

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Lary P. Hesdorffer
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, December 02, 2015 - 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: Lary P. Hesdorffer, Director; Nicholas G. Albrecht, Building Plans Examiner; Erin Vogt, Building Plans Examiner; Erika Gates, Inspector; Melissa Quigley, Assistant City Attorney

STAFF ABSENT: Renée Bourgogne, Architectural Historian

OTHERS PRESENT: Jenna Burke, Robert Cangelosi, Jr., Martha Griset, Vincent Marcello, Pat Meadowcroft, Hank Smith, William Sonner, Andre Villere, John C. Williams

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:35 PM. After the roll was taken, Mr. Hesdorffer noted the presence of a quorum with six (6) of the eight (8) seated Commissioners present. He added that at least five (5) positive votes would be needed to pass any action.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Blanda moved, Mr. Skinner seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carre Commission meeting of November 4, 2015 be approved as circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, Mr. Hesdorffer noted that an error had been recently discovered with the minutes of the January 7, 2015 Vieux Carre Commission meeting, where they had been improperly dated "2014" on the copies that were circulated for approval. To formalize the technical correction, it was necessary for the Commission to once again approve the document to ratify the minutes with the proper date instead of "2014" as they had been recorded earlier in the year. Mr. Blanda moved to ratify the minutes with the corrected date of January 7, 2015. Mr. Skinner seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman encouraged that a comprehensive transportation study be undertaken for the Vieux Carré, to include not only traffic but other by-products of transportation. The Chairman noted that such a study had not been undertaken in decades and in that time, any number of changes have occurred in French Quarter uses and services. He added that while the VCC has neither the staff nor the mandate to conduct such research, it can vigorously encourage the City of New Orleans, more specifically through the City Planning Commission and the Dept. of Public Works to look at the various aspects related to transportation.

He noted particular areas that could be looked at initially to see how the overall plan could be addressed. He suggested (1) taking a survey of grade-level parking areas, both public and private, and noting where and how they are used; (2) conducting a windshield survey of roadway conditions that seem to have more rapidly deteriorate over the past twelve months; (3) mapping private bus-routes and bus-stops; and (4) analyzing crimes by location and time as related to transportation.

Mr. Musso encouraged the formation of a citizen committee to help encourage the undertaking of such a study to consider all of the aforementioned as elements that will affect future the inventory of irreplaceable historic structures that make up the Vieux Carre.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Hesdorffer began by formally welcoming Mr. Rick Fifield as the newest Commission member, filling the AIA seat that had been vacated by Pio Lyons in September 2014. He added that Mr. Fifield has been a practicing architect in New Orleans for over 25 years and has also been serving on the VCC's Architectural Committee in a volunteer capacity prior to his appointment and ratification.

Additionally, the Director noted that on November 17th, the staff had an in-house masonry workshop/Q&A session with master mason, Michael Russo. The time was both valuable and informative.

Mr. Hesdorffer continued that a draft calendar of the 2016 meeting dates had been circulated for review by the Commissioners, including both VCC and AC meetings. Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the meeting schedule as presented. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Finally, Mr. Hesdorffer concluded the report noting the anticipation of the Commission once again presenting a design awards program in May 2016 to recognize exceptional projects that had been completed in the previous four years, as had been the case in 2004, 2008 and 2012. Mr. Musso noted that names of the members to constitute the Awards Committee will be announced at the January 2016 meeting of the Vieux Carré Commission.

V. NEW BUSINESS

721 Chartres St: Andre Villere, applicant; Roman Catholic Church Archdiocese of New Orleans, owner; Proposal to install two new HVAC units in rear garden, two new mini-split units on roof, and perform various minor work to facilitate the installation of new interior mechanical equipment, per application & materials received 10/28/15.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff report with Mr. Villere representing the application. Mr. Musso stated that the Architectural Committee was in favor and supported the proposal. Mr. Skinner asked if the new units would be located behind the Church and also 9' above grade. Mr. Villere confirmed that the units would be located behind the building but that the City has approved lowering the stands below the base flood elevation requirement. Mr. Musso clarified that part of the reason for the height had been based on general building code requirements of the City, which have since been waived in this instance.

Mr. Skinner then asked if the units would be concealed. Mr. Villere stated that the units would be well concealed by garden plantings, though they will not be invisible.

Mr. Taylor moved for **approval** of the application as submitted. Ms. Stokes seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

715 Ursulines Ave: Robert Cangelosi, Jr., applicant; Nathan E Chapman, owner; Proposal to eliminate previously approved gallery reconstruction from scope of work, per application & materials received 11/16/15.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff report with Mr. Cangelosi representing the application. Mr. Musso began with a personal acknowledgement that although he understood the owners' unwillingness to meet the City's legal requirements in order to build the gallery into the City's right-of-way, he also saw the reconstruction of either a balcony or a gallery as a definite improvement to the appearance and character of the building. Mr. Hesdorffer stated that Martha Griset, of the office of Real Estate & Records, was present to explain the City's position of the hold harmless agreement. Ms. Griset stated that the agreement between property owners and the City allows owners to encroach on public property but also requires that the City be protected from any liability which could result from any accident or problem relative to the use or connection with the built encroachment.

Mr. Cangelosi said that although he can appreciate the concerns being debated over the agreement to rebuild the gallery, they still need to stabilize the building façade and in general he

would like to proceed with rest of the rehabilitation program for this particular property.

