



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING MINUTES

July 27, 2022 at 6:30 PM in Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Boyer called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Todd Boyer (chair), Jim Cron, Jamie Davis, Tim Dawson, Christine Iman, Ronald Price (vice-chair)

Absent: John Rucker

Also present: Taylor Brill (Village Planner)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Price motioned to approve the Design Review Board-Regular Meeting- June 29, 2022, seconded by Mr. Cron. 3 yeas, 3 abstentions from Mr. Boyer, Mr. Dawson, and Ms. Davis.

COMMUNICATION

Planning & Zoning- Ms. Brill

Ms. Brill updated the board on the Uptown Master Plan and stated that the Village has hired a consultant to provide some preliminary concepts. The steering committee will be going over several of those concepts on August 1st. She encouraged the board, if they have any comments or questions, to reach out to her.

OLD BUSINESS

COA-22-11: 114 W Main St; Certificate of Appropriateness; Façade Renovations & Addition

Mr. Boyer asked Ms. Brill to give some background on this application. Ms. Brill informed the board that this had been previously tabled at the June 29, 2022 meeting due to a request for more information and details. She stated that the applicant has made some modifications to their proposal, specifically in regards to the elevator addition which includes adding a second and third floor balcony.

Mr. Boyer asked Ms. Brill to clarify which components of COA-22-11 had been previously approved at last month's meeting. Ms. Brill answered that the addition portion had been tabled but the window and door replacement portion had been approved. Mr. Boyer thanked Ms. Brill for the clarification.

Mr. Boyer swore in all persons present that wished to speak in relation to the application. Tim Dawson, Bryan Hunt, Chris Kerr, Rayce Robinson, Steve Stroh, and Karl Walter were all sworn in for public hearing.

Mr. Kerr spoke first on behalf of the application. He gave a brief background of the application and stated that he, and the other property owners for this building, hope to provide for the betterment of Plain City by repairing the McCune building. Mr. Kerr gave a presentation that highlighted several different points of the Plain City Comprehensive Plan and how their application meets those objectives. He states that this forms the foundation for why their application should be approved. He thanked the board for their time.

Mr. Stroh, the architect on the project, addressed the board in regards to comments from the previous meeting about building the elevator inside the existing structure. He presented the board members with physical copies of a diagram illustrating his points. Mr. Stroh, as indicated on the diagram, explained that there is very little buildable area within the existing structure given the type of foundation and condition of the walls. The buildable area that is available is smaller than the footprint required by the elevator shaft. He cited this as why they could not place the elevator shaft within the existing building.

Mr. Walter, from Jack D. Walters & Associates Inc. and the structural engineer on the project, spoke to the board in regards to the structural assessment he performed on the building. He asked the board if they had any questions regarding what Mr. Stroh presented, they responded that they did not. He explained that several of the walls, with the Main Street facing wall being the most severe, have pulled away from the rest of the building. He stated that given the way these buildings were made in the era, this is not uncommon and is repairable, but ultimately shows the poor condition of the walls. Mr. Walter said that this is why he advised not placing the elevator shaft within the building, doing so could result in too much potential damage. He also spoke to the poor condition of the brick and how it could be adversely affected by elevator shaft construction if it took place inside the building.

Ms. Iman asked if the vibrations from the proposed elevator addition would adversely affect the current building at all. Mr. Walter answered that, as shown in the site plan that Mr. Stroh submitted, having the elevator shaft five to six feet away and not inside the building would minimize the impact of vibrations. He also stated that if the elevator shaft was placed inside the building, an entire wall would have to be removed in order to allow for digging equipment to enter and perform the necessary work. Placing the elevator shaft outside of the building prevents that potential damage that could be incurred. Ms. Iman asked if, in Mr. Walter's opinion, any of the construction that is being considered would damage the building. Mr. Walter replied that it would not since the elevator shaft work would be taking place five to six feet away from the building. Ms. Iman asked about the addition that would be directly adjacent to the building. Mr. Walter answered that would consist of a shallow foundation which would not negatively impact the current structure. It would involve only digging two feet instead of the required six to seven feet that the elevator shaft will require.

