way that I read the statement that Mr. Perry made in last month's meeting recorded in the minutes.

Mr. Davis stated that it would not be closed off?

Mr. Nuckols stated correct.

Mr. Thompson stated the area in front of it would not be closed off as far as if you are walking down from above in front of it. We are talking about as far as the lot in between and I did not come here to complain about anything. We are very grateful for the proposed alternatives such as September, but I primarily came to write down the timeline to see the planning source. If they are not going to go ahead and wrap a fence to take that parking lot for the city to asbestos or any of that and if we have access to that side through the parking lot, then we appreciate the extra time that they have given us. The signage, they are going to work with us because it has to be done.

Mr. Nuckols stated if it is okay, I will read directly from the minutes "*the initial part is that they will have to rid the building of the asbestos so that will take about a month to do and then once that is done then they will have to section off the area to the parking lot to demolish the building*".

Mr. Keesee stated you take that as they are going to cut the parking lot in half and let them use the other half, you said section it off?

Mr. Nuckols stated that is what he stated.

Mr. Keesee stated is that okay Rod? I know it's not okay but it's better than not.

Mr. Thompson stated it's clarification.

Mr. Keesee stated if they put a fence down the middle, you can still use half.

Mr. Thompson stated if they put a fence down the middle, it would help serve the purposes. If you go ahead and put a fence down the middle, it's not going to help them if you are walking closer to the building. It needs to be done for safety reasons. Taking over the parking lot so you can stage for the asbestos removal and a place for them to park a dumpster, and for all the contractors to park. I think we can work around if that doesn't happen until November 1. I think last month in the minutes the proposal was that they could go ahead and start but they would need to go ahead and have contractor trucks all parked on Craghead. I think that is what was brought up at the last meeting in the minutes. I came here today to look for a timeline and November 1 sounds great and I just wanted to get clarification on when we will lose the lot.

Mr. Lackey stated Peyton the way that I read it if you go down a little bit, they are going to section it off and it's just going to be a walkway and there is not going to be any parking or parking spaces or anything else that is once the demolition begins. I think the key here for Rod and Emily is that they know that lot is going to remain open and not be

used for staging, blocked-off, contractor lot, or anything else until November 1. They will work until that time going forward. If in my mind we say that go ahead and do the asbestos and that lot remains completely opened to the public until November 1, and then they can do whatever they want with it until the time that they demolish it.

Mr. Thompson stated I think that is the intention of what you said and what we said as far as Economic Development. I just wanted to make sure this was handed off to Griffin okay we got the go ahead and here it is what it is and the next thing you know they come up and they have erected the fence across the area, and we wouldn't be able to undo that. If it is done the same way as it was the last time in the minutes and I am sure that is the intention as November 1, that is a big help to us.

Mr. Davis stated when is your busiest time that you are talking about and when is it officially over? If they come back to you and say is November 1st the earliest?

Mr. Thompson stated traffic slows dramatically at Thanksgiving and Christmas but what does go up huge at that time are gift cards. If people are not able to get to us, we are going to lose big time. We already know that, but we also know it is necessary and we appreciate as far as the help that they are doing with the signage and letting people know about us. We are not complaining but right now we live off of VIR.

Mr. Davis stated again the request that is being made is for the retaining wall and fencing. Is that primarily for the demolition of the building or are we talking about now for the asbestos removal also? What are we actually having presented today or voting on?

Ms. Williams stated the original application was the request for the retaining wall and fence.

Mr. Ranson stated I wasn't here last month and apparently, I missed a lot of fun.

Mr. Thompson stated I think it will look awesome when that is all green.

Mr. Ranson stated we have addressed Rod's concern. The parking lot will not be blocked off until November 1st. That will be the earliest.

Mr. Jones stated we are trying to guarantee that. Is there a way that we can get a guarantee from Griffin that the parking lot will remain open?

Mr. Dodson stated you could make that a condition; no blocking of the parking lot until November 1.

Mr. Keesee stated is that acceptable to you Rod?

