

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, August 3, 2016 - 1:30 P.M.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Nicholas S. Musso, Chairman
Leslie S. Stokes, Secretary
Patricia C. Denechaud
Rick Fifield
Michael A. Skinner
Jorge A. Henriquez

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Daniel C. Taylor, Vice-Chairman
C.J. Blanda

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

STAFF ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Meg Lousteau, Susan Guillot, Tommy Milliner, Albin Guillot, Jenna
Burke, Carol Gnaidy, Frances Swaggart, Mari Kornhaoser, Kerry Foley
Kessler, Chad Pellerin, Bev Falk, Robert Cangelosi, Mark Thomas, Henry
Hanisee, Betty Norris, Avery Foret, Lacey Wotring, Christian Rhodes,
Bryan Drude, Loretta Katherine Harmon

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:33 PM. Mr. Block called the roll, noting the presence of a quorum with six (6) of the eight (8) seated Commissioners present.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Ms. Denechaud moved, Mr. Skinner seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of July 6, 2016 be approved as previously circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Musso began the Chairman's report noting that the subcommittee on rooftop mechanical equipment would be meeting on Friday, August 5 (at a location to be announced). This subcommittee will discuss rooftop-related concerns outside of VCC purview, as well as existing applicable VCC Design Guidelines, and may make recommendations to other agencies and departments with jurisdiction over rooftop usage in the French Quarter.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Block gave his report as follows:

- Last week I attended the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions conference in Mobile, AL, where the new VCC Design Guidelines received an excellence award. Lary Hesdorffer, Kim Rosenberg and Dominique Hawkins were present to receive the award.
- The Staff is working to track statistically how many violation cases result in permits and work corrected before needing to be taken to adjudication. Thanks

to LAMA this is a statistic we can track monthly in order to keep up with our effectiveness. It will take a month or two to get the system tweaked but we are currently working at an 80-100% success rate, meaning that most or all violation citations are being addressed through permitting instead of adjudication.

- The Staff would like to share success stories along and along with the public and Commission, showing where properties have responded positively to violation citations.
- 706 Bourbon Street – excessive signage and merchandise display
- 629 St Peter Street- excessive signage and merchandise display
- We will continue to share additional successes at future meetings.

V. FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS – Annual Election of Officers

Mr. Skinner nominated Mr. Musso to be the Chair of the Commission. Mr. Stokes seconded the nomination and the Commission voted unanimously to elect Mr. Musso as Chair.

Mr. Musso nominated Mr. Taylor to be the Vice-Chair of the Commission. Ms. Stokes seconded the nomination and the Commission voted unanimously to elect Mr. Taylor as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Musso nominated Ms. Stokes for the position of Secretary. Ms. Denechaud seconded the nomination and the Commission voted unanimously to elect Ms. Stokes as Secretary.

Mr. Fifield nominated Mr. Taylor for the position of the Chair of the Architectural Committee. Ms. Stokes seconded the nomination and the Commission voted unanimously to elect Mr. Taylor as Chair of the Architectural Committee.

Prior to moving on to Old Business, some discussion was had regarding easement requirements for projections on or over the public right of way.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

336-340 Decatur St: Mark Thomas, applicant; Joseph C Paciera, owner; Proposal to demolish existing yellow-rated structure and construct new four story building, per application & materials received 07/04/15 & 07/19/16.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Messrs. Thomas and Rhodes present on behalf of the application.

Ms. Foret, in the audience speaking on behalf of the owners of the commercial properties on the riverside of N. Peters from Canal through Wilkinson, stated that she believed the project was improved but that she had a few concerns including the fact that a previous proposal for this site included the permanent closure of this portion of Conti St. Ms. Foret stated that she was happy this proposal did not include any such street closure. Additionally Ms. Foret was concerned how the building would be loaded and unloaded and that she would like to see loading/unloading exclusively on N. Peters.

Ms. Parren, in the audience, stated that she was a French Quarter resident and a French Quarter advocate and that the traffic flow to the new construction would be mainly pedestrian. Ms. Parren stated that she thought the design was in keeping with the toute ensemble and would have a great economic impact.

