

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

January 14, 2021

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Courtney Nicholas

Staff

Lisa Jones
Doug Plachcinski
Clarke Whitfield

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Chairman.

Mr. Lackey nominated Mr. Davis as Chairman. The nomination was approved by a 6-0 vote.

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mr. Lackey nominated Mr. Keesee as Vice Chairman. The nomination was approved by a 6-0 vote.

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Secretary.

Mr. Lackey nominated Ms. Nicholas for Secretary. The nomination was approved by a 6-0 vote.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-12 at 530 Main Street to relocate the main HVAC chiller exterior appliance from the rooftop to the ground adjacent to the northwest corner of the building. The applicant proposes screening the unit with fencing.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Charles Perkins, who stated I am here as the property manager for the owner. I am just here to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. Jones stated what is the reason for moving it from the roof to the ground?

Mr. Perkins stated the tiller quit last summer and the biggest reason for moving it is cost factor. It is almost double to put a new cooling tower on the roof and a new tiller inside compared to a ground-based unit.

Mr. Ranson stated it seems like looking at the photograph that the unit is eighty-eight inches wide and there is forty-two inches of clearance. Looking at the drawing it looks like the eight-eight inches overlaps the sidewalk.

Mr. Perkins stated no sir; it is actually back far enough that it will not be in the sidewalk. It will all be in that.

Mr. Ranson stated so, there is room enough there for the fence?

Mr. Perkins stated yes sir.

Mr. Ranson stated what is the fence going to be like?

Mr. Perkins stated it is going to be stucco wood tall enough to conceal the entire unit.

Mr. Ranson stated have you considered any other materials?

Mr. Perkins stated no, but we will be willing to and from just looking at everything it was my understanding that wood was usually recommended by ya'll, but we can.

Mr. Ranson stated it seems to me that some kind of metal would be more appropriate but I don't know how the other Commissioner's feel.

Mr. Jones stated are we talking about a six-foot privacy fence set up?

Mr. Perkins stated yes, it would probably have to be eight feet because the actual unit is taller than six feet. It would just be a privacy fence. If we needed to, we could even paint it to match the building. Whatever you want us to do.

Mr. Ranson stated doesn't eight feet exceed the zoning height for fencing?

Mr. Plachcinski stated not on this case it will not.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Davis stated well John said that he thinks that the metal fencing would be more appropriate and they brought to the commission a request for a wooden fencing. What do you think?

Mr. Jones stated what kind of metal fencing are you requesting?

Mr. Ranson stated I would like to see what it is going to look like. I am hesitate to approve a wooden fence because I do not think it is appropriate. I think it would be a

maintenance issue. It is going to be right beside the sidewalk. I think you can get metal screening fences designed for those units that has enough porosity that you get the correct amount airflow that you need. I cannot come up with a specific kind of design. In fact, it would be nice if they could come back and show us the fence. That is just my opinion and I feel like from a design stand point if I was designing a building today I would put a metal fence around it.

Mr. Davis stated it seems like most of the generators and other items that have been brought before the commission that we have approved wooden fencing to go around those.

Mr. Ranson stated that is often the case but I feel like with the design of the building a more contemporary building that a contemporary kind of fence would be more appropriate.

Mr. Davis stated any other thoughts?

Mr. Hessler stated I was just looking at the arrangement of that position in the parking lot it is about eight to ten parking spots back on the right hand side of the building quite a ways away from the main street viewpoint of the front. I do not know if that would change your feelings on whether or not you would like an extremely visible or towards the back corner.

Mr. Davis stated you probably wouldn't even notice it unless you were going around the drive-thru.

Mr. Hessler stated this is a significant height difference between there and an entire parking lot away from the home sign. There is a lot of distance and trees on the Main Street from the streetscape. It is minor in vision from the main areas of walking. Do we want to oppose a change in material or a range of colors that would be in the ordinance for the building as an option to leave it open somewhat for furthering the project. Therefore, we will not have to halt it to another meeting.