Mr. Thompson stated yes. I mean we know it has to be done and we appreciate that extra time.

Mr. Ranson stated now we can talk about the fence and the retaining wall. What is the fence going to be?

Mr. Davis stated it looks like to me that is what we are supposed to be voting on today is the retaining wall and the fence.

Mr. Ranson stated so we need some information on those things.

Mr. Lackey stated Mr. Chairman you still have the meeting open?

Mr. Davis stated I understand that, but we are trying to figure out exactly what we are discussing and what we are voting on.

Mr. Lackey stated okay.

Mr. Nuckols stated I am trying to recall.

Mr. Dodson stated I remember discussion of you not wanting someone to get impaled because they said they were not going to have spikes at the top.

Mr. Nuckols stated I understand. It was a non-picketed metal type fencing. The concern about the picket fence was the impalement concern. Also, picket fencing is typically required in your guidelines, but it is just a guideline. You have leeway to make alternative recommendations or decisions.

Mr. Davis stated again, I am just concerned at what exactly is that we are voting on and if we have already discussed it. RJ help me out here it wasn't the fencing or anything that was the problem it was whether or not what the work that they were going to do was going to impede the traffic going to Me's Burgers and everywhere else.

Mr. Lackey stated the original proposal was for us to approve it because they wanted to start within a week or so and the concern was the impact on the businesses and the seasonal nature of Me's. It wasn't the nature of the wall or the nature of the fencing. I was trying to find it in the minutes, you were concerned about someone getting impaled and they said no it was going to be flat top and that pretty much resolved the issue related to the fence. The only issue we had was the staging and the timing of the whole project.

Mr. Jones stated it was black aluminum fencing and they had it staged in front of the split face block so you couldn't climb up on the block on the side or top.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ranson stated you approved the fence last month?

Mr. Lackey stated no, we held it even though we were comfortable with the design.

Mr. Lackey made a motion to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for PZ22-155 at 231 Main Street, with the mandate that the parking lot between the subject site and the restaurant known as “Me’s” not be used, blocked off, used for staging, trucks, or any type of non-customer related activity until no earlier than November 1 and that the black metal fence and wall meets the guidelines. Mr. Hessler seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 7-0 vote.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING – NEW BUSINESS

1. Certificate of Appropriateness request PZ22-181 at 730 Main Street for the installation of a new transformer, utility cabinets and a flue pipe(exhaust).

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Jeff Bond stated I am with Solex Architecture, and I am here on behalf of Design Tech Engineers as well. The Verizon building located on 730 Main Street supplies central services to the building including phone, internet, and 911 service. We propose improvements to include electrical upgrades and part of that is a new transformer on a concrete pad, as well as some electrical conduit, and potentially a flue pipe for a new generator. The work being undertaken to improve service for liability and that is to minimize potential power outage that causes prolong service interruption to all the Verizon customers. What you see on the screen there now is the way the building looks now, and the next slide shows the pad mount for the transformer and possibly the flue pipe for a generator. Before the meeting I rode around downtown to look at other concrete pad for transformers and if you look next to the courthouse, around the apartments almost all the locations do not have fencing or screening around those. It is a piece of equipment that is owned by utilities and not by the owner. Our preference is to install concrete pad with a transformer without a screen wall. I would be glad to answer any questions.

Mr. Lackey stated Jeff is there a reason it’s not in the back of the building?

Mr. Bond stated engineers have had preliminary conversations with them at the utilities and given that the service is on Main Street and that is the closest and most economical location.

Mr. Lackey stated who bears that cost?

Mr. Bond stated the cost to the transformer is typically on the utility provider and the active transformer is on the property owner.

Mr. Lackey stated if it were located in the back then it would be up to the city to get to that transformer and not on the property owner?

Mr. Bond stated more likely and currently there is a pole not a ground transformer as a lot of properties on Main Street have pole transformers. My opinion, this is more of utility provider equipment not necessary a building equipment.

Mr. Davis stated Jeff does it have dimensions of the transformer in the application? I'm looking.