Mr. Drude, speaking on behalf of French Quarter Advocates, stated that their organization voted on whether or not to recommend this project and the vote ended with the highest percentage of approval from their members in the history of their organization. Mr. Drude continued that the VCC has to be grateful that the developers took into consideration the comments of the

Architectural Committee.

Mr. Skinner stated that he was happy that the roof structure had been modified from the previous proposal. Mr. Skinner continued that on the N. Peters elevation the volume of the galleries was too large with relation to the rest of the block. Mr. Musso noted that a caveat of the conceptual approval was the need to rework the galleries.

Ms. Denechaud moved for conceptual approval of the proposal. Ms. Stokes seconded the motion. Mr. Rhodes stated that if there was any more information the Commission would like that they would be happy to provide it. The vote was called and the motion to grant **conceptual approval** passed unanimously.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

808 Royal St: John C. Williams, applicant; N I C E Investments LLC, owner; Proposal to construct new four story building, per application & materials received 06/09/15 & 07/19/16, respectively.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Ms. Wotring present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso noted that the Architectural Committee and the applicant were attempting to balance a contemporary building and the historic neighborhood. Mr. Musso noted that the Architectural Committee included a caveat that any traditional details be changed to more contemporary details.

Mr. Skinner moved for **conceptual approval** of the application with details to be reviewed by the Architectural Committee. Mr. Hernandez seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. APPEALS & VIOLATIONS

730 Esplanade: 730 Esplanade LLC (Sidney D. Torres, IV, Manager), owner; Discussion of numerous work without permit violations, including but not limited to: drastically modifying window and door openings, installing at least ten skylights, creating at least one new window opening, constructing a new courtyard enclosure wall, replacing a large number of millwork window and door openings, and installing rooftop mechanical equipment, all without benefit of VCC review or approval. **[STOP WORK ORDER posted 07/27/16]**

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Ms. Harmon present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso stated that this is a very significant building and that all this work was done without any of the normal procedures. Mr. Musso stated that some of the work could have been accepted but other work would be rejected.

Ms. Norris, in the audience, stated that this was the first time she was seeing these violations and that she was appalled.

Ms. Lousteau, in the audience representing VCPORA, stated that she was shocked at what had been done and that anyone would take such liberties. Ms. Lousteau noted that this was a blue-rated building and therefore one of the most significant in the Vieux Carré. Ms. Lousteau stated that Mr. Torres is very aware of the requirements to do work in the Vieux Carré. Ms. Lousteau urged the Commission to require the undoing of the unpermitted work noting that rules are rules.

Mr. Musso stated that the Commission might not only require the removal of the work that wouldn't be approved but also of the work that would have been approved. Mr. Musso noted that the architect present to represent the property was brand new and shouldn't be blamed for the work.

Ms. Denechaud stated that she was appalled that the Stop Work Order (SWO) had been removed and that work was continuing despite the SWO.

Ms. Harmon stated that she agreed with the deferral to allow time for her to work with the staff and the Architectural Committee to work towards a resolution.

Ms. Stokes asked if Ms. Harmon could give any explanation for the actions of her client. Ms. Harmon noted that she had just been hired on Monday. Mr. Musso asked that Ms. Harmon ask her client to attend the next Commission meeting. Ms. Harmon noted that there were some contractor errors.

[Following the discussion of 730 Esplanade the meeting returned to the discussion of easement requirements]

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion of current city policy regarding easement requirements for projections on or over the public right of way.

Following the discussion of 730 Esplanade, the discussion returned to easement requirements and several other speakers discussed the issue.

X. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, July 06, 2016 VCC meeting.

Mr. Skinner moved to ratify the actions of the Architectural Committee and staff since the July 06, 2016 VCC meeting. The motion, seconded by Mr. Fifield, passed unanimously.

With no additional business to discuss, Mr. Skinner moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Fifield seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:05 PM.