

**BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
Town Hall Council Chambers
Regular Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Board of Architectural Review of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on September 9, 2020, in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Angela Toler, Chairman
Gary Vaughan, Vice Chairman
Andrea White
Lauren Runyan

Absent: Nancy Lehew

Staff: Timothy L. Wilson, Director of Community Development and Planning
Alfredo Gutierrez Velasquez, Planner I
Connie L. Potter, Executive Assistant

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Toler called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

MINUTES:

- July 14, 2020

Ms. White moved, seconded by Ms. Runyan to approve the meeting minutes as written.

**VOTE: Yes – Toler, Vaughan, White, Runyan
Absent - Lehew**

NEW BUSINESS:

- **FRCOA2208-2020.** Preliminary application review for demolition, renovation, and redevelopment of 131 E. Main Street for apartments and ground floor public access/retail market space.

Alfredo Gutierrez Velasquez explained that the application was for a preliminary review for 131 E. Main Street, which was the “Murphy Theatre Building”. BAR review has been requested by SEESUU LLC, Gary Wayland proposing the demolition and reconstruction of the majority of the existing building to a mixed apartment and retail use. No formal action was required at this meeting. This meeting was to provide information to the Board of the proposed project and receive their input.

Bill Barnett said that Gary Wayland is the owner of the building and he is working with Mr. Wayland in the development of the building.

The Murphy Theater Building is a fascinating building with a long history which includes being repurposed every less than twenty (20) years since it was built. It is one of the most prominent examples of historic adaptive reuse. It was constructed as the Front Royal Episcopal Methodist Church in 1879 to replace the previous wood structure. The front part of the building where the DL Coffee Shop is currently located was added to the original church structure and in 1908 it became the Murphy Theater. Less than 20 years later it became a Vaudeville theater and they built the prop tower made of clay blocks. In the 50s they added additional rooms on the back of the theater. There have not been any functional businesses down the Church Street portion of the building in some years. Mr. Barnett stated that this building was grossly underutilized.

Mr. Barnett explained that their vision is to have all retail down the Church Street side of the building either entering from Church Street or into a common lobby entrance and going down through the middle of the stores or both.

Ms. Runyan asked if the applicant will have to apply for a rezoning.

Tim Wilson said that the applicant does not need a rezoning, however a Special Use Permit is required because of the proposed apartment use.

Mr. Barnett said the building currently has apartments in the rear of the building on two levels. All the additions are made out of freight containers. There is a company in Front Royal that does not disclose their location because they manufacture freight containers for the military for living quarters. The freight containers are an efficient way to repurpose the building. They are looking to create workforce housing, create startup housing and because it will have approximately three (3) elevators in it they are looking to have an alternative for the elderly in Front Royal and Warren County. Something between a single-family home and assisted living. Currently we are losing the senior population to Strasburg, Lake Frederick, Stephens City, and other locations because we do not provide that type of housing here in Front Royal. They would also like to create customers for Downtown Front Royal and add to the quality of life.

Mr. Barnett showed BAR members the proposed look of the building. In restoring historic structures in the past, he has always tried to follow the architectural practices of making the additions not pretend to be the old thing. They would like the building to be energy efficient, have common areas and have a fully staffed 24-hour lobby.

Mr. Wayland mentioned they are thinking 60-80 units with some possibly being office space and other things.

BAR members expressed concern with the lack of available parking.

Mr. Barnett noted that Main Street properties are exempt from parking requirements.

BAR members continued to express concern for the parking, however they agreed that parking requirements were not in their purview.

Mr. Velasquez reiterated that properties facing Main Street are exempt from parking requirements regardless of the use.

Mr. Barnett said he was prepared to address the parking issue.

BAR members also expressed concern that a 70-foot front to back building could be overwhelming and this would also put the tiny church building in a box.

Mr. Barnett said there would be windows and doors on the side that faces Church Street.

BAR members said they would like to see storefront's facing Church Street and they did not have a problem with the contemporary look of the new proposed portion of the building.

Chairman Toler stated that for the most part the Board agrees with the proposed plan. They are good with the general concept but might require some design tweaks. They feel strongly that the new section of the building should not match the old section.

Mr. Barnett said they would like to know what the BAR would like to see as far as texture, etc. These buildings will be around for a long time and people can easily change the colors. He mentioned they did not want to decrease the number of units because it would decrease the income and noted this would be a very expensive project.

BAR members agreed they liked the idea of the proposed project and looked forward to it coming to the Board for review.

OLD BUSINESS:

There was no old business.

ADJOURNMENT:

There were no additional comments, and the meeting was adjourned.

Ms. Runyan moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughan to adjourn the meeting.

**VOTE: Yes – Runyan, White, Vaughan, Toler
Absent - Lehw**

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Connie L. Potter
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Executive Assistant