Mr. Bond stated I don't know that we put the dimensions on there, but if I had to guess it's a six feet by 8-foot pad. It is very similar to the one that is at the Path's building almost directly across the street.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Lackey stated I guess it's my week to be crotchety. Some of the things that Jeff has cited I know before like this is different like the courthouse. These are the city's rules the city put in place, and we have enforced it against private landowners in spite of costs and the response has been we will try to work with you, but we have got to follow the guidelines. I don't like the city coming and saying it's the costs and therefore let us violate our own rules and I like Jeff's argument by the way this is utilities and mechanical and a good place to have it. I do have concerns that the city asked for a bending of their own rule.

Mr. Ranson stated the is a very prominent location.

Mr. Davis stated any comments?

Mr. Nuckols stated I believe our recommendation was that it appears to meet the criteria of screening required. I am not here to defend the city, but whoever was making the application may not have been aware of the guidelines itself.

Mr. Davis stated Ryan are you going to defend the city?

Mr. Dodson stated the only defense that needs to be made is whether it is within the guidelines or not and that is why we have Bart here for.

Mr. Nuckols stated if I may comment that the guidelines are vague on this matter, and it doesn't specifically mention utility boxes. I am looking at them right now and rereading them again and it speaks more to service area and dumpster sites.

Mr. Lackey stated does anyone remember at the bus turnaround that we had screens at the gas tanks. We required screening some type of utility verses a dumpster. We did require screening on that.

Mr. Ms. Nicholas stated what type of screening is the city suggesting?

Mr. Bond stated the propane tanks are privately owned, and the utility company owns the transformer.

Mr. Lackey stated I think in this case the propane tank was owned by the city.

Mr. Bond stated right, but if they were a private entity putting a propane tank there because the property owner owns the propane company, is there a definition of mechanical equipment?

Mr. Nuckols stated it speaks specifically that service areas must be screened by public view including living areas, trash receptacles, mechanical equipment and dumpsters. That is as clear as it gets in your guidelines.

Mr. Davis stated then it could be determined that it is a piece of mechanical equipment.

Mr. Lackey stated it is diffidently a service area at least in my opinion.

Mr. Nuckols stated I think the question was what type of materials and the guidelines state a material that matches the building is one option. Certainly, there are other options available including planted material as well as various wooden or other type of fencing could be an option available.

Ms. Nicholas stated so in theory screening could be required but left opened to the interpretation of what is appropriate screening?

Mr. Nuckols stated certainly, it states matching developed and it also states that the service area should be screened. I think when they speak to the other options, they are speaking more of the dumpster pads, and dumpster sites where you have access in and out because they talk about wooden fences and wooden closers.

Mr. Hessler stated more than likely I imagine that we are leaning towards possibly two options of either some sort of screening whether it be metal, wood, or the city move the utility to not in the right of way.

Mr. Bond stated there is a periodic maintenance service required for transformers, and there is a 10-foot clearance required in front of the access doors. So, if there is an enclosure, we will need to have access doors. If enclosure is required, the owner would prefer a wooden fence or a cement fence.

Mr. Nuckols stated that would be like getting mechanical equipment and you could give consideration to access for servicing.

Mr. Lackey stated at the school board building on the corner of Market and Main the cinder blocks, I'm not sure if that is brick?

Mr. Keesee stated it is brick.

Mr. Lackey stated they have the transformer in there. I don't know who had to pay for it whether it was the owner, Piedmont Lands, or the city, but it is definitely one there.

Mr. Davis stated so are we thinking that we will grant this as long as they put some screen fencing around the transformer. Is that what everybody is thinking?

Mr. Keesee stated is the thing already there now, Jeff?

Mr. Bond stated no sir.

Mr. Keesee stated where is the transformer at now?

Mr. Bond stated on the pole. Just to the left of this picture there are two huge transformers that are on the pole.

Ms. Nichols stated is there not enough clearance to put screening around it?

