

MINUTES
VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, April 2, 2014 - 1:30 P.M.
City Council Chamber, City Hall - 1300 Perdido Street

PRESENT: Nick Musso, Vice-Chairman
Pat Denechaud, Secretary
C.J. Blanda
Alfred “Pio” Lyons
Michael Skinner
Leslie Stokes
Daniel Taylor

ABSENT: E. Ralph Lupin, M.D., Chairman
Jorge A. Henriquez

STAFF PRESENT: Lary P. Hesdorffer, Director; Gordon McLeod, & Sarah Ripple, Building Plans Examiners; Nicholas G. Albrecht, Building Inspector; Melissa Quigley, Assistant City Attorney.

OTHERS PRESENT: Betty Norris, Robert Vanlangendonck, Ron Rivet, Richard Bishop, Cate Bishop, Peter Nass, Harold Werling, Daniel Huertas, Keith Marrero, & Armina Mussa.

I. ROLL CALL

Vice-Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 PM and, after noting there would be no Chairman’s Report, requested the roll call. Mr. Hesdorffer called the roll, noting the presence of a quorum with six members in attendance, which also requires five (5) favorable votes to pass any action.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES from meeting of March 6, 2014

Mr. Blanda moved, Mr. Taylor seconded, to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2014 Vieux Carre Commission meeting, as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Mr. Musso stated that in the absence of the chairman, Dr. Lupin, he had no report to render at the present, however there may be a report at the next month’s meeting.

IV. DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Mr. Hesdorffer noted that the French Quarter Business Association, in conjunction with VCPORA and French Quarter Citizens, would be having another Graffiti Abatement Program (VC GAP) volunteer clean-up day in the Quarter, on Saturday April 5th. Those wishing to participate were invited to meet at 9AM in the courtyard of the 8th District Police Station at 334 Royal.

Additionally, the Director announced that the Commission staff has been benefitting from the volunteer services of Ms. Debbie Hudson who, although she had been working in the office that morning, was able to be present at the meeting in the afternoon. Ms. Hudson had become aware of the Commission by making an application for a permit. After learning how much more was involved with VCC work and seeing how the staff had little time for managing clerical tasks while serving the public, she decided to devote some of her own time to assist.

Thirdly, Mr. Hesdorffer explained that the VCC had been sent a copy brand new book entitled *The Paintings of Alan Flattmann, An Artist’s Vision of New Orleans*. He noted that the sender was the artist, who offered the book as a token of appreciation to the Commission. Mr. Flattmann had written in his cover letter that, as an artist who has painted French Quarter subjects for over 50 years, he was keenly aware of the VCC’s work. In fact, in the preface, he dedicated the book “to the Vieux Carre Commission, for its vital work over the years to preserve the authentic and distinctive character of old New Orleans.” Mr. Hesdorffer offered his public thanks for such a thoughtful honor.

Finally, he announced that the seventh Jacob & Mary Morrison Lecture would take place on Sunday, April 6th at 4PM at the Historic New Orleans Collection’s Williams Research Center at 410 Chartres Street. The lecture is free and open to the public. The lecture honors the memory of the Morrisons who were both pioneers in the founding of the VCC and preservation activities in the French Quarter for the rest of their lives.

V. NEW BUSINESS

336-40 Chartres: Mercier Realty & Investment Company, owner & applicant. Proposal to **demolish** four-story structure, per application & materials received 03/27/14. [**NOTE: this meeting marks the beginning of the 30-day layover period.**]

[Commissioner Denechaud entered during this discussion]

Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation with Mr. Werling and his attorney Mr. Nass present on behalf of the application, following which Mr. Musso made a general statement of concern regarding the length of time that 340 Chartres has been neglected. Mr. Nass stated that the owner's understanding of the property was that the building under discussion is a product of the mid-twentieth century and was historically an open yard. He provided a brief chronology of events in the last few months regarding concern for the structure, which resulted in the hiring of an engineer to provide a professional opinion in reference to the building's structural status and safety. Staff then clarified the history of the structure, explaining that a structure is documented in Sanborn Insurance maps beginning in at 1876 and appears to have remained, though possibly altered, as evidenced by changes to the building plans in the maps.

Mr. Musso questioned whether the lateral walls are common walls and if action had been taken to stabilize the building, to which Mr. Nass replied that he did believe the walls were common and that no action had been taken. The following discussion, involving questions from Messrs. Blanda and Musso, centered on why the building had been allowed to deteriorate to such an unstable point; what action or work had been performed recently to maintain the building; the recent use of the structure; the proposed use of the area; and whether the owner had clear title.