Mr. Dawson asked if the elevator equipment room could be moved elsewhere in the building since it would only require a shallow foundation. Mr. Walter stated that he would have to defer

to Mr. Stroh for that question. Mr. Stroh answered that the mechanical room has to be adjacent to the shaft since it is a hydraulic elevator. Mr. Dawson asked if the elevator shaft could be placed somewhere inside the building. Mr. Walter replied that since the footing foundation for the shaft would be seven feet deep, he does not advise placing the elevator shaft within the building due to the amount of construction it would take and potential damage that could occur.

Mr. Price asked Mr. Walter, if an elevator were not pursued at all, what would it take to make the building structurally sound. Mr. Walter answered that they are going to place horizontal ties, floor stabilizers, and wall stabilizers to correct existing issues. He did acknowledge that those solutions only address the current structural problems and not any problems that could arise from excavation. Mr. Price asked how that would be corrected, if necessary. Mr. Walter said that, in his opinion, it couldn't be corrected given the type of foundation in this building.

Mr. Stroh showed the board the revised site plan that gives a two-foot easement on the side and rear of the addition. It also includes a second and third story balcony that had originally been considered by the property owners and Mr. Stroh. He stated that, although the balconies were considered a viable option originally, the owners decided to go with the alternate site plan that did not include the balconies. That proposal is what was submitted to the board at the previous meeting. He stated that since the addition is a new construction, it has to comply with all relevant building codes which necessitate fire compliant stairs, ADA-compliant entryways, and ADA-compliant bathrooms. Mr. Stroh said that these are all reasons to put the elevator addition at the rear and slightly offset to the main building so as not to further change the existing structure. Mr. Stroh spoke to the points laid out by the Department of the Interior's guideline for historic building renovations. He stated that the submitted proposal meets each point and adheres to the overall character of the guidelines.

Mr. Cron inquired if the elevator addition would result in less or more space than is currently available to Mr. James' building in the rear. Mr. Stroh replied that with the exception of the 150 square foot addition, the space will remain the same. No boundaries will be crossed nor will Mr. James' property be touched. Mr. Kerr also stated that they met with Mr. James on Monday and that Mr. James was fine with the two-foot space. Mr. Dawson said that he has also spoken to Mr. James recently and that Mr. James is not completely fine with the proposal but does not want to be caught in the middle of the applicant's proposal. Mr. Dawson stated that he does not feel two feet is adequate access for Mr. James. Mr. Cron asked Mr. Stroh if the space available to Mr. James would change from what is currently available. Mr. Stroh and Mr. Kerr responded that it would not change and illustrated such on the site plan.

Ms. Davis stated that she is not a proponent of the flat roof on the elevator addition and has seen drainage issues in the past with flat roofs on other structures. She inquired how drainage will work on the addition. Mr. Stroh replied that it would have slightly more slope than the standard $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " slope per foot. He said that this would allow it to drain down piping that would extend downward along the building and then tie in to the underground storm water system. Mr. Stroh said that he does not envision this type of drainage posing any problems. He also stated that the electrical panels will be situated on the building in a way that would hide them from public view.

Mr. Stroh stated that all proper regulations and procedures would be followed to make sure any existing sewer lines would not be damaged. He explained how sleeves are placed over existing lines to prevent damage during construction or additions. Mr. Stroh asked Mr. Dawson if he knew the current elevation of the sewer line. Mr. Dawson replied that he does not know but that it is composed of clay tile. Mr. Stroh advised that it may be a good time to replace that portion of exposed clay tile sewer line with PVC and that a sleeve through the foundation of the addition would be installed as well as the proper footings.

Mr. Dawson stated that he is concerned with the demolition of the first-floor area proposed in the addition and the loss of those nearly original bricks. Mr. Stroh said that it will be a very selective demolition process since all the bricks will be saved for masonry repairs on other parts of the building. He said that it will be more time consuming than regular demolition since bricks will be hand-picked while removing that area.

Mr. Robinson spoke about the brick removal and reiterated that the bricks will be physically removed by hand and stored in a nearby property where they will be cleaned and restored as much as possible for future use on repairs on the McCune building. He said that it is a very delicate process.

Mr. Boyer opened the public comment section for the application.