Mr. Davis stated well I understand that John would like to have some drawings of the different types of fencing. Again, what we have approved in the past is the wooden fence.

Mr. Ranson stated that is just the way I think it should be and I have no other comment beyond that. If the group feels like that wood is good then it is fine with me. It is my opinion that the metal fence would be more appropriate.

Mr. Davis stated I hate to make them wait if they are ready to do something or make them wait another month until our next meeting.

Mr. Ranson stated we could approve moving the unit and ask them to bring a picture of the fence next time. I assume that they have not ordered the unit yet because it had not been approved. It will take a while to get it anyhow.

Mr. Perkins stated our contractors stated it would be approximately three months lead-time for the outdoor unit.

Mr. Ranson stated if we wanted to approve it now they can go ahead and order the unit.

Mr. Davis stated is that okay with you?

Mr. Perkins stated yes, that is fine.

Mr. Davis stated not sure without knowing exactly what kind of lightning would be put on it.

Mr. Ranson made a motion that it meets guidelines as presented and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for placing the unit on the ground and that they will bring a design for the metal fencing to the next meeting. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0-1 vote. (Mr. Keesee abstained)

2. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-13 at 554 Craghead Street for adaptive reuse of commercial space, three (3) residential buildings, and courtyard.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Mr. Kevin Jones, an Architect with Architecture LLC, stated I am working with Rick Barker Properties on this project. I am here to discuss the work. This is a certificate of appropriateness for the overall project. We will be coming back at a future date to sort of focus on questions on paint color and signage and a few of those more regular items. This is about the overall scope of the project right now. I am an architect and I work and live up in Blacksburg. I am also a Professor at Virginia Tech and I promise I will not talk any more than three hours.

Mr. Davis stated don't worry, I will cut you off.

Mr. Jones stated it is four properties. One is an empty courtyard or it use to be and it is probably being utilizing in Federal and State Tax Credits. We have already received approval from the State and I am anticipating positive review in the next week or two. There are four buildings Swift, Nabisco, Courtyard and Virginia City Motor. Virginia City Motor for the scope of this project is just a repair and some shell work on the building. The front part of the roof is collapsing it is meant to address the immediate condition that will be shelled out and be developed in the future as another project. The focus of the current work is on the Swift Company building, the Courtyard, between the Nabisco

Building. The projecting one is a mixed use about to be reused using the tax credits as eight AIRBNB apartment units, one and two bedroom between five and 650 square feet each, artist residence one bedroom unit on the lower floor of the Swift Company, and a 3,100 square feet shell space on the lower floor of the Nabisco to be developed in the future. The overall view on the existing condition is on page four, and you can see the continuation of the work Rick and his team have been doing on the 500 block of Craghead for a number of years. The red, gray and white buildings are Swift, Courtyard and Nabisco. The dark gray one to the right is Virginia City Motor. The image on the right is Muchos just to the right. On page four I will walk you through the site plan. In this case is Virginia City Motor's to the top and as you walk down, there is a creek and the train trestle are there as the plan to the South. Virginia Motors again just shell condition repair and replacement of the roof. We are adding two new porches and terraces to the rear of Nabisco and Swift Company Properties in the future; a sort of green space in the back. In the future, we are going to use the empty space where 1 building used to be, this triangle place in between, as a Courtyard entrance to the buildings. This allows us to address ADA accessibility and things for the first floor without impacting the Historic facades in any way, which has made our DHR reviewers very happy to keep some of the Historic position in front of the buildings intact and we are able to use that empty Courtyard space for our main entry. We are also creating a small, not quite ten feet across connector that connects to the two buildings on the second floor set back in that Courtyard.

Mr. Ranson stated where are the train tracks in this. Are they here?

Mr. Jones stated yes, they are not showing but they are above the creek currently.

Mr. Ranson stated are you going to keep them the way that they are?

Mr. Jones stated no, they would be coming out. The plan there is to develop a new public walkway that will allow you to walk from Craghead to the back of the future green space to the Mucho's Courtyard and back to the parking area.

