

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES
December 3, 2008 – 3:00 P.M.
Pre-Council Chambers, Mobile Government Plaza, 205 Government Street

A. CALL TO ORDER – Chair

The meeting was called to order by the chair Tilmon Brown at 3:01.

The Introductory Statement was read by the staff.

The members present were Tilmon Brown, Carlos Gant, Tom Karwinski, Michael Mayberry, Harris Oswalt, Bunky Ralph, Craig Roberts, and Barja Wilson.
Staff present was: Devereaux Bemis; Keri Coumanis; and John Lawler.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as posted per a motion of Michael Mayberry.

The Mid-Month Requests were approved as submitted per a motion of Tom Karwinski.

B. MID-MONTH APPROVALS

1. Applicant's Name: Bradley Robertson

- a. Property Address: 402 Chatham Street
- b. Date of Approval: 11/10/08
- c. Project: Reroof with 3-tab shingles, black.

2. Applicant's Name: Bill Host

- a. Property Address: 1661 Dauphin Street
- b. Date of Approval: 11/13/08
- c. Project: Tear off existing roof; reroof with 30yr Timberline charcoal shingles; reflash two chimneys and five dormers; repair/replace decking as needed.

3. Applicant's Name: Robert Cooner

- a. Property Address: 21 McPhillips Ave
- b. Date of Approval: 11/17/08
- c. Project: Reroof with GAF 30 year architectural shingles, charcoal gray.

4. Applicant's Name: Barbara Sims

- d. Property Address: 154 Macy Place
- e. Date of Approval: 11/19/08
- f. Project: Repaint exterior in existing color scheme.

5. Applicant's Name: American Roofing

- a. Property Address: 258-260 Michigan Ave
- b. Date of Approval: 11/19/08
- c. Project: Reroof with 25yr charcoal shingles

6. Applicant's Name: Pitsios Family Ltd Partnership

- a. Property Address: 57 Bradford Ave
- b. Date of Approval: 11/25/08
- c. Project: Repaint per submitted, approved colors.

C. APPLICATIONS

1. 174-08-CA: 109-111 S. Conception Street

- a. Applicant: Holmes and Holmes Architects
- b. Request: Install fiber glass porch railings

Tabled. Certified Record attached.

2. 179-08-CA: Government Plaza

- a. Applicant: Susan McGallagher
- b. Request: Brick selection

Approved. Certified Record attached.

3. 180-08-CA: 1706 Dauphin Street

- a. Applicant: McCormick-Brown
- b. Request: Sign approval

Approved. Certified Record attached.

4. 181-08-CA: 56 St. Francis Street

- a. Applicant: White-Spinner Construction
- b. Request: Sign approval

Approved. Certified Record attached.

5. 182-08-CA: 1123 Church Street

- a. Applicant: David Barnett
- b. Request: Fence

Approved with conditions. Certified Record attached.

6. 183-08-CA: 309-311 N Conception St.

- a. Applicant: Neighborhood and Community Services
- b. Request: Install cistern

Approved with conditions. Certified Record attached.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

174-08-CA: 109-111 S. Conception Street
Applicant: Holmes and Holmes Architects
Received: 10/21/08
Meeting: 12/03/08; tabled from 11/19/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Church Street East
Classification: Contributing Property
Zoning: R-1
Project: Install fiber glass railing.

BUILDING HISTORY

Constructed in 1857, The Bowers-Huger house is one of three remaining double townhouses in Mobile.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. According to MHDC records, the existing rear balustrade was installed in 1990. In order to alleviate maintenance concerns, the applicants seek approval for the installation of fiberglass balustrade.
- B. The Mobile Historic Guidelines, state, in pertinent part:
 - 1. “The porch is an important regional characteristic of Mobile architecture. Historic porches should be maintained and repaired to reflect their period. Particular attention should be paid to handrails, lower rails, balusters, decking, posts/ columns, proportions and decorative details. The balustrade of the stairs should match the design and materials of the porch.”
 - 2. “The materials should blend with the style of the building.”
- C. Applicant propose:
 - 1. installing fiberglass materials for the rear porch railings
 - a. 3” rounded strongrail system
 - b. Square pickets
 - c. White finish

