

Architectural Review Board
September 7, 2006

Jeffrey Plank, chair, called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. in the Town Council chambers; also present were Nancy Gill, Fred Schneider, Ruth Klippstein, John Koski; Clark Draper and Jim Bowling; and audience members and applicants Maria Morrell, Kirstin Thomas, Steven Meeks, and Win Winfree. Minutes of the August 2006 meeting were approved as presented, and the agenda was adjusted to include a discussion of StreetScape.

Summary of Actions: We agree to table action on Steven Meeks' application for rehabilitation of 135 Warren Street.

Jim Bowling, town attorney, reviewed the ordinances pertinent to ARB's process, and noted our information sheets. He described the penalty phase of our work, which we have not yet used, as a criminal penalty, outlined in zoning ordinances 26 and 27. In answer to a question from Fred, Jim said our "guidelines" would be sufficient in criminal court, as they are what we were required to adopt. Jeffrey described our charge from Town Council to avoid confrontation with property owners, if possible; and told about the "curbside review" he and Fred conduct annually to assess the condition of structures in the Historic District, and letters sent to owners whose property needs specific attention. How, he asked, do we handle the next step.

Bowling suggested an informal discussion with the property owner within 60 days after sending a letter through the zoning administrator, specifying repairs needed and how they should be handled commensurate with the Historic District; and next sending a certified or registered letter detailing penalties and giving 90 days for compliance. After this, if compliance is not forthcoming, the ordinance calls for the zoning administrator to file a criminal complaint; the alternate procedure is for the zoning administrator with the mayor's approval to enter the structure and cause the repairs to be made, the cost of which become a lien on the property; in cases of hardship, the town would pay for the repairs.

Jeffrey said two properties, one residential and one commercial, are waiting for "the next step," but ARB must have the Council's support, as the Council and town attorney would be the entities to continue the process, not the ARB. Steve Phipps spoke about the assistance the Council liaison, now Nancy Gill, has been to our working together, and his hopes that a final letter from the town would bring the property owner to a meeting. Jeffrey stated that as Council seems ready to take enforcement steps if necessary, we are prepared to get the "thorny issues resolved."

We addressed the specific problem of 330 Valley Street, formerly The Brick, and its missing cornice, which is contributing to damage of the structure. Bowling suggested Clark Draper send a certified letter, but noted that the owner lives in Florida and the Virginia courts would have difficulty forcing him to appear. Later Clark said he has a phone number for Stephen Hawranke, and will call him and hope to establish rapport, and ask for a mutually-convenient meeting time, outside our regular meeting schedule if necessary; a conference call is also a possibility. We are instructed not to let owners in violation of the ordinances ignore us, as this is unfair to all.

We discussed our responsibility with realtors in their sale of buildings in the Historic District that might have outstanding violations. Bowling said it is the buyer's duty to know about this. We also noted that the process of writing a letter detailing what we see as the proper way to fix and maintain the building should not short circuit the process of direct application to the ARB. Clark observed that the property owner has the right to meet with the Council, rather than the ARB.

Old Business: this has been covered with the above conversation.

New Business: Win Winfree described his idea for a mural celebrating the history of Scottsville on the east side of his James River Apartments at the edge of Canal Basin Square. He detailed the renovation of the wall and other such murals, and hoped the idea would generate wider interest in the town. We discussed it in a generally positive way, mentioning the work of creating a contest for the design, as Winfree suggested, judging it, creating it, and maintaining it. With many questions left to answer, Jeffrey suggested a meeting with a coalition of possible participants, including the Tourism Committee, Museum, Canal Basin Square, and the Town. Win will proceed.

Steven Meeks talked about his plans for 135 Warren St., showing detailed photographs. He proposes to rework the foundation to its original look, return the siding to its original board and batten look, replace the windows, rebuild a missing chimney and the front porch, and replace the rear addition. These plans have been reviewed by the state's Department of Historical Resources and conform to guidelines for participation in the tax credit program. Jeffrey stated that we need to have drawings for the rear addition before we can approve the entire application, so we jointly decide to not move on the application at this meeting, but to hope for further plans in October.

In a separate action Steven Meeks described research he is doing to re-create a well house over the concrete slab covering an abandoned well between 732 and 724 Valley St., to be used to store trash cans, etc. He showed drawings of a well house erected at Michie Tavern; we hope for a simpler form, and one specific to Scottsville or southern Albemarle. More research will be conducted.

Repairs and Maintenance: Another letter will be sent to owners of 115 Moore's Hill Rd., as they have not answered the August 7 letter. 380 Bird has not responded either; in this case, as they are not in the Historic District, Clark will proceed carefully. We need to learn more about problems at 370 and 380 East Main; we will continue to try to get an agreement for repairs at the Masonic building.

StreetScape: We now understand that the Department of Historic Resources expects us to review some aspects of the plans; Clark described the preliminary reports and site plans being filed. Jeffrey will contact the DHR.

Inventory project: We have decided to segment this project and make it electronic, rather than a more expensive published book. A curtailed meeting between Nancy and representatives of the Museum indicated their general interest in a down-loadable walking tour map; another, longer, meeting will be scheduled. Edna Johnson of "History Matters" is willing to help us find a web designer; Fred can also work on this. We proceed.

Other: We note the possibility of changes at the lace factory building, and Magnolia building, as well as the construction of condominiums above the Dollar Store, for which no application has been made for exterior structural changes.

We adjourned at 9:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Klippstein, secretary