Mr. Musso stated that granting approval today to eliminate the construction of the gallery would not eliminate the potential of it still being added in the future. Mr. Skinner inquired if the building could be renovated in two phases. Mr. Cangelosi replied that the proposed work included the stabilization of the façade now which would still allow the addition of a gallery in the future.

Jenna Burke of VCPORA, speaking on behalf of Pat Meadowcroft, stated that VCPORA is troubled that certain financial and legal demands are made for sidewalk servitudes and encroachments such as the one needed for the reconstruction of the gallery, and that this is not merely a French Quarter issue, but rather a city-wide issue. Ms. Burke continued that the City charges a non-negotiable rent for these servitudes. She concluded that homeowners should be responsible for their liability but the City should also be responsible for its own liability and that she hopes for future hearings concerning this issue.

Mr. Musso stated that the applicant would like to proceed with the work. Mr. Blanda asked if there had been a case of the City being sued because of a balcony/gallery incident. Ms. Griset stated that it was entirely possible but she doesn't know of any specific examples. Mr. Hesdorffer stated that he was not aware of any specific incidents. Mr. Musso recalled an incident where an 18 wheeler knocked down posts and he believes there were suits related to that incident.

With no further discussion, Mr. Taylor moved to **approve** the application consistent with the staff analysis and recommendations of December 2, 2015, to proceed with the rest of the elements of rehabilitation but eliminating the proposed gallery reconstruction. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. APPEALS AND VIOLATIONS

300 Bourbon St: John C. Williams, applicant; Royal Sonesta Inc, owner; Appeal of Architectural Committee denial of proposal to remove exiting slate roofing and install new metal standing seam roofing, per application & materials received 09/29/15.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff report with Mr. Williams representing the application. Mr. Musso stated that this is a situation where the VCC's Design Guidelines require the replacement of the roof with slate. Mr. Blanda asked for further explanation why the change of materials was being requested.

Mr. Williams gave his presentation explaining why the Royal Sonesta Hotel was seeking to install a new metal roof, replacing the existing areas of slate shingles, also noting that portions of the property already includes area of metal roofing. Mr. Musso stated that the areas with metal roofing appear to have a different pitch than the main, slate shingle-covered roof slopes.

Mr. Skinner said that in this situation, he felt it appropriate to adhere to the Design Guidelines and that he would not approve the replacement with the metal roofing. Mr. Blanda added that slate roofs are replaced and/or repaired all the time and questioned the change of material.

Mr. Musso responded that the slate roof could be replaced with slate and that there are no technical problems with this building that compromise the utilization of a slate shingle roof.

Mr. Taylor moved to **deny** the proposal to install metal standing seam roofing to replace the slate, consistent with staff analysis and recommendations of December 2, 2015. Ms. Stokes seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

724 St Philip St: Harry Baker Smith Architects, applicant; Larry W Anderson, owner; Proposal to renovate buildings including reconstruction and additions to partially demolished structure, per application & revised materials received 09/29/15 & 11/18/15, respectively. **[Violation notices sent 05/14/15 and 09/04/15]**

Ms. Vogt gave the staff report with Mr. Smith representing on application.

Mr. Musso stated that the architect/applicant actually represents a client who has a purchase agreement on the property but who is not the current owner. However, since the applicant has the permission of the owner, the Committee has recommended granting conceptual approval so that further design development will not be delayed once the property transfer has taken place.

Mr. Hesdorffer stated for the record that conceptual approval is not a final action but rather is

an indication that a proposal is worthy of further development and that approval will not be granted until final drawings can be reviewed and approved that are deemed acceptable for the issuance of a permit.

Mr. Taylor commended the applicant on his proposed rehabilitation and development plan and moved to grant conceptual approval consistent with staff analysis and recommendation of 12/02/15. Ms. Stokes seconded that motion and the motion passed unanimously.

917 Dumaine St: William Sonner, applicant; 917 Dumaine Street LLC, owner; Proposal to remove stucco from courtyard wall in its entirety, re-point masonry, replacing any unsound brick as needed and re-stucco to match existing, per application & materials received 11/17/15. **[STOP WORK ORDER issued 10/19/15, removed & reissued 10/22/15]**

Ms. Gates read the staff report with Mr. Sonner representing the application.

Mr. Musso added that what was being presented for review illustrated work of an overzealous crew and that now the project was being overseen by a new architect and an enlightened owner who realized his past mistakes. He then stated that the new proposal would protect the building, a factor he was greatly concerned about at this point in time. He further pointed out to the Commission that the Architectural Committee had agreed to the new proposal and he opened the floor to questions from Commissioners.

Without hearing any further discussion, Mr. Taylor moved to approval the proposed work, consistent with staff analysis and recommendation of 12/02/15 and to lift the Stop Work Order so that the work could begin. Mr. Blanda seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

VII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the VCC meeting of Wednesday, November 04, 2015.

Mr. Taylor moved, Ms. Stokes seconded, to ratify the actions taken by the Architectural Committee and Staff since the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of November 4th, 2015. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further business to be considered, Mr. Taylor moved for adjournment. The motion, seconded by Ms. Stokes, passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:33 PM.

APPROVED: _____
Leslie Stokes, Secretary

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