

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu  
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block  
DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, December 07, 2016- 1:30 P.M.**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Nicholas S. Musso, Chairman  
Daniel C. Taylor, Vice-Chairman  
Leslie S. Stokes, Secretary  
C.J. Blanda  
Rick Fifield  
Michael A. Skinner

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Patricia C. Denechaud  
Jorge A. Henriquez

**STAFF PRESENT:** Bryan D. Block, Director; Renée Bourgogne, Architectural Historian;  
Nicholas G. Albrecht, Building Plans Examiner; Erin Vogt, Building Plans  
Examiner; Tony Whitfield, Inspector; Melissa Quigley, Assistant City  
Attorney

**STAFF ABSENT:** Erika Gates, Inspector;

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Meg Lousteau, Daniel Taylor (architect for 620 Decatur), Bob Ellis,  
Stephen Baham, Hub Harrington, Jenna Burke, Dana Hansel

**I. ROLL CALL**

Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:30 PM. A quorum was established with the presence of six (6) of the eight (8) seated Commissioners present.

**II. REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Mr. Taylor moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of November 2, 2016 be approved as previously circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr. Musso noted the unfortunate events of the previous week on Bourbon Street and the severity of the crime in relation to innocent bystanders. Mr. Musso noted that there had been various discussions on addressing crime including curfews and land use and noted that the discussions were a step in the right direction. Mr. Musso also noted the use of public lighting and no gun zones and recommended that those in attendance contact their council person to let them know their feelings.

**IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Block gave the following Director's Report:

- As mentioned in my October 5, 2016 Director's Report, the City will be implementing a publicly available bike sharing system for use by residents and visitors. The proposed bike share system should cover a significant portion of the City, with much of the first phase to be located within the French Quarter. We have met with the vendor to discuss the sensitivity of locating parking stations and pay kiosks within parts of the District. Our concern is to maintain historic viewsheds and adjacencies at certain sensitive locations while assisting the team locate stations appropriately. A map of the Quarter has been provided indicating locations of buildings and sites of particular importance with the recommendation that these not be considered as sites for elements of the bike share program. The City hopes to launch the system by summer 2017.

- The Rooftop Addition Subcommittee met Monday, December 5, to try and bring the discussion to a resolution. The group agreed that, although the current design guidelines effectively define rooftop additions to existing buildings, they are inadequate with regards to unconditioned, activated rooftops or terraces. As we are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of applications for new construction and rooftop additions with such spaces proposed, we are working to compose language to address this. It is our goal that guidelines be as prescriptive as possible so that applicants find our review process transparent and predictable. Proposed amendments to the guidelines will need to be reviewed by the Commission and approved by City Council.
- The 2017 budget was approved maintaining current staffing levels and operating expenses. If any Commissioners would like a copy of the presentation it can be forwarded upon request.

Following the report, Mr. Taylor inquired when the proposed amendments to the guidelines would be ready. Mr. Block responded that he was hoping for them to be ready by the next month.

#### **V. NEW BUSINESS**

620 Decatur St: Robert Cangelosi, Jr., applicant; Josephine Paciera Prop Inc, owner; Proposal to demolish clock/sign pylon and construct new information/ticket kiosk, per application & materials received 07/22/16 & 11/11/16, respectively.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Mr. Taylor present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso noted that the Architectural Committee was more interested in the Commissioner's response to the proposed concept. Mr. Skinner noted that he was concerned about the morphing effect and stated that it was something the Commission shouldn't approve.

Mr. Musso noted that it would be a bad precedent and make it difficult to deny similar future proposals. Ms. Stokes inquired if there were other options similar to the proposal. Mr. Taylor (applicant) replied that they have pursued other options.

Mr. Skinner inquired if the proposed kiosk would interfere with the handicap ramp. Mr. Taylor (applicant) replied that it would not.

Mr. Blanda noted that the kiosk was intended to advertise businesses in the building and that it would have a totally different use when used for tourist information.

Mr. Taylor (applicant) noted that other existing kiosks are larger and have visible window unit air conditioning.

Mr. Musso noted that in at least the last five years nothing like this has been approved and those that were approved by other Commissions were abused.

Mr. Blanda inquired who would own the structure. Mr. Ellis, the attorney for the applicant, joined Mr. Taylor in representing the application and stated that the kiosk would be owned by a management company and leased from the Jax Brewery. Mr. Ellis continued that they could put conditions in the lease that prevent morphing and that he hoped the Commission found the design acceptable and appealing.

Mr. Musso noted that the enforcement arm of the VCC is not as strong as the rest of the city. Mr. Ellis stated that they would enter into an agreement with the VCC.

Mr. Blanda inquired who would benefit from the kiosk. Mr. Ellis stated that his client (the tourist

management company) would benefit from the kiosk. Mr. Blanda inquired if that was the same tourist operators as the ones who operated the kiosk adjacent to Café du Monde. Mr. Ellis replied that that was a competing tour company that operates that kiosk.

Ms. Lousteau, representing VCPORA, expressed concern not of morphing but of the structure in the first place. Ms. Lousteau noted the importance of tourism but the negative impact of the proposed kiosk, noting that the next tour company will want a highly visible location. Ms. Lousteau concluded that it would set a bad precedent and that although the kiosk was well designed it should not be approved.

