

NOTE: The below minutes are a summary of actions taken. They are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Minutes of the VCC Architectural Committee meeting of Tuesday, November 26, 2024– 1:00 PM

Committee Members Present: Stephen Bergeron, Rick Fifield, Cynthia Steward

Committee Members Absent:

Staff Present: Bryan Block, Director; Nick Albrecht, Principal Plans Examiner; Joseph Newman, Administrative Assistant

Staff Absent: Renee Bourgogne, Deputy Director; Marguerite Roberts, Senior Inspector; Erin Vogt, Principal Plans Examiner; Noah Epstein, Inspector

Others Present: Katherine Harmon, Richard Choate, Nakeila Polk, Myles Martin, Timothy Lupin, John Williams, Blake Kidder, John Rupley, Cassidy Robin, Bob Edmundson, Nikki Szalwinski, Mackenzie Laxton

Minutes

Old Business

511 Bourbon St: 22-03409-VCGEN; Loretta Harmon, applicant; Brevort Enterprises L L C, owner; Proposal to modify previously approved plans including proposal to utilize metal frames at existing wood alleyway gates, per application & materials received 08/15/2024 & 11/11/2024, respectively. <https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=S62SRB#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Ms. Harmon present on behalf of the application. Ms. Harmon noted her belief about the metal frame gate being a “superior” design functionally noting that this is a high-volume bar. Ms. Harmon continued noting that if it were clad on the interior side that you would never know about the metal frame. Ms. Harmon stated that vehicular gates with metal frames show a precedent for the existence of wood-clad metal gates.

Mr. Fifield asked if this gate was used for ingress and egress. Ms. Harmon responded that the courtyard space could be entered either through the building or through the alley. Mr. Block asked if a layer of wood is showing on the inside with Ms. Harmon clarifying that the shop drawings don’t show this but they want to offer that as an option and Mr. Block noted his belief that would make it much more palatable. Mr. Fifield commented on his belief that in this case a differentiation could be made between residential and commercial.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve with the proviso applicant work with staff on final details with the gate to be clad on both sides also noting the commercial use of this property as a circumstance that factored into this decision. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

327 Bourbon St: 24-12164-VCPNT; Gates Erika, applicant; Karno 327 Bourbon Real Estate LLC, owner; Proposal to leave previously painted masonry exposed, per application & materials received

05/14/2024 & 11/07/2024, respectively.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=Z0D6VF#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Martin present on behalf of the application. Mr. Martin noted the owner was in favor of not painting the brick as well their favorability toward some type of anti-graffiti coating should the approval to leave the brick unpainted be granted. Mr. Martin said he would be happy to return with a specific product to protect the ground floor. Committee members commented positively on the progress of the work and its improvement.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve the proposal to leave the previously painted masonry exposed. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

905 Royal St: 24-29895-VCGEN; Zach Smith Consulting, applicant; The Sam and Nori Lee Revocable Trust, owner; Proposal to renovate building including the construction of a new pool and new exterior mechanical equipment, per application & materials received 10/01/2024 & 11/06/2024, respectively.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=N6WDNJ#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Martin present on behalf of the application. Mr. Martin noted the sizing and count of exterior condenser units had been checked and they are correct per check-in with the mechanical engineer. Mr. Martin continued that adjustments to the sizing of the racks had been done as a result. Mr. Martin continued that the proposed wool was nothing fancy and would not be built above grade. He concluded noting that they were comfortable with the lighting as proposed having observed the building at night but would return with a proposal if that changed.

Ms. Steward noted her belief the updates are good and an improvement with Mr. Bergeron noting his acceptance of the approach to the transoms having seen photos.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve the proposal with final details to be worked out at staff level. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

740 Royal St: 24-30117-VCGEN; Zach Smith Consulting, applicant; St Ann/Royal LLC, owner; Proposal to modify previously approved plans including proposed modifications to the mechanical platform and installation of additional mechanical equipment, per application & materials received 10/02/2024 & 11/11/2024, respectively.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=K01A3M#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Martin present on behalf of the application. Mr. Martin noted that a secondary permit was applied for while under construction because the owner wanted to install more modern air conditioning in the front apartments. Mr. Martin continued that they were seeing if it would be possible to lower the units back to 18" above grade and they were looking through past communication from the Building Department to determine when they had requested increased height. Mr. Martin expressed a willingness to defer the matter to collect more information as needed.

Ms. Steward noted her interest in hearing what the Building Department has to say with Mr. Block questioning whether this change was made as directed by the Building Department or as a contractor measuring from finished floor instead of from grade, saying he hasn't heard anything about changes to these requirements. Mr. Fifield noted that if it is a change in policy this needs to be known as well as his belief deferral is needed.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer to allow the applicant time to work with Safety and Permits and staff to gather the requisite information. Ms. Steward seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

610 Bienville St: 24-33213-VCGEN; Richard Choate, applicant; NEW HOTEL MONTELEONE, owner; Proposal to renovate building including the installation of new rooftop HVAC equipment, per application & materials received 11/01/2024 & 11/19/2024, respectively.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=J1VAPH#>

Mr. Block read the staff report with Mr. Choate present on behalf of the application. Mr. Choate noted the drawing staff commented about not being able to find is an interior area. Both Mr. Fifield and Ms. Steward commented on the asymmetry of the central entrance/entry door being odd. Mr. Choate said the asymmetry of the door was a decision related to ADA accessibility. Ms. Steward noted she would like to see other options and trying to make it symmetrical/more symmetrical. Mr. Bergeron commented if the doors currently in place don't have any historic standing and Mr. Block noted he wasn't sure about the doors but the rest of the openings have been heavily modified. Mr. Fifield briefly commented on asking for clarification from Mr. Choate about iron bars being called for and Mr. Choate confirmed they are solid bars. Mr. Bergeron asked for clarification regarding the deck support purlins with Mr. Choate noting they are to be removed due to damage/modification over time and replaced with new members.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve proposed work with the exception of the front door/front door millwork with that item to return to the committee and all other details to be worked out at staff level. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

241 Bourbon St: 22-30621-VCGEN; John C Williams, applicant; 241 Holdings LLC, et al, owner; Proposal to modify previously approved plans including modifying ground floor openings and millwork, per application & materials received 10/11/2022 & 11/19/2024, respectively.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=C464QQ#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Ms. Laxton and Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated that the proposal provides symmetry and a larger opening on Bourbon St. Ms. Laxton noted that the scoring in the masonry is wider than what they are proposing.

Ms. Steward commented she thought the updated proposal was an improvement. Mr. Fifield asked for clarification about the window as proposed versus the previously existing conditions. Mr. Block commented that if the design is approved it doesn't seem to match historic/existing conditions and would need to match more accurately. Mr. Fifield commented about his concerns in relation to the proposed larger opening and questioned as to why it was being done, noting that there may be an option to look at a more contemporary vocabulary rather than something trying to look historic. Mr. Block noted how just because other buildings on Bourbon St. have non-historic large openings doesn't mean that has to be imposed on every other building on Bourbon Street functioning as a bar. Mr. Block further commenting that other bars functioning with normal size opening. It was noted there could maybe be a more continuous vocabulary with respect to the design with Mr. Block noting the possibility/potential of alignments. Mr. Williams noted again his feeling about having come up with a solution that he felt strongly about and that they would not go with a contemporary design as this was a tax credit project.

Mr. Fifield asked about the opening as it relates to ADA accessibility, noting that this was not an ADA entrance. Mr. Bergeron noting how in prior meetings he expressed that other proposals had what he thought was excessive door area and that if this were to be a restoration of the façade there would be three door openings aligned with the windows above and asked whether the applicant would entertain that approach. Mr. Williams commented on his belief about the current proposal being the preferable direction. Mr. Bergeron commented on his belief that the less wide openings appear wide enough for any other bar on Bourbon Street and questioned why this case would be different and require a much wider opening. Mr. Williams stated that he did not think the business could survive with single door openings. Mr. Bergeron noted the staff recommendation of denial of proposal to increase the width of door opening and his belief a very compelling reason would be needed to do anything in opposition to that with Mr. Block noting this recommendation is based on the design guidelines.

Nikki Szalwinski, in the audience, commented that this “whole thing feels muddy” as it relates to the current discussion and Mr. Williams mention of SHPO, agreeing it seems “forced and a mess”, and that if restaurants are able to survive with doors that are normal width why can’t a bar which operates with much higher profit margins.

Mr. Bergeron moved to adopt the staff recommendations for conceptual approval of the proposed door to window conversion, denial of the proposal to increase the width of the existing door opening, and deferral of the proposed changes to the Bienville side door opening as per today’s discussion. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

241 Bourbon St: 24-33363-VCGEN; Angelo J Barcia, applicant; 241 Holdings LLC, owner;

Proposal to install new mechanical platform on service ell roof and to install new hood vent exhaust on roof of main building, per application & materials received 11/01/2024 & 11/04/2024, respectively.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=1UN1E0#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Ms. Laxton and Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Fifield asked why units are not being installed on the roof of the unrated infill noting that if thinking about preservation issues, his preference would have been to have them on an infill piece of unrated construction rather than on the roof of a blue rated building. Mr. Fifield asked what would be the actual structure on the service ell roof. Ms. Laxton replied that it would be a standard mechanical roof rack. Mr. Williams commented that they could make the roof rack smaller.

