

A special meeting of the Historic District Review Board was held on **July 31, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.** in the City Hall Planning Conference Room, 1911 Boundary Street. In attendance were Chairman Joel Newman, board members Quinn Peitz and Erica Dickerson, and city staff Lauren Kelly. Chuck Symes and Barbara Laurie were absent.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d) as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place, and agenda of this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Newman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

REVIEW OF FULL BOARD PROJECTS

Bridges Preparatory School – 1100 Boundary Street Portable Classrooms

Applicant: Bridges Charter School (HR14-29)

Ms. Kelly said this is the former Boys & Girls Club building that Bridges closed on in the last week. They are trying to meet the capacity they need, so they are requesting 2 temporary portable classroom units. The classrooms would be there a minimum of 3 years while the school completes their build-out. Each unit is 1500 square feet for a total of 3000 square feet.

There were applicable guidelines from the Supplement about new construction, Ms. Kelly said, and about scale on “a street without a discernable rhythm.” There aren’t any buildings directly fronting the lot where the portables are proposed, she said. There is also a section of the UDO in regard to temporary classrooms: There needs to be a plan to eliminate the portable buildings in order to approve them. Ms. Kelly and the Bridges representatives have been in discussions about this.

In regard to the siting, staff recommends minimums of 10’ on the side and rear. There also needs to be a pedestrian circulation plan that shows how these buildings connect to the existing building; a traffic impact study because of the increased capacity portables will cause; a tree survey; and a certified arborist’s report in regard to 2 Live Oaks. At the pre-application conference, they have discussed that the buildings won’t meet the Historic District guidelines, as “they are a last resort.”

Staff recommends finding a way to screen the buildings from the street to maintain the aesthetic harmony, Ms. Kelly said. There aren't many adjustments to the buildings that can be made. There is a 6’ tall aluminum fence there now, and staff had the idea to bring the fence all around the perimeter at Congress and Church Streets with shrubs planted inside it for screening.

Ms. Kelly showed where the trailers would be located. They plan in the future to build in the general area where the trailers will be now, and will have parking and drop-off in the back. There would need to be screening for the parking in the future, and that could be the portables' screening. If the Historic District Review Board feels it's appropriate, she said, the screening could be 8'-10' tall to better hide the trailers; Bridges would have to get a variance because that's taller than they typically allow.

Charlie Calvert, a volunteer and board chair, said he feels the neighbors might feel a fence "keeps them out" and Bridges doesn't do that. **Marty Miley** said there are life safety issues, like how to get the fire department in if they need to, which was brought up at the pre-application conference. Mr. Peitz said fencing is expensive, as well. Chairman Newman felt that "its two negatives, instead of a negative and something to soften it," like some landscaping would be, which is a "living gesture" instead of more construction. Unless they planned carefully to develop it into a future parking lot, they would lose money.

The building has a strong presence on Boundary Street, Chairman Newman said, and then asked Mr. Miley how to get into it. Mr. Miley showed him on the overhead image. Ms. Kelly said they have required that they have an entry on Boundary Street. Mr. Calvert said, "This is a crown jewel of redevelopment downtown," and they also have to be safe, and so forth. They are really excited about how this is going to look for form and function for Beaufort, he added.

Mr. Peitz asked where they are in the timetable. Mr. Calvert said they are talking to banks about financing, and they have a great concept that he thinks is doable in 3 years. They grow annually by a minimum of 3 classrooms, Mr. Calvert said. They need high quality student space. They are agreeable to everything that staff has said. Mr. Miley said, with the design they have, he sees no problem. Before they can address the 3-year limit on the portables and answer when they'll be gone, they have to talk to the bank about financing: it will depend on when they can get financing.

Chairman Newman said he had looked at these buildings for a Montessori school at one time; they're not cheap, and they are "not environmentally the most enjoyable space." They are not saving a lot of money by having a mobile classroom. Mr. Miley said it's their last option. Mr. Calvert said they wanted to be downtown so that the students could take advantage of things the taxpayer is already paying for.

Maxine Lutz said Historic Beaufort Foundation is delighted the charter school wants to invest in downtown. It needs to be screened, but she hates the black aluminum fences "that have popped up everywhere." She thinks landscaping is the best option, and they can cover them in a matter of months with the right plants. Mr. Miley said the school would like that as an option, too.

Ms. Lutz asked if installing the portables would require any tree removal. Mr. Miley showed on a photo where the portables would go. He envisions “some trees will have to be removed, at least one of the big Live Oaks.” Chairman Newman said in the motion he would recommend that the city alter the setback requirements to save the tree, so to take it down now for temporary buildings, when it could be incorporated later, is a bad option.

Chairman Newman asked how they “are getting away without a ramp,” and Mr. Miley said because they don’t have someone there now who needs it, but they will have to provide one if someone needs it. The ADA guidelines will apply as they build the building. Mr. Miley said the plans could be altered easily, because the buildings have room to accommodate this need, and a ramp was taken into consideration.

Mr. Peitz moved for approval of the request, “with two exceptions to the staff report” – to put in (fenceless) landscaping for screening and with a recommendation of staff consideration of granting a setback variance in the event the tree survey indicates that the temporary buildings will jeopardize the live oak – and including the circulation plan and the tree survey per the staff report. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Peitz moved to adjourn, and Ms. Dickerson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.