

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION

LaToya Cantrell
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
DIRECTOR

NOTE: The below minutes are a summary of actions taken. They are not a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Minutes of the Vieux Carré Commission meeting of Wednesday, March 22, 2023–1:00 pm.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Stephen Bergeron, Toni DiMaggio, Gabriel Virdure, Robert Pearson, Heather Veneziano

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Angela King, LaVerne Toombs, Julio Guichard

STAFF PRESENT: Bryan Block, Director; Renee Bourgogne, Deputy Director; Erin Vogt, Senior Building Plans Examiner; Tommie Milliner, Deputy City Attorney; Nora Goddard, Inspector

STAFF ABSENT: Nicholas Albrecht, Senior Building Plans Examiner; Marguerite Roberts, Senior Building Inspector

OTHERS PRESENT: Katherine Harmon, John Williams

I. ROLL CALL

Commissioner Bergeron called the meeting to order at approximately 1:08 pm and Mr. Block called the roll. Mr. Bergeron, Ms. DiMaggio, Ms. Virdure, Mr. Pearson, and Ms. Veneziano were present, constituting a quorum.

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES

Mr. Pearson moved to accept the December 2022 and January 2023 minutes as distributed by staff in advance of the meeting. Ms. Veneziano seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commissioner Bergeron stated that he had no report, but took the opportunity to remind everyone that the Committee and Commission meetings use Robert's Rules of Order, and that all speakers must be recognized by the Chair, and that all actions must be orderly and productive.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Block introduced newly hired inspector, Nora Goddard, and presented updates on Madame John's Legacy and the ongoing 5G equipment installation. *See attached report.*

Ms. Virdure asked how the 5G equipment was typically permitted, was it flagged for VCC review? Mr. Block responded that the VCC made non-binding recommendations since it had an impact on the *tout ensemble*. He explained that LAMA, the permitting system used by the City, the VCC and HDLC have boxes to click off as recommended or not recommended. He stated that final approval was handled by the Department of Public Works, but that they did take recommendations seriously.

Ms. Bourgogne added that staff would be working with the Law Department on establishing review Guidelines for the installation of historic plaques, stating that the process had previously been handled by a now-nonexistent Landmarks Commission. Mr. Milliner explained that this issue was raised as part of a previous application and that there were first amendment concerns regarding the content of the plaques, but that the process could be set up so an applicant could apply, the VCC would decide if the application had significant merit, and then design the plaque. The plaque would then be the VCC's plaque, not the owner's, which would then allow for the content to be vetted. Ms. Bourgogne noted that staff was looking at how this was handled by other cities and at various levels of government review, and what their review criteria was, how they handled fees, fabrication, etc. Ms. DiMaggio asked what the timeframe would be for this to be implemented; Ms. Bourgogne responded that they hoped to have it addressed in the next couple of months, and that staff had gotten some pushback from the public. Ms. DiMaggio asked if this was regarding the delay; Ms. Bourgogne answered that the issue was that the VCC currently had no Guidelines or criteria for this type of review, since this was not previously under the VCC's jurisdiction.

V. NEW BUSINESS

500-40 St Peter St: 21-04902-VCGEN; Kidder Blake, applicant; El Churasco Chapin LLC, owner; For recommendation only: Proposal to install thirty rooftop and wall mounted intake vents of various sizes to ventilate attic and stairwells, per application & materials received 02/23/2021 & 02/13/2023, respectively.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Documents.aspx?ObjLabel=Permit&ID=873987>

This item was not heard, as a quorum would be lost when Ms. Viridure recused herself.

518 St Peter St: 23-04318-VCGEN; 518 St Peter St: Hodgins Julia, applicant; The City of New Orleans, owner; For recommendation only: Proposal to install new mechanical equipment in courtyard, per application & materials received 02/13/2023.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Documents.aspx?ObjLabel=Permit&ID=962321>

This item was not heard, as a quorum would be lost when Ms. Viridure recused herself.

422 Chartres St: 23-01121-VCGEN; Loretta Harmon, applicant; C E R Realty, Fernando E Palomenque, Fernando E Palomeque, owner; Proposal to install four skylights on flat roof, per application & materials received 01/12/2023.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Documents.aspx?ObjLabel=Permit&ID=959085>

Ms. Vogt read the staff report with Ms. Harmon present on behalf of the application. Ms. Harmon stated that she agreed with the report and was already revising the drawings to provide a detailed plan. She added that she had now been on the roof to document the conditions. Ms. Viridure moved for **approval** with final drawings to be provided for review at staff level. Ms. DiMaggio seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VI. CHANGE OF USE HEARINGS

730 St Peter St: 22-35393-VCGEN; John C Williams, applicant; St Peter FQ Holdings LLC, owner; Proposal to demolish courtyard structures, modify millwork, install mechanical equipment, and modify roof to connect the front and rear structures, in conjunction with a **change of use** from *vacant* to *restaurant (standard)*, & *cultural facility*, per application & materials received 11/30/2022 & 02/14/2023, respectively.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Documents.aspx?ObjLabel=Permit&ID=955033>

Ms. Vogt read the staff report with Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated that he appreciated the cooperation with staff and the City, and that he thought the project would be a huge win for the Quarter and the city, as it would allow Preservation Hall to train young students on site with master musicians. He also appreciated staff's recommendation to waive the 30-day layover for the demolition of the small, non-historic courtyard structures. Mr. Williams added that he was working closely with Nick Kindel and Ashley Becnel from Zoning, and with the City Planning Commission, and he did not expect any zoning changes to be required. He stated that he expected all issues to be resolved by the next meeting, but appreciated moving the architectural review forward.

Ms. DiMaggio asked staff about the change of use, and their recommendation for deferral vs. approval. Ms. Vogt responded that it was a matter of public notice, as Zoning was still trying to determine what the use would be, but that staff did not want to delay bringing the architectural concerns to the Commission. Ms. Bourgogne also noted that staff was recommending conceptual approval of the architectural aspects of the proposal, but with a proviso that it would be contingent on receiving approval from all agencies. Mr. Block added that it was staff's position that the demolition of the small, anachronistic buildings was not related to use. He added that there were still discussions ongoing regarding whether or not an open space waiver would be required, and asked that a caveat to that effect be included in the Commission's motion.

Ms. DiMaggio moved for **conceptual approval** of the overall work, with the proviso that the motion was contingent on approval and/or necessary waivers from all other overseeing agencies. She further moved for **deferral** of the change of use, and for a waiver of the 30-day layover requirement for demolition of the anachronistic courtyard structures. Ms. Viridure seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VII. APPEALS AND VIOLATIONS

625 Dauphine St: 21-33678-VCGEN; Kirk Garrett, applicant; 625 Dauphine Street LLC, owner; Appeal of Architecture Committee denial of proposal to retain gas lights and other lighting installed without benefit of VCC review or approval, per application & materials received 12/09/2021 & 10/05/2022, respectively.

<https://onestopapp.nola.gov/Documents.aspx?ObjLabel=Permit&ID=909250>

The applicant requested deferral of this item prior to the meeting.

905 Royal St: 23-04489-VCPNT; Nine O Five Royal, applicant; Nine O Five Apt House Hotel Inc, owner; Seeking a hardship regarding current violations with proposal to not address violations under current ownership with the property currently for sale, per application received 02/23/2023.

The applicant requested deferral of this item prior to the meeting.

VIII. RATIFICATION of Architectural Committee and Staff actions since the Wednesday, January 18, 2023 VCC meeting.

Ms. Veneziano moved for ratification. Mr. Pearson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

With no business left to discuss, Ms. Viridure moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:46pm. Ms. DiMaggio seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Director's Report

3-22-2023

Madame John's Legacy Update:

On 3/13/23 I was able to attend the LSM board meeting where the following items were discussed and approved:

- As per the consultant, Larry Wilson's report, MJL has never been brought up to its full historic potential. LSM needs to decide what is the "story" that needs to be told.
- Fortunately, none of the work on the building to date has damaged the historic integrity of the building.
- The original contract required a historic preservation consultant. Ladd was that individual but there was not another put in place after his death.
- Board Architecture Committee request that Mr. Wilson be hired as that consultant as he is up and running already which would be most efficient.
- A Historic Structures Report must be compiled.
 - About 60% of the material required for HSR already in place
 - Should take about 6 mos
- Historic structural engineer with specialization on historic timber frame construction should be engaged.
- Masonry wall at the street needs to be demolished.
 - Poorly built
 - Opportunity to engage archaeology study once removed
 - Will help to understand if there originally was a wall in that location
- The AC is of the opinion that the building should be interpreted to 1788
- Potentially should change name from MJL since that is a result of a 19th century story and not actually relevant to an 18th c interpretation
- Option 3 in the report allows for work to be done that does not entirely return to 1788 but could lead to full restoration

Motions were made to:

- find financial resources up to \$50k to hire Mr. Wilson or another professional for rest of the project- approved
- hire historic structural engineer (\$30k)- approved
- compile historic structures report (\$100k)- approved

5G Installation Update

- Over a two-day period I personally walked the entire FQ with a map showing the locations of all permitted locations as well as locations of all applications yet to be approved.

- Following this field audit I verified everything in LAMA and was able to determine that there are several locations where poles have been installed in deviation of approved locations, installed with only a street-cut permit, in deviation of approved guidelines (close proximity to other poles, locations in lieu of historic lamps resulting in a net gain of poles).
- There are several locations where permits were issued for poles that deviate from guidelines as mentioned above but have yet to be installed. As these permits have expired for lack of work within 6 months I have requested that these permits not be renewed.
- We have developed more rigorous protocols for review of new applications with better mapping of other extant permits/applications to avoid some of this in the future.