Mr. Ranson stated but the creek will remain and you will have a walkway beside it?

Mr. Jones stated it will be over top and the landscaping sympatric plans for that park and these kind of things are in development for future plans.

Mr. Ranson stated is there still water in that creek?

Mr. Jones stated yes, the creek is regularly running and there has been flood issues on the site and part of our scope work is repairing the interior on the first floor of both of those buildings and making them more resilient for future flood events. Any questions further on the site?

Mr. Davis stated I am interested in the entrance from Craghead Street where the two buildings come together. Now there is going to be an entranceway at the end of those that you can walk through and get to the back Courtyard?

Mr. Jones stated no, you would not be able to walk through there. You are going to walk along the new walkway of the creek if you want to go to the back of the building. It is an old pharmacy building and because of the creek, that Courtyard is triangle shape, and the back of the building is only about as wide as my shoulders between the two buildings to the rear. Then it is twenty plus feet wide at the front and we are levering that and half way back in that Courtyard we are going to create sort of an entry with one door into the Swift building and one door into the Nabisco.

Mr. Davis stated it will have façade on the front of Craghead Street?

Mr. Jones stated yes, if you look at page five, just the line drawing elevation, you can see where the Skel figure is standing that façade element above is the Historic leftover façade and is the only thing that remains from that building. That stays in place and it is just open air Courtyard behind just as it is now.

Mr. Davis stated that is neat.

Mr. Jones stated again, this allows us to pick up around three feet of vertical height to get up to the first floor level. This allows us to address accessibility of things without having to add lifts and do all of that kind of complicated things that we sometimes have to do to the front of the Historic buildings. The elevation on page five you see sort of Swift and Company, the creek, and the tressle are just left of the page. It is Swift Company, the Courtyard, the leftover façade, and then Nabisco. By doing the shell work on Virginia City Motor, which is the three round top windows.

Mr. Ranson stated the openings will pretty much stay the way they are?

Mr. Jones stated yes.

Mr. Ranson stated it looks like on the Virginia City Motor that in line is that the existing facade or is that the roof?

Mr. Jones stated that defines the roof behind it.

Mr. Ranson stated okay, what is shown there is pretty much is the existing façade looks like just the roof looks funny.

Mr. Jones stated that particular drawing just gashes in the profile of the roof that is behind the façade. It is a gable roof just a triangle roof behind. Right now, it is partially boarded up with no Historic construction. There is a little bit of Historic transit left, the most of the upper three round windows are still intact, and we will be doing a little

renovation there. Other than that, we are changing out bay doors for the storefront that is the only change on the façade. All the openings remain the same, and the same Historic materials remain the same. All of these are typical DHR tax credit kind of purchase.

Mr. Ranson stated will you have a bridge?

Mr. Jones stated we do this as a small connector, a new construction standing between the two buildings. It is about half way back to three structural bays back in front of the building. This allows us to address our egress and light safety questions while keeping the Historic stairs in their original locations inside the building without having to add additional stairs. We are connecting second floors of both of those buildings, we will have one stair in one building, and one stair in the other building with this little glass connector. It also stands as a canopy over the entrance to keep the rain off your head when walking in or out. Then the last slide where it walks down to the trestle is currently and I guess it moved during the flood out to the road. You can see the sense that there will be the new walkway that runs along the side of the building that allows the access back to Lynn Street, back to the parking, and back to the potential green space in the future. I can answer in other questions.

Mr. Davis stated so today you are only asking for our approval to continue on with the project.

Mr. Jones stated yes sir, the windows are going to be Historically appropriate that we are maintaining, so the Historic character of the block are the kinds of things that we are focused on today. Final paint colors and what signage might end up being, those kind of things will be addressed as we develop the project a little bit further.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ranson made a motion that the application is within the compliance and it meets guidelines as presented and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

Mr. Lackey left the meeting at 4:30 pm.