Mr. Bond stated there is.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion that a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted for request PZ22-181 at 730 Main Street for installation of a new transformer, utility cabinets and a flue pipe (exhaust) providing that appropriate fence screening is located around the visible street sides of the transformer. Mr. Keesee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 7-0 vote.

2. Certificate of Appropriateness request PZ22-182 at 542-550 Craghead Street for new paint colors and signage.

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Kevin Jones, who stated I am the architect working with Rick Barker and the team down on Craghead. This is a previously approved sort of larger picture scheme that we presented to you over a year ago. The focus today is on the issues of final selections, signage, and a piece of artwork. The slide today kind of walks through what we are proposing, and I also brought some real-life color samples because the visual colors sometimes look different. As for sample the colors on that look kind of pink on that. There are four store fronts, and one is just a courtyard where you can see the outline of the individual is standing. Those three projects, you can see the single apartments complex mixed use building to be used for Air BNB's. The building to the right is Virginia Motor Company and that is currently being shelled out for later for a tenant. The idea is to come in and repaint the entire lot to finish out the collection of renovations along that stretch of Craghead. It will be at least three colors here the darker green on the two on your side, and slightly lighter

green for the store front and the empty façade by the courtyard. Then a light gray almost white for the corners trim, and then for the Virginia Motors this darker kind of bronze color, and the cornice/trim accents a lighter gray.

Mr. Lackey stated I have one curiosity question. I love it, but what is the elephant doing?

Mr. Kevin Jones stated the branding that the development of this new project is Vantage Art Flats, and the project is going to feature a number of some art works and displays as part of the buildings. This is some of the public facing art installation. As you know the plans are to develop a public park in the rear of the building. So public park creating sort of a series of outdoor sculptures and things to animate like a Danville Art Trail and those kinds of things to bring life to the district and it is meant to be some kind of identifying marker in the district.

Mr. Ranson stated I am kind of amazed that Mr. Lackey wants an elephant instead of the donkey, but okay.

Mr. Jones stated this art works is a group of Italian Artist, and it is called cracking art and they make a number of these kind of sculptures, and they do this kind of installation all over the world. Those are examples from all around and just to give you a sense of what is involved.

Mr. Ranson stated what are the elephants made out of?

Mr. Jones stated it is plastic.

Ms. Nicholas stated is the elephant intended to be permanent or is that art for now to be changed out at a different time?

Mr. Jones stated somewhere from it being a long-term installation in years over months. It is meant to be a long-term installation.

Ms. Nicholas stated some of the other art installations are changed out semi regularly.

Mr. Jones stated right, I know that is what happened at the Danville Art Trails. This one is private, and it is meant to have a public face. This is meaning to peak out and it was a former building and now it is a courtyard. That courtyard is what we are using to provide accessible entries to both buildings, so we don't have to modify the front of the buildings because the courtyard is becoming a special little piece block.

Ms. Nicholas stated help me envision because what is on the screen right there the elephant on the left seems to be much more out into the public-right-way than the elephant on the right. Which is it going to be more like?

Mr. Jones stated the one on the right, because the one on the right is an actual image of the actual piece of art put into that, and the one on the left is an available computer model of the reasonable approximates what we are doing but is not an exact. The idea is that it will come out in a way that it will encroach pursuing the encroachment permit with the city.

Mr. Nuckols stated you don't know how far out facing the building it's going to be?

Mr. Jones stated I can't be specific, yet we have only just begun negotiations with the company, but I would say twelve to eighteen inches into the sidewalk.

Mr. Dodson stated as long as he is going through the proper channels to get an encroachment permit that made me feel better.

Mr. Nuckols stated your guidelines permit those types of activities to extend as far as 3 feet into a sidewalk of 10 feet or less.

Mr. Rick Barker stated I can give a little color to that picture. We have been with economic development earlier talking about this project and we were telling them that we are going to be asking for that encroachment and it was suggested that if you approved the design then we will request an easement. We have throughout the block some interests in common where we provide the city with easements on our private property and the city provides us with easements on public property and there is where we have shared easements. We would add this to that list.