Mr. Taylor (Commissioner) stated that this was a very busy corner with a lot of congestion. He continued that he saw the importance of the function but that this was not the right location. Mr. Taylor continued that an information booth would have people standing around it creating further congestion.

Mr. Musso noted that there was an ongoing enforcement problem with drop off busses at this corner. Mr. Taylor (applicant) stated that the corner was not that congested. Mr. Musso responded that the concern was when other activities happen simultaneously and he suggested that the applicants consider alternate locations.

Mr. Fifield moved to **defer** the application to allow the applicant to consider alternate locations. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**939 Toulouse St:** Jane Anderson, applicant; Catherine L Arnold, owner; Proposal to install new walk-up parking service, per application & materials received 11/08/16.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Mr. Baham present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso noted that in some ways this application was similar to the one that had just been discussed. Mr. Musso noted that there were concerns about the gate and possible resulting traffic delays resulting from the gate operation.

Mr. Blanda inquired if the parking lot was currently full of contracted parkers. Mr. Baham replied that there were a few monthly parkers but the lot was not completely full. Mr. Blanda questioned if they were having trouble filling the lot.

Mr. Skinner inquired why they needed a meter inside the gate if it was used for monthly parking. Mr. Baham stated that it was so that parkers could purchase a ticket and place it on their dash. Mr. Musso inquired why there was a need to place a ticket on the dashboard in the first place. Mr. Baham stated that parkers can buy tickets in any increment.

Mr. Harrington, in the audience, stated that he was an owner directly behind the lot and noted that the property had been an eyesore for years and that there had been a couple cars parked there on random occasions. Mr. Harrington stated that the proposal does not seem to make financial sense if it is used for monthly parking. Mr. Harrington asked if the Commission could impose some kind of long term requirements such as limiting the lot to six spaces and requiring the gate to always be locked.

Mr. Musso replied that there were also some zoning issues at play and that some of Mr. Harrington's requests were outside of the Commission's abilities at this point. Mr. Harrington stated that they also had serious safety concerns, noting that the property was wide open behind the lot.

Jenna Burke, in the audience, questioned the installation of a kiosk on a lot with a gate. She stated that the kiosk would be overkill, noting that the operators could utilize other monthly paying methods.

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Ms. Lousteau, representing VCPORA, expressed her concern that this will be operated as an hourly lot and that this could only happen if parkers have a key or the gates are left open. Ms. Lousteau continued that parking lots are in high demand and that she would be happy to assist the applicant in providing names of potential parkers.

Mr. Fifield stated that the major concern was the possibility of the gates remaining open and that the gates will cease to hide the visibility into the lot. Mr. Fifield noted that no part of the proposal addresses that concern and moved to **defer** the application.

Mr. Baham stated that there was nothing to prevent the gates from remaining open now. Mr. Fifield stated that a kiosk opens the possibility of hourly use.

Mr. Taylor noted that the best use of the land would be a building.

Mr. Blanda seconded the motion for **deferral**, which passed unanimously.

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## VI. **APPEALS AND VIOLATIONS**

**409 Bourbon St:** Jennifer Rowe, applicant; Nova Aurelia Holdings, LLC, owner; Proposal to make repairs, correct violations, and retain work done without permits, per application & materials received 04/25/16 & 08/29/16. **[Notice of Violation sent 11/13/14]**

The application was withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting and placed on an upcoming Architectural Committee agenda.

**411 Bourbon St:** John C. Williams, applicant; Cajun 411 LLC, owner; Appeal of Architectural Committee denial of proposal to modify previously approved plans with the addition of a third floor to an existing building, per application & materials received 10/11/16, 10/25/16, & 11/30/16, respectively.

The application was deferred at the applicant's request prior to the meeting.

## VII. **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Discussion of Tricentennial Interactive Signage:** Proposal of the placement of QR code signage at various locations of historical importance throughout the Vieux Carré for the purposes of the Tricentennial Celebration.

Ms. Hansel began a presentation regarding the proposed Tri centennial noting that she represented WYES and that they produce their own content for the Tri centennial commission project. Ms. Hansel stated they were looking to create tourism tie-ins, allowing locals and visitors to enjoy various sites throughout the Vieux Carré and city. Ms. Hansel noted that they had partnered with the Historic New Orleans Collection.

Mr. Musso stated the he was concerned with how and where the signs would be located. Ms. Hansel stated that they were open to the most appropriate site. Mr. Block noted that there was a list of potential sites that included public properties, some owned by the Archdiocese, and other privately owned properties. Mr. Block suggested that a presentation be made to the Architectural Committee for each site.

Mr. Taylor inquired if the installations would be permanent. Ms. Hansel stated that they would only be in place from the end of 2017 through 2018. Mr. Musso requested that the proposed sites be submitted to staff.

Mr. Taylor moved for the applicant to work with staff regarding the locations of the signage, to be presented to the Architectural Committee, and to be approved by the Commission. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Ratification** of Vieux Carré Commission and Architectural Committee meeting dates for 2017.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Commission and Architectural Committee meeting dates for 2017. The motion, seconded by Mr. Blanda, passed unanimously.

**VIII. RATIFICATION** of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, November 02, 2016 VCC meeting.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, November 02, 2016 meeting. The motion, seconded by Mr. Blanda, passed unanimously.

With no other business to discuss, Mr. Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Skinner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:25 PM.