Mr. Davis stated Mr. Barker I would like to say on behalf of the Commission Thank You for your vision of the things that you are proposing for downtown and Thank you for being a part of it, and being instrumental in it. We appreciate it very much.

Mr. Rick Barker stated Thank you, it is rewarding work and thank you for doing your earnest best to protect the District and the visual impacts that you can control. What you do across the District in a whole, it protects our investment on Craghead Street. We appreciate that.

Mr. Davis Chairman stated I am going to turn item number 3 over to our Vice-Chairman Mr. Keesee.

3. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD2021-14 at 618 Craghead Street to rehabilitate the building interior and exterior including one (1) commercial space and 88 residential dwelling units.*

Mr. Keesee opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Garrett Shifflett; I am here to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. Ranson stated it looks like are you going to be replacing windows and stuff?

Mr. Shifflett stated restoring the existing windows.

Mr. Ranson stated so really you're not changing anything?

Mr. Shifflett stated no, we are adding a few store front doors here and there but other than that, the existing windows that are there are in good shape. Every window will have to be retouched and redone with new glazing, paint and all of that. They are going to be retaining the original windows that are in the building.

Mr. Ranson stated is this the tax credit project?

Mr. Shifflett state yes sir, we have approval part one and part two from both State and Federal.

Mr. Keesee closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Jones made to motion to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness at 618 Craghead Street to rehabilitate the building interior and exterior to that 1 commercial space and 88 residential dwelling units. Mr. Keesee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0-1 vote. (Mr. Davis abstained).

Mr. Keesee Vice Chairman turned the meeting back over to Mr. Davis Chairman.

4. *Certificate of Appropriateness Request PLRDD-2021-16 at 510 Spring Street to rehabilitate the building exterior, alter building façade storefront windows, and create a 30'x54' outdoor patio on the adjacent lot (Parcel # 22434).*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Rob Ford, who stated I am just here to answer any questions that you may have.

Mr. Ranson stated could you tell me exactly why this is different from the last time?

Mr. Ford stated 508 Spring Street is added to that request and 510 Spring Street has already been granted. We are in the process of combining all three addresses as one and we want approval for 508 to be changed as well as the outdoor patio.

Mr. Ranson stated 508 is to the right?

Mr. Ford stated that is correct and there is a lot of structural issues with what is already there inside. Some old wood beams are in the wall that has termite damage. I will have to open the wall to fix it anyway.

Mr. Ranson stated is the patio new?

Mr. Ford stated the patio is new. We have obtained a lot through the city and we want to put the patio in.

Mr. Ranson stated see that is a nice metal fence.

Mr. Ford stated the design for it would be a metal top rail and a metal bottom rail, metal sides and wood shallow box style fence going out there.

Mr. Keesee stated it is a nice fence, John.

Mr. Hessler stated before when you started this project it was presented you were only working on the center building and you haven't had the lot yet and weren't sure exactly what was underneath the front façade as I recall.

Mr. Ford stated correct, we kind of had the idea to put the patio out there the whole time and trying to obtain the final ink from the bank. We finally made that purchase in December and I was able to get in there and did some digging and found out the front wall is in bad shape.

Mr. Hessler stated you have combined internally the two buildings.

Mr. Ford stated yes and we are in the process of it now. Mr. Shanks is supposed to be finishing our survey so we can get it to the city to try to get it all zoned as one property.

Mr. Keesee stated the building right beside the patio; I'm assuming that is going to be a restaurant?

Mr. Ford stated that is our hopes, and we are in the process of upgrading it to get someone in there.

Mr. Hessler stated I was just looking at the new section of the building to the right if anything was salvageable like the openings and the windows are going to be changed. If there are any salvageable material on the outside front façade.

Mr. Ford stated the doors that are there now is about the only thing salvageable left on that front. It is in bad shape.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Ranson made a motion that the application is within the compliance and it meets guidelines as presented and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Keesee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The November 12, 2020 minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Approved By: