

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

The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com.

A regular meeting of the Board of Architectural Review of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on December 13, 2022, in the Town Hall East Conference Room.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Waters called the Board of Architectural Review meeting to order at 7:02 p.m..

ROLL CALL

Present: Collin Waters, Chairman
Holly Rhodenhizer, Vice Chairman
Gary Vaughan
Angela Toler
Katherine Snyder

Staff Present: Lauren Kopishke, Director of Planning & Zoning
John Ware, Deputy Zoning Administrator
Connie L. Potter, Clerk for the Board of Architectural Review

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November 8, 2022, Regular Meeting.

Vice Chairman Rhodenhizer moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughan to approve the minutes of November 8, 2022.

VOTE: Yes – Waters, Rhodenhizer, Vaughan, Toler, Snyder
No – N/A
Abstain – N/A
Absent – N/A

VOICE VOTE

PUBLIC HEARING

- **Application # 2200483 – SEESUU, LLC.** This is an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish and remove a portion of a contributing structure on a property within the Town of Front Royal Historic District located at 131 E. Main Street. The property is zoned C-2, Downtown Business District, and is identified as Tax Map 20A7, Section 4, Parcel 37.

Mr. Ware reviewed the application request to demolish and remove a portion of a contributing structure within the Town of Front Royal Historic District located at 131 E. Main Street. The estimated date of construction of this building occurred in 1879 with the building being used as the Front Royal Methodist Church. The building includes three (3) types of masonry construction methods with the rear addition being brick veneer over concrete block. In 1908-1909 additions were added to the core unit of the church in the front and the rear. At this time the church space was converted into a commercial establishment offering stores, post office and a theater. As noted in the Historic Reconnaissance Survey the front addition is one of the most substantial and sophisticated downtown commercial designs. Prior to 1920 the terracotta hollow tile super structure was completed and was probably intended to be fireproof. The ribbing on the sides of the hollow clay tiles provided a gripping surface that aided both in bonding structural clay tile courses and also in bonding plaster or stucco used to cover the tiles on the building interior or exterior. These hollow clay tiles are not hard-fired and do not usually have a glazed, weather-resistant surface. Being exposed to rain and water the tiles will chip, scale, and deteriorate rapidly. The use of hollow clay tiles for construction projects began in the 1850's and began disappearing from common use as architectural components of construction as early as 1930. The tiles were light weight, went up quickly and cost less than other building materials. The tiles were used for their fire resistance, sound, and heat-loss properties. (*Encyclopedia of Building & Environmental Construction, Diagnosis, Maintenance & Repair.*)

Around 1950 the rear brick addition which may be brick veneer over concrete block was added to the structure which was used as apartments.

Mr. Ware presented pictures in a power point presentation showing portions of the clay tile having water intrusion and cracks in the seam on a portion of the building on the side as well as the front of the building.

The application also requests part of the roof to be removed in the center section and replace with like materials. The application request for demolition is for the terracotta block and the brick veneer in the very rear of the building. The demolition does not include the portion of the building where the church was located.

Staff finds the terracotta hollow tiles do not add any significant historical element to the main structure.

The applicant Gary Wayland explained the process he has gone through to get to this point and noted he has been working on this process for 3-4 years. Mr. Wayland said he has met with staff and various Boards on what he might be able to do with the building. He and those he has spoken

with have always expressed concern for parking if the building is made into apartments. When he first obtained the building he fixed the front part of the building where water was leaking in and destroying the inside of the building. His original intent was to have his business located in the building but has moved the business to Luray. Mr. Wayland stated he wants to do the best for the Town and the merchants; however, he needs to know what he can do with the structure.

Chairman Waters asked Mr. Wayland to explain his overall idea of what his vision was for the building and what maintenance has he done to the terracotta portion of the building.

Mr. Wayland said that until he knows what he can do he cannot move decide and move forward. He explained he could install 600 square foot dwelling units with the idea of catering to young professionals and people over 55 that want less maintenance. Have a concierge service to benefit the people living there and the community. If he is able to take the building up to 60' here could have a rooftop viewing area for the public to utilize. Mr. Wayland explained he has not done any maintenance to the terracotta portion of the building.

Chairman Waters asked if Mr. Wayland had brought in a structural engineer.

Mr. Wayland explained he does not want to bring in a structural engineer until he knows what he has the possibility of doing. He noted he is trying to preserve the most important part of the building.

Chairman Waters noted that he believes the terracotta has its own value and that as a Board they have to make sure all efforts have been exhausted to provide restoration vs. demolition to a historically significant structure. He would like to see a structural engineer report or any kind of a cost analysis between restoration vs. demolition.

Mr. Wayland expressed that from his perception the Board is to look at the application and say if it is historically significant and need to make sure it will be standing for the next thirty (30) years. He has to decide how much money he is going to put into the building or sell the building.

Chairman Waters opened the public hearing.

Keith Menefee, Downhome Comfort Bakery owner at 128 E. Main Street said he has family ties to the area and loves the history of Front Royal and Main Street. He wants the structure in the front to be maintained and feels it is still a structurally sound building. Mr. Menefee questioned what material would be used when reconstructing the portion of the building to be demolished. He expressed concern of parking availability if the building is made into apartments and if those apartments are constructed from shipping containers as he has heard was going to be done.

John Vander Wijst, Schewels store manager located at 125 E. Main Street. He expressed concern for the safety and maintenance of the building because their building is located next to the building in question. Mr. Vander Wijst also expressed concern for parking availability and their access to the back lot of his building.

Bill Barnett, 1115 Buck Mountain Road, Bentonville, VA. Mr. Barnett shared he had been working with Mr. Wayland on this project for the past 3-1/2 years and they have gotten nowhere. They have been through a number of town managers, planners, and directors. The building in question is a terracotta building and is empty all the way to the top and is functionally obsolete. He believes there could be something really nice at this location.

Suzanne Silek, 295 W. Main Street stated she was the former owner of 131 E. Main Street in the 1970s and 80s. Ms. Silek mentioned there was a grave still under a portion of the building, specifically “Mrs. Sumption” and possibly other graves. She spoke about the various uses in the building.

Ellen Aders, lives on E. Prospect Street and owns and works at 23 Church Street. The Murphy Theater building has been bringing people in the community together since the 1800s. People have worshiped there, watched a theater show, picked up mail, obtained news, and had lunch and coffee there. Over 100 years later we are still talking about the Murphy Theater building. Stories and history bring communities together and builds civic pride. She does not think that tearing down a portion of the building is the only option. From a website called Livingplaces.com which is a company that has done some historic research made the statement that “the most prominent example of historic adaptive reuse is the former Front Royal Methodist Church at 131 E. Main Street”. Someone outside our community recognizes all the different pieces of the building and the historical significance.

Barbara Samuels, 400 E. Jackson Street. Ms. Samuels expressed that if the door is opened for “train cars” how many other landlords and property owners on Main Street will be allowed to put “train cars” on their property. She is concerned this will set precedence.

Phil Foster, 130 E. Main Street has long family and personal ties to the downtown area. He does not want to see the structure overly changed. He is concerned of the number of units, parking, and aesthetic appeal. Mr. Foster said that Mr. Wayland had a whole lot of vision but no answers to the questions asked at the meeting. He does not want to see something torn down without a guarantee that something will be built back. If making a decision tonight he would like to see the Board either table the application for more information to be provided or vote no.

Lewis Moten, 1132 Kesler Road. Mr. Moten questioned how long it will take to have something built back once a portion of the structure is taken down. He noted he did not want to see “shipping containers” towering over Main Street but would like to see store fronts on the side of the building.

Millie Andrews rents 201 A&B E. Jackson Street where she runs an alteration shop. Ms. Andrews expressed that if the terracotta façade is the problem then why not renovate it if it is failing. As a business owner she expressed concern for the lack of parking.

Nina Thayer, co-owner of C&C Frozen Treats at 409 E. Main Street. As a business owner and owner on Main Street she is concerned on whether or not studies have been done to construct a sixty (60) dwelling unit apartment and can the existing pipes handle that much water and the

electric handle the usage. At 409 E. Main Street they have outages and if the usage on Main Street is going to be increased she is concerned about more outages.

William Huck, 409 E. Main Street and co-owner of C&C Frozen Treats. When renting his building he saw what needed to be done and started fixing it. They were then able to purchase the building and put their hard-earned money back into the building to provide a future for those that come after them. Without a structural engineer saying it needs to come down then it should not come down. At times though he feels a property owner should be able to do what they want to do with their own property. However, what an owner does to the property has to better themselves and the community.

David Silek, 165 Hickerson Hollow Road, Front Royal, VA, beneficiary of 217 E. Main Street. Mr. Silek said they sold the property at 131 E. Main Street in approximately 1992 when it then went into a state of deterioration. While attending this meeting he was made aware that the terracotta tile portion of the building was not supposed to be an exterior element or feature of the building. Terracotta does last a while but when exposed to the elements it does deteriorate as seen with water lines and pipes. The exterior walls are not designed to carry any weight in the middle of the building. Mr. Silek noted that if the building is unearthed the Town has a responsibility to have an archeological survey conducted to determine if there are bodies there. He expressed concern that there is no clear plan of what is going there if a portion of the building is demolished. Mr. Silek said a performance bond should be required of the owner/builder to assure compliance with the proffered conditions of what they want to do at the location. He expressed concern of the availability of parking and noted that it should also be addressed in the proffers.

Kerry Barnhart, owner of 122 and 205 E. Main Street, developer, President of Vibrissa Beer, and the Chair of the tourism committee Discover Front Royal. Ms. Barnhart explained that their buildings are historic, and they were required to submit a detailed site plan when wanting to do renovations and bring new life to the buildings. She does not understand why this applicant has not been required to submit a detailed site plan with what they propose doing with the building. Ms. Barnhart explained they went through the process the right way and noted they have won a Northern Virginia and DC American Institute of Architecture Award for urban catalyst and for restoration. When they presented their application and plans to the Board of Architectural Review they submitted an entire plan and did exactly what they said they were going to do. She would like to see this from any developer proposing changes to a historic structure and see a whole plan and make the changes in the context of the whole plan.

Brian Conley, 370 Wesley Lane, Bentonville, VA, owner of Turning Leaf Realty Group located at 28 E. Jackson Street. Mr. Conley expressed concern that the applicant is proposing a demolition without having a plan in place moving forward. He recommended that the Board of Architectural Review deny the application if there is no plan in place other than demolition.

Chairman Waters closed the public hearing.

Mr. Ware reiterated that the application is only for demolition of the rear section of the building from the terracotta block to the rear of the building. The building encompasses 90 some percent

of the lot. The building on Church Street all the way to the back is the property line. Going forward where it comes up to the terracotta next to Schewels it deviates off the building and runs with the Schewels property. There would be no encroachment on parking in the back. Properties on E. Main Street from S. Royal Avenue to the bridge at Happy Creek are exempt from meeting the parking requirements. Properties on E. Jackson Street from S. Royal to Church Street are exempt from the parking requirements. Mr. Ware mentioned again that the only application before the Board is for demolition. New construction or conversion of the existing structure, which is allowed by matter of right, would be brought back to the Board for approval with a separate application. In addition, it would require approval by the Planning Commission. He noted the Board can put conditions with the vote or table the decision.

Both Chairman Waters and Board members agreed they would like to see a structural engineer report submitted. Mr. Wayland said he was not willing to provide such a report because of the cost it would take without knowing what he is allowed to do moving forward and confirmed he had done zero maintenance to that portion of the building.

Board members went through a portion of the demolition review guidelines. Mr. Wayland was asked if he had done any stabilization to the building, and he answered he had not done any stabilization to the area of the building where the terracotta is located.

Mr. Barnett added that he had the building at 131 E. Main Street for sale for a time. Several people brought structural engineers in however he had not seen any reports. Every proposal they had to keep that section of the building would require them to cover the outside of the building with 1 or 2 inches of cementitious material, drill holes and pump it inside the terracotta.

Chairman Waters moved, seconded by Ms. Snyder to deny the application because they do not have enough information to justify demolition.

Ms. Kopishke explained the process if the Board wanted to table the application they could ask the applicant for additional information.

Chairman Waters asked Mr. Wayland if they tabled the application would he be willing to provide a structural engineer report and what was his justification for demolishing a portion of the building.

Mr. Wayland said it was for the benefit of the Town and working with the Town to put the best thing there that they possibly can.

Mr. Barnett expressed that they were following the process that was given to them by staff and were not trying to take shortcuts.

Mr. Wayland said he has no problem working with the Town management to do what is best for this space and that it is totally unutilized at this point.

Ms. Kopishke said that staff had tried to steer them in a way that gets the ball rolling. She explained the different options of moving forward and that staff felt the best first step was the demolition.

Mr. Wayland mentioned that he would not spend the money to demolish the building if something wasn't determined on how to move forward.

Board members and staff continued some discussion on the process moving forward with either denying, approving with conditions, or tabling the application. They also discussed stabilization of the front portion of the building if taking down the other portion of the building. Mr. Wayland said at that point he would bring in a structural engineer if granted demolition approval. He noted that if the application is denied for demolition he will sell the building.

Chairman Waters expressed they are not seeing any effort from the applicant to determine if the building needs demolition or that it can be preserved.

Chairman Waters reiterated his motion to deny the application, seconded by Ms. Snyder.

VOTE: Yes – Rhodenhizer, Toler, Snyder, Waters
No – Vaughan
Abstain – N/A
Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

NEW BUSINESS

There were no items for new business.

OLD BUSINESS

There were no items for old business.

OTHER

There were no additional comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Waters moved, seconded by Mr. Vaughan to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Vaughan, Snyder, Waters, Toler, Rhodenhizer
No – N/A
Abstain – N/A
Absent – N/A

VOICE VOTE

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Approved by Board of Architectural Review
Date: 1/10/2023