Mr. Hunt spoke first on behalf of Mr. Dawson from an individual capacity and not as a board member. He spoke about the nature of a Certificate of Appropriateness as it is laid out in the Plain City Codified Ordinances and how it relates to this application. He stated that materials that would be used in the addition are not natural, traditional materials and are more generally associated with contemporary building designs. Mr. Hunt said that the black color of the addition would not match the original building nor match other historic buildings in the area. He informed the board that the addition is modernizing the property which goes against the outlines in the code. He believes that, given the testimony already heard this evening, relocation of the elevator shaft and related components is not impossible, it's just not recommended or financially desired. Mr. Hunt said that when the alley was vacated, there had been an agreement between all adjoining property owners to keep that area clear. He stated that, now to his own detriment, Mr. Dawson has performed property improvements that would be damaged or destroyed if the application is approved. Mr. Dawson would pursue appropriate legal action, if necessary. Mr. Hunt also believes that public access and service access would be restricted as well as neighboring property devaluation if the application is approved. He recommends denial of the application.

Eric Medici, a property owner whose building is across Main Street opposite of the applicant's building, spoke on behalf of himself and Mark Troyer, an adjacent property owner. He is strongly in favor of the proposed addition and feels that it is being done appropriately and with tactfulness. He believes that the intent of the guidelines is being followed and that if the elevator shaft were placed inside the building it would irreparably change the entire aesthetic and properties of the building, negating the historical value. An elevator shaft inside the building would not be something that could be undone. He also feels that during his six years of serving on the Design Review Board he has never seen a cleaner or more complete application.

He believes that the applicant has gone above and beyond to try to appease adjacent property owners. Mr. Medici does not believe that placing the elevator inside the building would allow for enough usable space elsewhere, it would significantly inhibit hallway space and retail space. Mr. Medici stated that overall, he is in favor of this application as submitted.

Mr. Kerr spoke to section 1327.08(J) of the Plain City Code and how he believes that placing the elevator inside the building would violate that portion of the code. He also stated that, although he does not believe this pertains to the Design Review Board's purview, he spoke to the previous owner of the building, Mr. Houchard, about the verbal agreement regarding building in the alleyway. He stated that Mr. Houchard said that there was no such agreement as he recalls. He also spoke to Mr. James on Monday and that he did not recall having a verbal agreement either.

Mr. Stroh reminded the board that the materials and colors proposed in the application have been previously approved by this same board. He also informed the board that when the Village vacated the alleyway, there were no conditions of easements or setbacks. Mr. Stroh believes that there has been a precedent set with building into the alleyway in regards to the exterior stairs on Mr. Dawson's property. Mr. Dawson stated that those stairs have always existed in that placement.

Mr. Boyer closed public comment on the application at 7:23pm.

Mr. Cron informed the rest of the board members about previous approvals by this board that have allowed modernization and repairs to other similar buildings. He said that since there are not masons available that are as skilled as those that built the McCune building, he is in favor of whatever it takes to preserve the building. As a member of the Plain City Historical Society, he is in favor of the application and its proposals to save materials and preserve history.

Mr. Boyer asked Ms. Davis if she had any comments. She replied that she does not at the moment.

Mr. Boyer asked Ms. Iman if she had any comments. She responded that she does not. She did state that part of the reasoning behind tabling the application until this meeting was to hear Mr. Boyer's input and opinion since he was not present at the previous meeting.

Mr. Boyer asked for Mr. Price's opinion. Mr. Price stated that his main concern is having the footprint changed and losing one side of the building to the addition. He had hoped to have a footprint in which no addition would be viewable from the street sidewalk.

Mr. Boyer acknowledged the previous meeting minutes and that it looks like great discussion took place. He feels that the impact to the building is significant but that in making it as accessible as possible allows it to be viable and relevant now and in the future. He believes that the elevator being placed internally is the best solution as far as the Design Review Board is concerned however he understands that there are significant obstacles to doing that including financial, structural integrity, and usability of the leftover space. He would like to see a further decrease in the viewability of the addition from the street. The flat roof is a positive step in that direction he believes. Mr. Boyer stated that he would like to not be able to see the mechanical

units either and would like additional assurances from the applicant that they would not be placed along Chillicothe Street. He feels that this application meets all the guidelines outlined by the Secretary of State but would like to see more exploration in certain design aspects. He cites that with the addition of Mr. Dawson's patio area on the Grainery, the alleyway has become more of a public space and as such, places the elevator addition more in the public view. Mr. Boyer does not prefer the balcony option. He would like to see more design options for the addition. He ideally prefers that the entryway does not bump out into the alleyway at all. He inquired about lighting options for the entryway and wants to make sure that the lighting does not negatively alter the pedestrian experience in the alleyway.

Ms. Davis stated that she had also been concerned about lighting but assumed it had been previously discussed at last month's meeting when she was not present.

Mr. Boyer asked the applicant if moving the elevator machinery is possible, in regards to Mr. Price's earlier question. He asked if the elevator equipment room could be switched with the stairway. Mr. Stroh replied that it would not be possible due to an excess of spacing between the machinery and the elevator shaft. He also wanted the entryway to be extended into the alleyway for visitors to be able to plainly view the entrance.

Mr. Kerr asked the board if the mechanical room and stairs are switched, would the board members be more amenable to that proposal. Mr. Price responded that he would be if it meant not having the addition extend into the alleyway. His primary concern is not having the addition change the existing footprint, he would like to have the current footprint remain the same. He understands that would impact how people, who are looking for the entrance, may have a harder time doing so.

Mr. Kerr stated that he is concerned that board members are attempting to appease one property owner and that is jeopardizing the accessibility of the McCune building. Mr. Price does not believe that is accurate and that Mr. Dawson's properties are not his concerns. He is only concerned with the existing footprint changing. Ms. Iman is also concerned with the changing footprint and would like to see it remain the same.

Ms. Davis asked the applicant what percentage of the building is being changed. Mr. Stroh replied that, although he is not completely confident of the following number, he believes roughly 12% to 15% of the perimeter wall is being changed. Mr. Kerr acknowledged that they are trying to preserve the rear space in an effort to be a good neighbor to the adjacent property owner, Mr. James.

Mr. Boyer asked the applicant if they are open to exploring options that would remove the addition from extending into the alleyway. Mr. Stroh asked, for clarification, if the addition were to be removed would the board be fine with a canopy or some type of entrance marker to be installed. Ms. Iman said she would be fine with that change. She also asked about different designs that would make black an accent color and not the primary color. Mr. Boyer commented on the elevation plans without the balconies and how there are key transition points that allow for an appropriate change of color and types of materials.

Mr. Boyer asked Mr. Stroh if they would like the board to vote or if they would prefer to table it until next month. The applicant asked for a brief moment to talk amongst themselves.

Mr. Robinson stated that if they moved any part of the addition, they risk not having adequate access on the second and third floor in regards to bathrooms and Mr. James balcony. Mr. Robinson informed the board that he believes that with the accompanying experts, their testimony, previous board approvals, guidelines that have been met, as well as the applicant's intent, that he would like the board to vote on the application as submitted. That would include the proposal without the second and third story balcony.

Mr. Hunt asked for clarification in regards to the balconies, if they would exist or not. Mr. Robinson stated that it would not include the balconies in an effort to respect the spacing in the alleyway.

Mr. Cron asked Ms. Brill and Mr. Boyer, if the application is approved, would the applicant need to come back to this board for approval on entryway lighting. Mr. Boyer and Ms. Brill replied that they would not need to unless it is a type of lighting fixture that substantially alters the character of the area. Ms. Brill also stated that small directional signage would also not need board approval but a large company sign would need approval.

Mr. Price asked if the mechanical room and stairway could be switched. Mr. Robinson stated that, per Mr. Walter's testimony, it's not recommended to do so since construction could cause additional damage to either the applicant's building or Mr. James' building.

Ms. Davis asked if the board doesn't approve the application, what would the ultimate outcome be. Mr. Boyer responded that the applicant could appeal their decision, they could come back with a different proposal, or could abandon the entire project. Mr. Robinson informed the board that he truly believes the submitted proposal is the best option and tabling or denying the application is not a viable option.

Mr. Boyer addressed the board members and reminded them that if a motion is made, it is done so in the affirmative.

Mr. Price motioned to approve application COA-22-11, seconded by Ms. Iman. 5 yeas, 1 abstention from Mr. Dawson.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.