



Minutes
Architectural Review Board
Supplementary Meeting
March 26, 2018
Council Chambers, City Hall
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Members Present

Jonathan Gerlach, Chair
Sabina Weitzman, Vice Chair
Kerri S. Barile
Carthon Davis, III
Karen Irvin
Susan Pates
James Whitman

Members Absent

Staff

Kate Schwartz

Mr. Gerlach called the Architectural Review Board meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Gerlach determined that a quorum of seven members was present and asked if public notice requirements had been met. Ms. Schwartz stated that they had.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Gerlach asked there were any changes or additions to the agenda. There were no changes to the agenda.

CONTINUED ITEMS

- i. **COA 2018-12 – 506-512 Sophia Street** – Brendyn Fisher requests to demolish the existing townhomes and requests approval of the site planning, scale, massing, and architectural details of seven three-story townhomes and one four-story apartment building.

Lee Shadbolt, Commonwealth Architects, and Steve DeFalco, the property owner, were present to represent the application.

Mr. Shadbolt provided updated drawings for the project for the Board and reviewed the changes. He said the original drawings approved by the Board had not accounted for the actual topography of the site, so the current design was partially a correction of that. He also noted that the entries had been shifted from the right side to the left on the front elevation. The overall heights have been reduced by bringing the first floor closer to the base flood elevation, reducing floor-to-floor heights, and reducing the roof pitches from 9:12 to 7:12.

Mr. Gerlach said that the height to the midpoint of unit four increased four feet five inches and asked why this one had increased proportionally more than the others. Mr. DeFalco said it was an aesthetic choice to make the roof lines of the two buildings appear level, but that it could

probably be reduced. He said the floor-to-floor heights had also not been reduced on unit four, but likely could be.

Ms. Weitzman asked how far the roof deck was set back. Mr. Shadbolt said it was approximately 10 or 11 feet back from the front of the building, but that would be increased with the lower pitch. He reviewed the floor heights and said that unit four could be reduced by approximately two feet.

Mr. Shadbolt also noted that other changes that had been made, including re-spacing windows, adding carriage-style garage doors, adding window niches to the side of unit one, moving the windows on the side of unit one closer to the street, and modifying the windows on the north side of unit four. Mr. Gerlach said the spacing seemed off on the side of unit four. Mr. Shadbolt noted that this was an optical illusion because the building was connected at the rear and does not have an overhang.

Mr. Davis asked about the hatching on the roofs of units four through seven. Mr. Shadbolt explained that this was an elevator override that would stick out as a shed dormer. Mr. Davis asked if this can be on the interior. Mr. DeFalco said they thought this was a better choice because it is along the rear property line.

Ms. Weitzman discussed the garage door style and said that the addition of panels wasn't necessarily enough to make them carriage-style. She also said that the simpler door design may actually be more appropriate. Mr. DeFalco said they would look at their design options and offer several examples and pictures.

Mr. Whitman asked if the applicant would consider using slate for the roofs, or going back to standing seam metal. Mr. DeFalco said the material had been changed for cost reasons, and because the roof slopes were not very visible. Ms. Weitzman said they would be visible as part of the city's skyline. Mr. Whitman said he would prefer to see a more high-end material used for the project. Mr. DeFalco said part of the reason for the change was that they had increased their costs on brickwork. Ms. Irvin said if they were simplifying this, perhaps that cost could go to the roof instead. Mr. DeFalco said they would be willing to go back to the standing seam metal. Ms. Weitzman said she supported this as well.

There was some discussion of the architectural style of the buildings. Ms. Weitzman noted that the window sizes seem odd based on the floor heights, and Ms. Pates asked if too many windows had been included. Ms. Weitzman asked the architect to evaluate the spacing and detailing of the windows, including the jack arches, and to consider reducing the total number of windows in favor of larger or taller windows.

Board members discussed the lack of information provided for the site plan, scale, and massing of the condo building and said they would not be able to fully evaluate the context of the project without this information. Ms. Weitzman requested a site section or other documentation to help understand the relative heights of all buildings on site. Ms. Irvin said that perspective views or street elevations would be needed to help understand the interaction with neighboring buildings.

Dr. Barile said that though they have reduced the height about six feet, it isn't really enough. She said she had the same concerns that she did a year ago. The surrounding context is a number of

small buildings. The new buildings are way too tall, and she said she could not support the project.

Mr. Gerlach said he had the same concern about height and would prefer to see one less story on the buildings. He asked about the cost of the flood insurance they were seeking to avoid by raising the buildings. Mr. DeFalco said the insurance cost would be \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year per unit. They decided to raise the buildings because the increase was only a few feet for a large cost savings.

Mr. Whitman said he could support the additional two feet of height in order to get out of the floodplain. He thought it was not a substantial change from the project the ARB initially approved.

Ms. Pates asked the group if she was the only person that opposed the demolition of the existing buildings. Ms. Weitzman said she understands what Ms. Pates is saying, and agrees the buildings are unique, but with the condition of the buildings and the cost of flood insurance, the buildings will never be economically viable. Mr. Shadbolt said that over the years, he has evaluated a number of rehabilitation plans for the buildings, but they've never made a plan work and the stone is literally falling apart.

Mr. Davis and Ms. Irvin noted that they were still undecided on the project and that they needed more information and context in order to make a decision.

Mr. Shadbolt said that they were looking to build on a previous approval for the project, and that they saw this as a progression of the project. He said it was challenging for the developer to have to start over after working through these previous approvals. Mr. Davis said that the developer's feasibility isn't within the Board's purview.

Ms. Weitzman noted that the photographs of other historic buildings make the case for this project. She said she has some difficulty with the unit sizing, but there are many examples of building with similar scale and massing historically. Mr. Whitman asked what the square footage of the units would be. Mr. DeFalco said they would be 2800 to 3300 square feet.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Tucker, 100 Wolfe Street, said he had concerns about the height of the project and its proximity to his rear property line, but he said those had been addressed by the Board. He said he would prefer the project be lower, but it was interesting to hear the discussion. He also noted that as an architect, he had often provided elevation streetscapes for projects he had done.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Gerlach noted that the City Council would be considering a resolution to authorize the joint Historic Preservation Working Group at their March 27 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.



Jonathan Gerlach, ARB Chair

