

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, January 4th, 2017 - 1:30 P.M.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Nicholas S. Musso, Chairman
Daniel C. Taylor, Vice-Chairman
C.J. Blanda
Rick Fifield
Michael A. Skinner
Jorge A. Henriquez

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Leslie S. Stokes, Secretary
Patricia C. Denechaud

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

STAFF ABSENT: Nicholas G. Albrecht, Building Plans Examiner; Erika Gates, Inspector;
Tony Whitfield, Inspector;

OTHERS PRESENT: Meg Lousteau, Jenna Burke, Gail Cavett,

I. ROLL CALL

Chairman Musso called the meeting to order at approximately 1:34PM. A quorum was established with the presence of five (5) of the eight (8) seated Commissioners present.

[Ms. Stokes arrived during the first report, bringing the total number of Commissioners to six (6)]

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Skinner moved, Mr. Blanda seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of December 7, 2016 be approved as previously circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Block gave the following Director's Report:

- According to VCC Design Guidelines, outdoor lighting is an important factor for the sense of safety, security and well-being it provides residents, workers and visitors after dark. A consistently lit sidewalk encourages a vital, active nighttime environment, while one that is poorly illuminated or has highly contrasting light and glare, creates dark areas and shadows which can appear foreboding. I have recently attended several intra-departmental meetings where I have received feedback expressing an overwhelming assessment from the public that the Quarter is too dark at night. This is affecting safety and sense of security. This low lighting level also has an impact on the effectiveness of security cameras.

Temporary high-intensity light standards were installed during the New Year's Eve festivities to brightly illuminate Bourbon Street. As we surely do not want these to become a permanent installation along Bourbon Street or elsewhere, I and the Staff will be conducting an extensive nighttime survey within the District over the next couple of weeks. From this

we will determine existing lighting conditions and how the design guidelines should be amended to improve illumination and security.

New specifications for security cameras that can be more readily monitored by the NOPD are also being drafted. The design guidelines will also need to be amended to include this recommendation. I will have a draft report available for review by the AC at the upcoming January 24, 2017, meeting.

Furthermore, in an effort to improve the safety, quality of life and infrastructure of the French Quarter holistically, the VCC is teaming up with the other City regulatory departments to ensure better compliance with all City ordinances, building codes and regulations. For example, we recently participated in an intra-departmental educational sweep reminding business owners and tenants within the entertainment zone that such compliance was required and enforceable.

Mr. Musso noted that current VCC lighting guidelines regulate private lighting, and that he hoped the sweeps would evaluate public lighting and potential improvements.

Leslie Alley, Deputy Director of the City Planning Commission, stated that there would be a comprehensive evaluation of lighting and safety in the Vieux Carré, and that the CPC would coordinate with the VCC to revisit regulation and oversee implementation.

- You have received copies of the annual attendance of Commissioners and AC meetings. We will ratify them at the end of the hearing. Please let us know if you find any information to be incorrect so it can be amended.

Mr. Musso requested that the attendance records be added to the VCC website.

V. OLD BUSINESS

917 Conti St, 923 Conti St: Harry Baker Smith, Architects, applicant; 917 Conti, LLC, owner; Review of design development documents in conjunction with conceptually approved **change of use** from *commercial* to *residential*, per application & materials received 05/25/15 & 12/07/16, respectively.

[Ms. Stokes arrived during the staff report]

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Mr. Smith and Ms. Rumbley present on behalf of the application. Mr. Blanda asked the applicant about the number of proposed units (18) and parking spaces (5), asking if the building owner would contract with nearby parking garages to provide three additional spots. Staff noted that the current proposal had reduced the number of units to 16, and would only be one parking space shy of having parking for each unit. Mr. Musso noted that there was no mandate requiring parking for the development.

Mr. Taylor moved to **approve** the proposal, consistent with staff and Architectural Committee recommendations. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

608-12 N. Rampart St: David Macdonald, applicant; Irish Channel Funding, LLC, Camela M. Zimmerman, owner; Proposal to construct an elevated pool deck with outdoor lounge area and covered parking, per application & materials received 09/06/16 & 11/29/16, respectively.