Mr. Nass confirmed that the owner has no intended use for the land at present and that he does have clear title. Mr. Musso requested a survey to discern the property lines and clarify whether the lateral walls are common. Mr. Vanlangendonck, a Vieux Carré resident, asked whether this area, which is obscured from the street and currently unlit, would be secured from vandals following demolition. Mr. Werling stated that the owners would install a fence.

Mr. Taylor moved, Mrs. Denechaud seconded, to **begin the 30 day demolition layover period**, require the application to return to the Architectural Committee for further discussion, require the owners to stabilize the structure during the period of review, and request that a survey be provided to clarify common walls and property lines.

VI. CHANGE OF USE HEARINGS

518 Conti: Bamboula Properties, LLC, owner; Exodus Goods, LLC, applicant. Proposal to install signage in conjunction with a **change of use** from *vacant* to *retail* (women's clothing), per application & materials received 03/21/14.

Mr. McLeod made the staff report with Ms. Mussa representing the application. After the presentation and without any additional discussion, Mrs. Denechaud moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, to approve the signage as proposed to accommodate the **change of use** from *vacant* to *retail* (women's clothing), thereby authorizing staff to issue permits for the work. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. VIOLATIONS & APPEALS

924 Orleans: Dale R. & Johnnie H. Paugh, owners; Ron Rivet, applicant. Proposal to reinstall curb cut, per application & materials received 06/14/13. [**Notice of Violation sent 02/17/14; STOP WORK ORDER posted 03/10/14**]

Mr. McLeod gave the staff presentation with Mr. Rivet in attendance on behalf of the application. Mr. Taylor inquired what the difference was between the curb-cut approved by the Architecture Committee and the currently proposed curb-cut approved by the Department of Public Works. Mr. McLeod clarified that each side of the proposed curb-cut does not have the DPW-required four-foot radius, and by reducing that dimension, the work will not necessitate the relocation of a cable service box in the sidewalk right-of-way. Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Lyons seconded, to **approve** the driveway and curb-cut as submitted with the remaining items on the application to be returned to the Architecture Committee for review and approval prior to permit issuance. The motion passed unanimously.

1218 Decatur: Southern Holding Company, LLC, owner; Wink's Bakery, tenant/applicant; Keith Marrero, architect. Proposal to retain signage and to reroute exhaust-hood vent installed without benefit of permit or application, in conjunction with a **change of use** from *vacant* to *bakery*, per

application & materials received 02/24/14. [**STOP WORK ORDER** posted **02/13/14**; **Notice of Violation** sent **02/14/14**]

Mr. McLeod presented the staff report with Mr. Marerro present for the applicant. Mr. Musso stated that the Architecture Committee was satisfied with the proposal to reroute the hood-vent. Mrs. Denechaud inquired about the menu of the bakery, noting that the name contained the word “bistro”, suggesting a menu beyond the normal scope of a bakery. Mr. McLeod displayed the menu, which consists of mostly baked goods. Mr. Taylor then moved, Mr. Lyons seconded, to **approve** the signage and exhaust-system as proposed, and the **change of use** from *vacant* to *bakery*, and to **lift** the STOP WORK ORDER and authorize staff to issue permits for the work provided that the exhaust-hood fan is painted a dark, flat color in order to blend in with the adjacent roof surface. The motion passed unanimously.

729 Dumaine: Henry W. Giles, Jr., owner/applicant. Proposal to make minor repairs and paint, per application & materials received 03/11/14. [**STOP WORK ORDER** posted **02/07/13**]

Mr. McLeod made the staff report with Mr. Huertas present to represent the application. Mr. Lyons moved, Mrs. Denechaud seconded, to **approve** the application as submitted and to **lift** the STOP WORK ORDER and authorized staff to issue permits for the work. He motion passed unanimously.

VIII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of March 6, 2014

IX. Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Skinner seconded, to **ratify** all actions taken by both the Architectural Committee and Staff since the March 6, 2014 meeting of the Vieux Carré Commission. The motion passed with all in favor.

Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Musso seconded, to **adjourn** the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30 P.M.

APPROVED: _____
Pat Denechaud, Secretary

NOTE: These minutes are a summary of actions taken and are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting.