

MINUTES
VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, May 7, 2014 - 1:30 P.M.
City Council Chamber, City Hall - 1300 Perdido Street

PRESENT: Nick Musso, Vice-Chairman
C.J. Blanda
Michael Skinner
Leslie Stokes
Daniel Taylor
Jorge A. Henriquez

ABSENT: Pat Denechaud, Secretary
Alfred "Pio" Lyons

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: Peter Nass, Harold Werling, Kurt Werling, Robert Vanlangendonck, Erica Amrine, Ray Hostetter, John C. Williams, Rachel Robinson,

I. ROLL CALL

Vice-Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 PM.

Prior to requesting the roll call, Mr. Musso asked the director for comment. Mr. Hesdorffer noted that the VCC's long-time chairman, Dr. Ralph Lupin, had passed away the previous week and that with an extraordinary great sense of loss and respect, he stated that the Commission had lost the person who had service to the VCC was longer than any other, with multiple terms dating from 1987 to 1990 and then again from 1995 to 2014. Furthermore, he also held the record for length of service as chairman, dating from 2002 to 2014. He added that Dr. Lupin's varied interests and his record of giving back to the community had been all well-documented. He added that no one could have been more passionate about the French Quarter than Ralph Lupin, nor could anyone be more devoted to the protective role given to the VCC. He closed saying that, both as a colleague and a friend; he appreciated Dr. Lupin's exemplary efforts and his dedication to the protection of the *toute ensemble* and saluted his legacy which set a standard for other Commissioners to follow in years to come.

Then per Mr. Musso's request, Mr. Hesdorffer called the roll, noting the presence of a quorum with six (6) members in attendance. He noted for clarity that five (5) favorable votes are necessary to pass any action, even with six commissioners present.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES from Vieux Carré Commission meeting of April 2, 2014

Mr. Blanda moved, Mrs. Stokes seconded, to approve the minutes April 2, 2014, as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

III. OLD 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 end of the 30-day layover period.]**

Ms. Ripple presented the staff report, with Messrs. Nass and Harold and Kurt Werling in attendance on behalf of the application. Mr. Nass stated that the owners have submitted information about the property conditions and a redevelopment plan for review. He also addressed the discovery of a passageway located between this landlocked structure that is part of the remaining 340 Chartres open parking lot and the three (3) neighboring structures that front on Chartres at 326-30 & 332 Chartres. He noted that the alley/passageway is covered at the ground floor and open from the second story upward to the sky. Mr. Musso noted that the additional information had not been provided until after the submittal deadline and that the information would be more appropriately reviewed at this time by the VCC's Architectural Committee. Mr. Nass also stated that his client's consulting engineer has written a recommendation that building's walls be deconstructed to a height of ten (10) feet. Following brief comments, Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, to **defer** the application with the redevelopment plan to be returned to the Architecture Committee for further review before coming back to the VCC for consideration. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

622-26 St. Peter: Mendel S. Rau, owner; Charles A. Berg, architect/applicant. Proposal to alter carriageway millwork, per application & materials received 03/11/14, 4/14/14, & 4/21/14, respectively.

With no one present to represent the application, Mr. Musso stated that the presentation would be delayed until later in the meeting, pending the presence of the applicant.

715 Dauphine: 715 Dauphine, LLC, owner; Ray Hostetter, applicant. Proposal to retain NOPD style security camera approved in 2009 for a 5-year period, per application received 03/26/14.

Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation with Mr. Hostetter representing the application. Mr. Taylor questioned whether there had been a second five (5) year period stipulated in the report. Ms. Ripple noted that the decision ultimately was being left to the discretion of the Commission. Mr. Musso stated that he would prefer to avoid setting short term stipulations for permits, noting that the timeframes for anticipated obsolescence of such devices cannot easily be predicted. Following a short discussion, Mr. Taylor moved, Mrs. Stokes seconded, to **approve** the application to retain the NOPD style security camera. The motion passed unanimously.

