

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

Mitchell J. Landrieu
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
DIRECTOR

Minutes of the **Vieux Carré Commission** meeting of **Wednesday, May 3rd, 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
- 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; Melissa Quigley, Assistant City Attorney;
- STAFF ABSENT:** Erika Gates, Inspector; Tony Whitfield, Inspector;
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Gail Cavett, Brittany McGovern, Meg Lousteau, Susan Guillot, Mary Hewes, Dwight Norton, John Williams, Lacey Wotring, Aubrey Keady-Molanphy, Richard Choate

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.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Blanda moved, Mr. Taylor seconded, that the minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of April 5th, 2017 be approved as previously circulated. The motion passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Musso gave a brief presentation regarding the City's bike share program, noting that the bikes themselves were sophisticated and worked fairly autonomously. Regarding the kiosks and the prototype kiosk that had been installed, Mr. Musso noted that the prototype lacked the vertical kiosk which would be a venue for advertising.

Mr. Musso continued that the proposed program included 24 bicycles per station with 36 stations in the Vieux Carré alone. Mr. Musso recommended 15 stations, all located on the perimeter of the neighborhood adjacent to primary traffic corridors. Mr. Musso continued that this could be accomplished in a way that there would be no point more than 3 blocks from a station. Mr. Musso encouraged the overall proposal to help out residents by providing public bike corrals. Mr. Musso stated that he wanted the bike program to reduce traffic but not become a dominant feature of the neighborhood and that there had been talk of eliminating the kiosk entirely. Mr. Musso concluded that the more input there is the better and that there seems to be a rush to do this and doesn't feel the process needs to be rushed.

Ms. Cavett expressed concern regarding the precedence the bike stations may set, the placement of advertising on the streets, and a commercial enterprise establishing itself on the streets. Ms. Cavett noted that North Rampart Main Street, Inc. was opposed to the use of bike kiosks on the interior of the Vieux Carré but that that organization does support the installation of public bike corrals on the interior of the neighborhood.

Ms. McGovern noted that the French Quarter Business Association was opposed to bike shares in the interior of the neighborhood noting that the program represented competition to local bike rental businesses. Ms. Govern also requested that business owners be informed when a stall is to be located in front of their property.

Ms. Lousteau, representing VCPORA, noted that her association objected to any advertising on the bike corrals but that they did support the installation of public bike corrals. Ms. Lousteau stated concern that the kiosks would essentially function as vertical billboards.

Ms. Guillot, representing French Quarter Citizens, stated that her association opposed bike shares with advertising anywhere in the French Quarter but did support public bike corrals.

Ms. Hewes noted that the French Quarter Management District voted in opposition of the proposal.

Mr. Musso stated that no one was categorically against the plan but that they want to make it work.

Mr. Norton noted that the bike share program is a transportation system and not a touring/rental system and compared it to the difference between renting a car and taking a taxi. Mr. Norton stated that the program functions differently than a bike a rental and that the advertising would conform to existing regulations and that there would be no third party sponsored stations advertising themselves.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Block gave the following comments:

As you are likely aware, a major Bourbon Street reconstruction project is currently underway. This project will include removal of the existing paving, replacement of subsurface utilities and sidewalk repair between Canal Street and Dumaine. The work is being sequenced so that only two blocks are under construction at a time. This is an infrastructure upgrade only and is not related to any potential traffic reconfiguration.

V. NEW BUSINESS

626 Bourbon St: John C. Williams, applicant; Grace T Granger LLC, owner; Proposal to modify previously-altered front elevation of yellow rated building, removing existing openings and lowering the floor level to grade, per application & materials received 02/24/17 & 04/26/17.

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Mr. Williams and Ms. Wotring on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso noted that the existing condition is atypical and would not set a precedent for other projects. He stated that both options moved forward to the Commission because either approach is viable. Mr. Williams then passed out a packet to the Commissioners, which had not been submitted to staff for prior review.

Mr. Blanda stated that the stoop should be removed in order to clear the public way, as it is currently an obstacle. Mr. Fifield argued that retaining the stoop would show the previous history of Bourbon street, and that demolishing it would remove evidence of different periods of time and previous residential use. He stated that it could be reworked to be retained as long as it could meet Fire Marshall requirements. Mr. Musso agreed that it could be kept with minimal modifications.

Ms. Wotring stated that the owner wishes to remove the steps, and that it was only submitted as an option at the request of the Committee.

Mr. Taylor moved to **conceptually approve** both options as recommended by staff. Ms. Stokes seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Musso requested that Mr. Williams provide documentation of Fire Marshall requirements.

926 Chartres St: John C. Williams, applicant; Chartres Empire, LLC, owner; Proposal to construct a gallery on the Chartres elevation and to renovate and partially demolish the brown-rated rear building to accommodate the creation of two new residential units, per application & materials received 03/14/17 & 04/19/17, respectively.

Mr. Albrecht gave the staff presentation with Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Blanda commented that he likes the plans as presented and noted that it adds two additional residential units to the neighborhood.

Mr. Taylor moved for **approval** of the application consistent with the staff recommendation. Mr. Fifield seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. APPEALS AND VIOLATIONS

320 Decatur St: Jill Shingledecker, applicant; The New Hotel Monteleone Inc, owner; Appeal to retain uplighting installed without benefit of VCC review and approval, per application & materials received 01/05/17. **[Notice of Violation sent 10/26/16]**

Ms. Vogt presented the staff report with Mr. Choate present on behalf of the application. Mr. Musso noted that there is not a lot of existing illumination on the sidewalk, and that some compromise could be reached. Mr. Fifield stated that the Design Guidelines do not allow the existing fixtures, and that the owner should be required to light the sidewalk. Mr. Musso stated that a compromise could be considered if a new lighting package were proposed.

Mr. Choate stated that there has been uplighting in this location for twenty-five years; he agreed that the existing lamping is too bright but that the owner is willing to alter the lights and add additional sidewalk illumination. He also agreed to paint the fixtures to match the building and minimize their appearance. Mr. Musso requested a comprehensive lighting proposal, including new lamping and sidewalk lights. Mr. Block asked the Commission to require smaller fixtures if they found the uplighting to be retainable.

Mr. Taylor stated that the uplighting has been existing in this location long enough, but that the fixtures and lamping could change, and could be handled at staff level, as well as additional sidewalk lighting. Mr. Musso stated that the revised proposal should be reviewed by the Architectural Committee.

Mr. Taylor moved to approve the retention of the uplighting in concept, with new fixtures and lamping to be within Design Guidelines, and that a complete lighting package be submitted for further review. Mr. Blanda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

725 Iberville St: Avery Foret, applicant; 730 Rue Bienville, LLC, owner; Appeal of Architectural Committee vote of approval with proviso of the proposal to retain drop awnings installed without benefit of VCC review or approval, per application & letter of appeal received 02/03/17 & 04/25/17, respectively. **[Notice of Violation sent 08/16/16]**

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

720-30 Bienville St: Avery Foret, applicant; 730 Rue Bienville, LLC, owner; Appeal of Architectural Committee vote of denial of the proposal to retain signage and lighting, per application & letter of appeal received 11/18/16 & 04/25/17, respectively. **[Notice of Violation sent 05/10/16]**

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

VII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, April 5, 2017 VCC meeting.

Mr. Taylor moved to ratify the Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, April 5th, 2017 meeting. The motion, seconded Ms. Stokes, passed unanimously.

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