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Mr. Macdonald present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso commented that the Architectural Committee found the proposal acceptable due to the brown rating of the building, and the creation of open space. Mr. Taylor moved to

conceptually approve the proposal, consistent with staff and Architectural Committee recommendation. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

1135 Decatur St: Harry Baker Smith Architects, applicant; 1135-37 Decatur St LLC, 1135-37 Decatur St LLC, owner; Proposal to renovate front façade, including restoration of previously existing gallery and millwork, per application & materials received 10/19/16 and 12/29/16, respectively.

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Mr. Smith present on behalf of the application. Mr. Blanda commended the applicant on the proposed restoration, stating that the building is an eyesore in its existing state. Mr. Taylor moved to **approve** the proposal, consistent with staff and Architectural Committee recommendation. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion of Bike Share Program: Presentation by Dwight Norton regarding new bike sharing kiosks to be installed in various locations throughout the French Quarter and city at large.

Mr. Norton's presentation stated that bike share programs relieve congestion and vehicular parking, and that the hubs for the bikes would be located in a public right of way, with locations and signage to be reviewed by the VCC. Station locations will be visible, and within walking distance of transit hubs, important business and tourist centers, and in close proximity to each other. The stations will be sensitive of historic view-sheds.

Mr. Musso noted that stations should be on public property, but that there are many existing conflicts on public space. If there is an increase in biking, the city should seek to limit tour buses, or regularly close streets to vehicular traffic.

Mr. Blanda expressed concern over the size of the bike stations, stating that the examples shown take up a lot of room. Mr. Norton responded that the cities shown are larger, and that the stations in New Orleans will not be as large. He also stated that studies were being completed regarding curb use, finding loading zones that are no longer being used.

Ms. Stokes asked if any resources would be provided for new cyclists to learn rules surrounding biking. Mr. Norton stated that there would be a bicycle safety campaign.

Mr. Skinner asked how liability would be managed since the behavior of cyclists cannot be regulated. Mr. Norton stated that membership could be suspended or revoked for bad behavior.

Mr. Fifield asked what the projections were for local use versus tourist use. Mr. Norton stated that residents were the primary consumer target; that stations would be spread for workforce mobility and that pricing plans would be more affordable for monthly use versus hourly use, and that low income users would have more affordable membership rates.

Mr. Taylor noted that the VCC has repeatedly discussed the need for a transportation study, and asked if Mr. Norton would coordinate and share his findings with the VCC, which Mr. Norton agreed to do.

Ms. Gail Cabot addressed the Commission, noting that she had participated in the bike corral parking program that was approved by the Commission in 2012, and that they were looking forward to coordinating with Mr. Norton on the project.

Ms. Meg Lousteau stated that a comprehensive traffic study was needed in the Vieux Carré, and that the impacts of transportation would need to be coordinated. She asked Mr. Norton what plans were in place to ensure bikes would be redistributed throughout the city. Mr. Norton responded that income from bike use would provide incentive for the vendor to redistribute the

bikes on a daily basis in order to encourage use, and that distribution would be adapted based on any ongoing events. Ms. Lousteau noted that vehicles for bike distribution would not always be able to access sites during events, due to potential traffic issues or road closures.

Ms. Jenna Burke echoed previous comments, particularly the need for a transportation study, and expressed concern with bike safety and the use of bike lanes. Messrs. Musso and Blanda also voiced safety concerns, particularly with tourists who are not familiar with New Orleans traffic laws and may be inattentive. Mr. Norton noted that safety has not been a significant issue in other cities with bike share programs. Mr. Blanda asked if there would be any attempt to enforce traffic laws; Mr. Norton stated that they would work with NOPD.

I. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, December 07, 2016 VCC meeting.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, December 07, 2016 meeting. The motion, seconded by Mr. Blanda, passed unanimously.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Architectural Committee and Commission attendance records for 2016. 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 2:30 PM.