Mr. Fifield asked how the placement conforms to the guidelines with staff commenting they talk about visibility from the public right of way and from other properties as well as the rating of the building. Specifically, the Guidelines note equipment should be “visually unobtrusive.” Mr. Fifield raised the question of how the units would be supported with Mr. Block asking if there had been a structural investigation of the roof itself showing that it can carry the amount of weight. Mr. Williams confirming there had been. Mr. Bergeron asked staff if courtyard infill is existing with staff saying it is and asking if the opening configurations as seen on “slide 170” are all existing with staff replying yes. Mr. Bergeron noted Mr. Fifield’s strong feelings about the mechanical and staff recommending deferral because he “thinks they also have their reservations” stating he doesn’t see any reason to not follow their recommendation.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer to allow the applicant to work with staff on alternative proposal per today’s discussion. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

1014 Saint Philip St: 24-33384-VCGEN; John C Williams, applicant; Robert D Edmundson, owner; Proposal to convert existing fountain into new swimming pool, per application & materials received 10/31/2024.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=A38XC1#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Ms. Robin and Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Ms. Steward asked about there not being a grab bar and Mr. Williams stated if they do that they will return for approval. Mr. Williams stated his belief they don't consider this a pool because swimming can't be done in it calling it an "exercise fountain".

Nikki Szalwinski, in the audience, noted that two feet would be barely clear of the base of the service building wall. Ms. Szalwinski recommended getting rid of the fountain and putting in a separate pool.

Mr. Williams brought up the property owner Mr. Edmundson following the public comment. Mr. Edmundson stated there is only one owner affected by the location of the fountain as well as that him and the neighbors jointly collaborated for work on the brick wall along the property line. Mr. Edmundson continued that the affected neighbor has been advised of the intent regarding the fountain has been provided current working drawings. The neighbor has provided a signed letter stating no objections to deepening the water feature. Mr. Edmundson noted a full size pool was not needed or wanted as well as describing the proposed work as "sensible". Mr. Edmundson noted a correction to Mr. Williams statement regarding the fountain's age saying he believes it is older than Mr. Williams had noted. Mr. Fifield noted he sees this as "a less disturbing solution" than other things with Mr. Bergeron noting his caution about ensuring waterproofing.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve the proposed "water feature" with final details to be worked out at the staff level. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

810 Esplanade Ave: 24-26624-VCGEN; Fifield Betsy, applicant; Ibu and Bapak LLC, owner; Proposal to make masonry repairs to the building including the installation of new helical ties, per application & materials received 09/03/2024 & 11/20/2024, respectively.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer due to no one present on behalf of the application. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

200 Decatur St: 24-33783-VCGEN; John Rupley, applicant; 200 Levee Street LLC, owner; Proposal to remove infill from between all pilasters on the Decatur and Clinton alley elevations and to install new French doors in all openings, per application & materials received 11/05/2024.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=YUYJ4P#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Rupley present on behalf of the application. Mr. Rupley stated that they were looking for a conceptual approval for a client who was looking to buy the building and activate the ground floor. Mr. Rupley continued that they were not opposed to a combination of doors and windows, that in-swinging doors would be preferred but that would depend on the occupant load and the egress requirements. The committee voiced their joy with the proposal and recommended considering some nuance with the programming as the use develops.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to conceptually approve the removal of the opening infill and installation of new millwork with the details to return to the Committee. Ms. Steward seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

1113 Chartres St: 24-34311-VCCAM; Cangelosi, Jr Robert, applicant; Foundation Keyes, owner;
Proposal to install new security features including a security camera, keypad door hardware, and a hedgehog device, per application & materials received 11/11/2024.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=1UV4UV#>

Ms. Steward made the motion to defer the item at the applicant's request. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

1000 Decatur St, Latrobe Park: 24-34892-VCGEN; Daniel Ferg, applicant; The City Of New Orleans, owner;
FOR RECOMMENDATION ONLY: Proposal to install three new metal entry gates at Latrobe Park, per application & materials received 11/15/2024 & 11/12/2024, respectively.
<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/PrmtView.aspx?ref=PTQEN5#>

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Kidder present on behalf of the application.
Mr. Fifield expressed his feelings about the enclosure of public space and questioned the necessity of the enclosure. Mr. Kidder noted the purpose of the gates would be to enforce existing hours with Mr. Block noting it is a serious enforcement issue.

There was public comment from Nikki Szalwinski noting that this beautiful public space is being used as a toilet and that she agrees we shouldn't have to enclose public spaces but that is the reality of the situation and that it is a losing battle trying to keep them out.

Mr. Bergeron noted his belief that unfortunately the problem trying to be solved here with architecture is a problem that probably cannot be solved by architecture. Mr. Kidder noted his belief this architecture does aid the city in helping to keep the park more welcoming.

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to forward a positive recommendation for the proposed work to the city. Ms. Steward seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

At approximately 2:38 PM Ms. Steward made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next AC Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2024