

**BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
TOWN OF FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA**

September 12, 2017

**Regular Meeting
Town Hall**

Present: Angela Toler, Chairman
Joan Harding, Vice Chairman
Gary Vaughan
Nancy LeHew
Michael Whitlow

Staff: Jeremy F. Camp, Planning Director/Zoning Administrator
Doug Napier, Town Attorney
Connie L. Potter, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Also present were members of the press and public.

The September 12, 2017 meeting of the Front Royal Board of Architectural Review was called to order by Chairman Toler at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Vaughan moved, seconded by Vice Chairman Harding to approve the meeting minutes as written.

VOTE: Yes – Vaughan, LeHew, Whitlow, Harding, Toler

NEW BUSINESS

There were no items for new business.

OLD BUSINESS

- **FRCOA-000455-2017**, Afton Inn. A Certificate of Appropriateness Application submitted by the Economic Development Authority for the demolition of 2 E. Main Street, the Afton Inn.

Mr. Camp reminded the BAR that the motion is for an application for demolition and noted that a plan had not been submitted at this time. Staff's recommendation in the Staff Report was to approve the demolition contingent on two items.

- 1) Permits can only be issued once a plan has been reviewed and approved by the Board of Architectural Review, and
- 2) A development surety is put in place before demolition that is approved in form by the Town Attorney to guarantee demolition is completed once started.

Chairman Toler asked if BAR members had any additional comments that were not discussed in the work session that preceded the regular meeting.

Vice Chairman Harding noted that BAR members had concerns.

Vice Chairman Harding moved that the BAR does not approve. She then stopped and referred to the “Addendum” questions to be used when determining approval/denial of demolition applications.

Vice Chairman Harding withdrew the motion.

Demolition Review Guidelines:

- 1) Contribution to Historic District. Is the building identified as a contributing structure? This is typically determined from the Front Royal Historic District records.

Chairman Toler said that in the work session the BAR identified the building as a contributing structure and noted that it was one of the key structures that qualifies the Town to have a historic district.

- 2) Structural Integrity. Does the building retain structural integrity? The following may be used to evaluate and determine if a building retains its structural integrity?

BAR members agreed that it depended on who you ask. Chairman Toler said they could feasibly find someone who would say “yes, it does”. Vice Chairman Harding added that someone would say “it is salvageable”.

- 3) Feasibility. Upon review of the facts of the application, public testimony, and Town records, what factors limit renovation of the building instead of demolition, as determined by the BAR.

Significantly higher costs than new construction – The BAR has received conflicting cost information.

Poor Marketability, due to location or lack of usable space – Location is a prime factor to be retained.

Environmental Factors – The BAR has not received any information on environmental factors.

Local, State, or Federal Regulations – Sometimes things are precluded if federal funds are used. Vice Chairman Harding referred to some type of regulations that state you cannot tear down or alter if federal money had been used. Mr. Whitlow said that if you have received funds to renovate, for example a “plaqued” building, you are “stuck” to keep it. Vice Chairman Harding said the BAR is not 100% sure so this would be a question mark as well.

The building is recognized as blighted – At this point in time, yes.

- 4) Due Diligence. Has the applicant given due diligence? Due diligence includes seeking renovation of the property for an extended period; allowing the relocation of the building (if offered by a 3rd party); and salvaging portions of the building.

Chairman Harding stated that there has been such a “muddy” trail as to what has been done. If people knew that the EDA was not having success in marketing the property, and people who have said they wanted to renovate the building, but were not given permission. She believes this throws into question whether due diligence was in fact done. BAR members agreed they could not confirm “yes” due diligence was done.

Mr. Whitlow said in answering these questions, the BAR would not approve demolition of the structure. He felt there wasn’t enough information to make an intelligent decision. There has been a lot of interest from the Urban Development partners who have on their website, “Save the Afton Inn”. As far as marketing the building, Mr. Whitlow said he can only assume all the proper paperwork was made to gain some sort of status so that it could be marketed as a historic property. There must be some sort of paper trail and if the EDA has been to trade shows and marketed the Afton Inn, there would have to be some sort of proof. In his opinion, with all the new interest that is being shown in the building that the BAR take a different approach to possibly saving the building and if that doesn’t happen then let’s tear it down and build something that looks like the existing structure. Until the BAR has more information, he cannot make that decision and believes the application should be tabled.

Mr. Camp did not recommend tabling the application because the applicant can then just appeal that to Town Council.

Vice Chairman Harding moved, seconded by Ms. LeHew that the BAR, based on a number of factors that have been discussed in length, vote to decline to approve the demolition permit.

VOTE: Yes – Harding, Toler, LeHew, Whitlow, Vaughan

Mr. Vaughan moved, seconded by Mr. Whitlow to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: Yes – Toler, Harding, Whitlow, Vaughan, LeHew

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Connie L. Potter
Sr. Administrative Assistant