Mr. Davis stated if you would just smack the elephant up inside the building and then you wouldn't have that problem.

Mr. Barker stated it is mean to draw attention.

Mr. Davis stated what is interesting to me is that you are showing work that is being done for buildings and we are talking about elephants.

Ms. Nicholas stated is it going to be a blue or red elephant?

Mr. Barker stated if you are curious, I can give you some details as we mentioned it is a group of artists from Italy called Cracking Art just like the images on your screen there. We will use a red. That's there and if you scroll just a little bit you will see the different colors and things. We appreciate if you see this for the first time that it will have some sort of novelty effect but where they are made and where they are displayed, I assure you that they are regarded as fine art. These are limited editions and most of the animals come in multi sizes and Cracking Art are well known throughout Europe. They were displayed previously in New York, Washington DC, Miami, and San Francisco. The theme throughout the block is it is going to be a park theme block and finished with

the idea of our goal is to attract creatives to the block. To live, work, and play and if you think of public art place as part of that. We just ordered eleven different animals in different sizes, different colors, and some will be lighted at night.

Mr. Davis stated Rick I hate to even ask this question because I am all for anything that goes on in that area, but are you worried about people spraying graffiti on them, or worried parents lifting their kids up and taking pictures with them seated on the back of an elephant, and the possibility of them falling . Are you concerned about any of that? Have you seen any of that in the other places that you have mentioned?

Mr. Barker stated those are legitimate concerns and if I had more photos then I could show you these in public parks. The smaller and shorter ones you would see people and children climbing on them. They are light plastic, and they are able to take a little punishment, but fortunately if they were to get spray painted you could probably pressure wash it off. We have been overall very pleased with the lack of vandalism since we started downtown years ago. The area is well lighted, and it's not secured but we have not had any theft or vandalism.

Mr. Davis stated well good I am glad that is not a concern.

Ms. Nicholas stated the proposed sign is there any plan for that to be lit?

Mr. Barker stated we have some building lighting but not specifically to internally light that one. We have some building mounted with up lights and down lights. I think that plus the public street lighting seems to be enough. There will be lights down off the wall at night that will light the sculptures.

Mr. Davis stated the renovations that you have does that incorporate the little tying of your piece of land?

Mr. Barker stated it is, you mean in between?

Mr. Davis stated yes.

Mr. Barker stated that is going to be the heart of the project now will be primary entry. When you are looking at the building the Nabisco building to the right it will be painted white, and it will have a commercial tenant to be determined in the future. The space to the left will be an artist or residence studio and then it is apartments throughout the rest. This will be the primary entrance to the building and there is an accessible ramp, and a set of stairs. So, unless it's a restaurant you will come in through the courtyard and you will enter the restaurant in the middle of the building and the main access to the apartments will be behind that fellow in the brick. It is meant to be in the heart of the block and to service the function as getting into the building and kind of as a gathering space.

Ms. Nicholas stated I know previously we had approved the kind of paneling that's there that left the information there for the plans of the block and that is coming out completely, am I correct?

Mr. Barker stated correct.

Ms. Nicholas stated looking at the application itself I see it is asking about the sign and paint colors, and it's not asking anything about the elephant. Are we being asked to approve anything elephant wise?

Ms. Williams stated yes, this was added as an addendum later on.

Mr. Nuckols stated it came in after we had sent the information to you, and we were asked for that to be included.

Ms. Nicholas stated okay, thank you.

Mr. Barker stated the public arts are covered in the guidelines and I didn't see anything that was spoken directly to it.

Mr. Nuckols stated outdoor displays are the only opportunity that falls into that category.

Mr. Barker stated we felt better to share it than not.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Nicholas made a motion to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness be granted for PZ22-182 at 542–550 Craghead for new paint colors including connected gray, at east soldier, urbane bronze for the facades and heron plume and fawn brindle for the cornice, trim accents, and black finish for the window crate and as well as the proposed projecting window sign as indicated within the application, and also to the elephant as proposed. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 7-0 vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The August 11, 2022, minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Approved by:
