

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, March 8th, 2017 - 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
Jorge A. Henriquez

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Patricia C. Denechaud

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

STAFF ABSENT: Erika Gates, Inspector; Tony Whitfield, Inspector;

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Guillot, Bev Falk, Gail Cavett, Daniel D. Taylor, Meg Lousteau,
Peter Trapolin, Shea Trahan

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:33 PM. A quorum was established with the presence of six (6) of the eight (8) seated Commissioners present. [Commissioner Stokes arrived during the Chairman's Report]

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Skinner moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of February 1st, 2017 be approved as previously circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

[Ms. Stokes arrived during the Chairman's Report]

Mr. Musso began his report discussing the bike rental program. He noted concerns that had been expressed at recent French Quarter meetings including the disruptive nature of bikes, the fact that the ongoing demonstration did not feature the advertising kiosks, and that poles adjacent to the kiosks were used more frequently by other bicyclists.

Mr. Musso noted that the current proposal calls for bikes to be placed in commercial parking areas. Mr. Musso noted that the neighborhood suggested bikes on the perimeter rather than the interior of the French Quarter. Mr. Musso suggested that the total number of bikes be reduced with most placed on the perimeter and some strategically placed on the interior of the French Quarter.

Mr. Musso continued that there was a lack of a comprehensive transportation plan regarding the program, questioned whether there was a potential to use some parking spots currently used for regular vehicles as kiosk locations, and if public parking lots could be obligated to give one or more spaces to rental or private bike parking.

Mr. Blanda expressed his concern for the number of bikes/kiosks in the French Quarter and recommended that they be kept to a minimum in the Quarter with more on the perimeter.

Gail Cavett, in the audience, stated that she found that the whole program was moving too fast and there was not enough opportunity to weigh in or contribute input from the community. Ms. Cavett noted that the proposal called for a total of 300 bikes with 576 parking spots for bikes according to a preliminary map. Ms. Cavett stated that if the producers of the program had come to them that they would have informed the producers that there is a greater need for more parking for private bikes. Ms. Cavett continued that it was generally cheaper and faster to take Uber than to use the rental bikes and that people who bike want to be within three blocks of their destination. Ms. Cavett continued that bike kiosks should be linked with locations for bus and streetcar stops and recommended that there be a serious engagement between the community and the planners moving forward. Finally, Ms. Cavett questioned if the associated advertising was appropriate for the French Quarter.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Block gave the following report:

- As part of the Administration's ongoing French Quarter Public Safety & Improvement Strategy, the Staff has created the "Lighting in the Vieux Carré" handout, a draft copy of which is in your packet. This is based on our recent field surveys and taken directly from the VCC design guidelines, boiled down to the very basics, to make it easier for applicants to quickly and more readily understand precisely what types of light fixtures are recommended and how to properly mount them on their buildings. A short list of recommended light fixtures is also included. Our goal is to encourage property owners to take full advantage of the existing design guidelines to ensure that their buildings and the surrounding areas are adequately illuminated for public safety and well-being. The staff has also completed a survey of locations of existing City streetlamps within the district. A map is being generated showing recommendations for the installation of new streetlamps where it is impractical to rely upon building lighting to adequately illuminate the area. Once this has been approved it will be provided to the Commission for adoption.

- As previously discussed, the bike share program is currently conducting a temporary demonstration of the program which included two demo stations in the French Quarter during the month of February. Each station contained 35 bikes. Due to a strong response from the public the demonstration has been extended through March, although the French Quarter stations were moved to another location outside the district in order to expand the trial into other neighborhoods. There was no damage to any bikes. The bike racks were not used by personal bicycles. It was noted that the bicycle baskets were sometimes used as receptacles for trash but the vendor was operating with reduced personnel and learning from this experience in anticipation of the full roll-out. Users learned to return bikes to the station based on the small, \$1 fee for locking bikes to outside racks.

The following timeline information has been provided:

- Potential candidate sites are being vetted by the City and Social Bicycles, the vendor, based on best practices and City goals during the month of March. VCC Staff will be involved in this process.
- April 11, a workshop will be conducted to discuss French Quarter bike station locations in order to obtain comment and feedback from the public. This is to be held at the Historic New Orleans Collection Williams Research Library Auditorium, 410 Chartres Street, beginning at 6:30pm.
- A draft map of the locations will be available in May.
- Station locations to be final in August.

V. OLD 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 & 03/01/17, respectively.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Messrs. Ellis and Taylor present on behalf of the application. Mr. Skinner inquired if this proposed location was the same as previously reviewed.

Mr. Ellis replied that their lease is specifically for the location of the proposed kiosk. Mr. Ellis continued that they had retained an expert to study the traffic around the area. Mr. Skinner replied that he was familiar with the corner and that it was prone to traffic. Mr. Musso stated that the applicant should have an opportunity to look at an integrated solution as suggested in the staff report.

Mr. Blanda questioned the need for a kiosk at this location, noting that there was a similar kiosk in front of Café du Monde. Mr. Ellis replied stating that that kiosk was operated by a competitor of the operators of the proposed kiosk.

Noting the recommendation in the staff report to collaborate with the adjacent awning proposal, Mr. Ellis stated that they would like to defer to the following meeting to see if they can work something out with the canopy people.

Mr. Skinner moved to defer the application. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

820 Dauphine St: Shea Trahan, applicant; The Academy Of Sacred Heart, owner; Proposal to construct new residential rooftop addition and two (2) rooftop decks on existing brown rated building, in conjunction with a potential **change of use** from *vacant* to *residential*, per application & materials received 02/07/17.

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Messrs. Trapolin, Legier, and Trahan present on behalf of the application. Mr. Skinner stated that he is generally opposed to roof top additions, and that he found this one to be highly visible from St. Ann. Mr. Henriquez asked the developers to explain why they were requesting the addition. Mr. Trapolin explained that the availability of interior space is limited in the existing building, due to requirements from the State Historic Preservation Office that many interior elements be retained. The small addition will add a single unit, and fits between the existing massing created by the rooftop access stair and third floor of the building along Dauphine, thereby not requiring a new rooftop stair or elevator access.

Ms. Susan Guillot addressed the Commission, asking that the rooftop decks be denied as it is not in keeping with the *tout ensemble* of the district, particularly in a residential neighborhood. Mr. Trapolin responded that one rooftop deck would be strictly for the residents of the penthouse addition, while the other would be limited to residents of other units. Mr. Trapolin argued that the rooftop exterior space was particularly important due to the lack of open space on the property, which is surrounded by parking.

Mr. Blanda asked if any patios or ground level outdoor space is being provided. Mr. Trapolin explained that several small courtyards are being provided on the ground floor, mostly to obscure parking from view, but that no communal space would be available, as no additional parking spaces can be sacrificed for this use. Mr. Legier noted that the entire parking lot is not available to them, and appears to be larger than what they actually have access to.

Mr. Taylor moved to conceptually approve the proposal, consistent with staff recommendations, and to approve the change of use. The motion died without a second.

Mr. Skinner moved to **defer** the roof decks and return their review to the Architectural Committee. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion. Ms. Stokes, Messrs. Blanda, Henriquez and Skinner voted in the affirmative. Messrs. Taylor, Fifield and Musso voted against.

Mr. Taylor moved for **conceptual approval** of the rooftop addition and **approval** of the **change of use** to *residential*. Mr. Skinner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VII. APPEALS AND VIOLATIONS

411 Bourbon St: John C. Williams, applicant; Cajun 411 LLC, owner; Appeal of the Architectural Committee's recommendations and decision of February 14, 2017 to defer proposal to construct approximately 2,100 sq. ft. third floor addition and 675 sq. ft. rooftop deck on top of existing two-story building and previously approved second floor addition, per application & materials received 10/11/16 & 02/24/17, respectively.

The applicant provided revised drawings to the Staff after the last AC meeting and then provided a large set of drawings presumably including revisions to Commission members and Staff immediately prior to the review. There was no time for these revisions to be adequately reviewed by Staff or the AC prior to the hearing.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff report with Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Skinner inquired how different the current proposal was from the version last reviewed by the Commission. Mr. Musso noted that it was hard to quantify the changes not having had time to review such a large set of drawings only just having been presented. The Staff was able to report that the revisions at least included additional, highly visible roof mounted mechanical equipment and a lack of response to the previously requested roof terrace railing location.

Mr. Skinner inquired why the staff report states that the proposal goes against the design guidelines. Mr. Williams agreed that the proposal does not meet the guidelines in that the guidelines do not recommend rooftop additions on existing buildings lower than three stories in height.

Mr. Blanda questioned why the proposal was being reviewed without the approval of the Architectural Committee. Mr. Block stated that the applicants have the right to proceed without the recommendation of the Architectural Committee. Mr. Blanda stated that the purpose of the Architectural Committee is to review and recommend whether or not to approve a proposal.

Mr. Skinner moved to defer the application to the Architectural Committee pending their recommendation for approval or denial especially since the current proposal has yet to even be presented to the AC in this iteration. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, February 01, 2017 VCC meeting.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, February 1st, 2017 meeting. The motion, seconded Ms. Stokes, passed unanimously.

With no other business to discuss, Mr. Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Stokes seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:34 PM.