V. CHANGE OF USE HEARINGS

1109 Royal: HLH Properties, LLC, owner; Jeffrey G. Dreyfus, applicant. Proposal to construct new, fire-rated closet within passageway in conjunction with a **change of use** from *hair salon to art gallery*, per application & materials received 03/27/14 & 04/08/14, respectively.

With no applicant present, Mr. Musso stated that since a speaker's card had been submitted, the application would be deferred until later in the meeting.

631 Decatur: City of New Orleans, owner; The Fudgery, Inc., tenant; John C. Williams, architect/applicant. Proposal to reverse swinging direction of ground floor doors, in conjunction with a **change of use** from *art gallery to retail*, per application & drawings received 04/08/14.

Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation noting that the commercial space was part of the Upper Pontalba Building. Mr. Williams was in attendance representing the application. Mr. Musso requested clarification from the architect that the **change in use** does not require any additional kitchen equipment nor any other exterior changes, with the exception being anticipated new signage. Mr. Williams confirmed that the sign will be applied for separately adding that according to his clients, in other municipalities proposals similar to this one have not required any additional venting, although that may not be the case with this particular location. He added that the tenants first wanted to get assurance that the new use and millwork changes could be approvable. Following that, if any new venting would be required, Mr. Williams said that his "anticipation would be that it would be a small vent into the interior courtyard." With no further discussion, Mr. Taylor moved, and Mrs. Stokes seconded, to **approve** the proposed millwork changes in conjunction with a **change of use** from *art gallery to retail*, consistent with the staff's analysis of May 7, 2014. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hesdorffer reiterated for the benefit of the applicant that while the *retail* use is approvable, the (undefined) venting which might be required *may not be approvable* if it is viewed as compromising the integrity of the Upper Pontalba Building as a structure of national significance. Mr. Williams said he and his clients believe that the use is *retail* and is similar to the new operation opening at the Riverwalk, also deemed to be a *retail* operation.

VI. CHANGE OF USE HEARINGS (continued)

1109 Royal: HLH Properties, LLC, owner; Jeffrey G. Dreyfus, applicant. Proposal to construct new, fire-rated closet within passageway in conjunction with a **change of use** from *hair salon to art gallery*, per application & materials received 03/27/14 & 04/08/14, respectively.

Returning to an item deferred earlier, Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation with Ms. Amrine representing the application. Mr. Musso confirmed that the Architectural Committee found the use of hollow, metal doors in this particular instance to be acceptable. Mr. Blanda moved, Mrs. Stokes seconded, to **approve** the application as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS (continued)

622-26 St. Peter: Mendel S. Rau, owner; Charles A. Berg, architect/applicant. Proposal to alter carriageway millwork, per application & materials received 03/11/14, 4/14/14, & 4/21/14, respectively.

Despite the applicant's failure to be present, Mr. Musso asked if the Commission was willing to hear the application. With no objection, Ms. Ripple gave the staff presentation. Following the staff report, Mr. Blanda expressed concern about the well-being of the building's foundation due to the skewed condition seen in façade photographs that show what appears to be a structural sagging of the millwork on the Royal side of the elevation. Staff noted the concern and ensured that the issue would be addressed with the architect and owner. With no further discussion, Mr. Taylor moved, Mrs. Stokes seconded, to **approve** the application consistent with staff analysis and recommendations of May 7, 2014, provided that millwork shop-drawings are submitted for staff review and approval prior to installation. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Musso announced that the VCC Foundation would be holding an informational public hearing on May 21, 2014 to announce the commencement of the Design Guidelines project getting underway. He called on Rachel Robertson, Director to the Foundation. She added that the meeting would be in the ballroom of the Bourbon Orleans Hotel, at 6PM. The meeting marks the launch of the Guidelines "redrafting" project being undertaken by the VCC Foundation on behalf of the VCC.

IX. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of April 2, 2014

Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Skinner seconded, to **ratify** the actions of the Architecture Committee and Staff since April 2, 2014 meeting of the Vieux Carré Commission. The motion carried unanimously.

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

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:15 P.M.

APPROVED: _____
Pat Denechaud, Secretary

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