STAFF ANALYSIS

The applicants intend to bring a sample of the fiber glass railing to the ARB meeting. The ARB does not typically allow modern replacement materials, such as HardiePlank, on historic buildings. Given the significance of this property, Staff believes a modern replacement material would be inappropriate as it would be difficult to replicate the proper reveal and details. Therefore, Staff recommends denial.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Mr. Nicholas Holmes, Jr. and Rev. Johnny Cook were present to discuss the application. Mr. Holmes said he believed that the railing was replaced in the 1990s. He pointed out that he had replaced the Capitol columns with metal and that the Bishop Portier House columns had been replaced with fiberglass. He had been unable to get materials that would withstand the elements and he brought a sample of the materials to be used. Craig Roberts suggested the use of mahogany or red cedar which would not rot as quickly.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion occurred concurrently with the public hearing and continued. Concern was expressed about the materials and the design. As the discussion developed several suggestions were made. There was a suggestion that wood be used and be placed inside the glass of the porch. Tom Karwinski suggested that a grillage be used to mimic the original hand rail but which could be removed without much trouble. It was also suggested that the railing simply be left off. The discussion centered on the design of the railing presented. There was general consensus that the sample presented did not match any historic handrail and that the design was inappropriate. Several Board Members stated they were not opposed to a substitute material if the design of the hand rail were appropriate. The applicants were asked to research a more appropriate design and bring it back to the Board to which the applicants agreed.

FINDING OF FACT

There was no finding of facts.

Decision on the Application

Craig Roberts moved that the application be tabled and the applicants return to the Board at the next meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Staff pointed out that it was too late to get on the December 17 agenda, but that there was time for the January 7. There was general agreement that this would be agreeable.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

179-08-CA: 153 Government Street
Applicant: Goodwin, Mills and Caewood
Received: 11/17/08
Meeting: 12/03/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Church Street East
Classification: Contributing Property
Zoning: R-1
Project: Brick selection

BUILDING HISTORY

A new building is currently being constructed at this site to house the Mobile County Courthouse.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. The applicants are seeking approval for their exterior brick for the new building.
- B. The Guidelines for New Residential and Commercial Construction state “ the goal of new construction should be to blend into the historic district, but to avoid creating a false sense of history.”
- C. Applicants will be bringing brick samples to the meeting.

STAFF ANALYSIS

As required by a previous COA, the applicants agreed to present their exterior material choices to the ARB once they were selected. Susan McGallagher appeared before the Board in an informal manner on Nov. 19, 2008. On Nov. 19, the Board approved the choice stucco, but asked the architects to reconsider the brick selected. Ms. Gallagher agreed to return to the Board after researching alternatives. (See www.mobilehd.org for the full minutes of the Nov. 19 meeting). Samples of the alternatives, as well as the original choice, will be presented and discussed again on Dec. 3.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Nicholas Holmes, Jr and the 3rd, Susan McGallagher, Kevin _____ and _____ Martin were present to discuss the application. The younger Holmes had looked into the situation and explained that the County had a history of leaking buildings. The elder Mr. Holmes informed the Board that the Boreal Bricks had a 41% higher water absorption level than the proposed brick. Board Member Craig Roberts then interrupted the presentation and noted that the information provided answered the Board's question from the previous meeting and there was no need to continue.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board noted the information about hardness of the brick which was provided.

FINDING OF FACT

Craig Roberts moved that, based upon the evidence presented in the application and during the Board discussion the Board finds the facts in the Staff report. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Decision on the Application

Craig Roberts moved that, based upon the facts found by the Board, that the application does not impair the historic integrity of the district or the building and that a Certificate of Appropriateness be issued. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appropriateness Expiration Date: 12/03/09.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

180-08-CA: 1706 Dauphin Street
Applicant: Hall McCormick & Assoc.
Received: 11/14/08
Meeting: 12/03/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Old Dauphin Way
Classification: Non-Contributing Property
Zoning: R-1
Project: Install signage.

BUILDING HISTORY

This building has undergone a recent renovation. An American four-square, it was most likely constructed in 1915.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. The applicants are seeking approval to install a new sign.
- B. The applicable Sign Design Guidelines provide for the following:
 - 1. The overall design of all signage including the mounting framework shall relate to the design of the principal building on the property. Buildings with a recognizable style such as Greek Revival, Italianate, Victorian, Queen Anne, Neo-classic, Craftsman, et al., should use signage of the same style. This can be done through the use of similar decorative features such as columns or brackets.
 - 2. The structural materials of the sign should match the historic materials of the building. Wood, metal, stucco, stone or brick, is allowed.
 - 3. The total maximum allowable sign area for all signs is one and one half square feet per linear front foot of the principal building, not to exceed 64 square feet.
 - 4. Lighted signs shall use focused, low intensity illumination. Lighted signs shall use focused, low intensity illumination. Such lighting shall not shine into or create glare at pedestrian or vehicular traffic, nor shall it shine into adjacent areas. Light fixtures mounted on the ground shall be screened by landscaping.
- C. Applicants propose:
 - 1. install sign

- a. 6' tall; situated 2' from the ground;
- b. 4'8" wide;
- c. Approximately 4' by 5' on each side, equals 40 total square feet;
- d. Wood columns;
- e. Screen printed sign on wood
- f. Spot lighting on photo cell;
- g. Located on property, per submitted plan.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Board has determined that a 5' height limitation on freestanding signs is appropriate for the pedestrian scale of historic districts. Therefore, Staff recommends the sign be reduced in height to 5'. Further, Staff recommends the applicants check with Urban Development.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Amy McCormick was present to discuss the application. She stated that she was willing to limit the height of the sign to 5 feet. She also stated that the light would be uplit and landscaping would hide the housings.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion occurred concurrently with the beginning of the public hearing when details of the plan were worked out.

FINDING OF FACT

Bunky Ralph moved that, based upon the evidence presented in the application and during the Board discussion the Board finds the facts in the Staff report. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Decision on the Application

Bunky Ralph moved that, based upon the facts found by the Board, that the application does not impair the historic integrity of the district or the building and that a Certificate of Appropriateness be issued. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appropriateness Expiration Date: 12/03/09.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

181-08-CA: 56 St. Francis Street
Applicant: RSA/ White-Spunner
Received: 11/17/08
Meeting: 12/03/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Lower Dauphin Street
Classification: Contributing Façade / New Construction
Zoning: B-4
Project: Install signage.

BUILDING HISTORY

The historic cast iron façade is all that remains of this 1830s commercial building, the Coley Building. In 2007, the rear of the building was demolished and the façade was incorporated into the new garage structure for the Battle House Hotel.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. The applicants are seeking approval to install a new sign. The sign will indicate the entrance to the elevator lobby for the “Spa at the Battlehouse.” As demonstrated by the drawings, the sign is being placed on southwest corner of the spa/parking garage complex, at the corner of the historic façade of the Coley Building.
- B. The applicable Sign Design Guidelines provide for the following:
 - 1. The overall design of all signage including the mounting framework shall relate to the design of the principal building on the property. Buildings with a recognizable style such as Greek Revival, Italianate, Victorian, Queen Anne, Neo-classic, Craftsman, et al., should use signage of the same style. This can be done through the use of similar decorative features such as columns or brackets.
 - 2. The structural materials of the sign should match the historic materials of the building. Wood, metal, stucco, stone or brick, is allowed.
 - 3. The total maximum allowable sign area for all signs is one and one half square feet per linear front foot of the principal building, not to exceed 64 square feet.
 - 4. Lighted signs shall use focused, low intensity illumination.
- C. Applicants propose:

1. install bracketed sign;
2. metal decorative bracket;
3. opaque, laminated glass;
4. etched logo and lettering on glass face;
5. illuminated LED tubing around perimeter of sign.

STAFF ANALYSIS

At the far end of the parking garage complex, the building has an existing 22 sq. ft. sign. The proposed signage would add another 17 sq. ft., keeping the building within 64' sq. ft. limit. The materials and design of the sign conform to the design guidelines. Therefore, Staff recommends approval.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Philip Miller was present to discuss the application. He explained that the lighting would be LED tubing surrounding the sign on the inside of the frame.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion occurred concurrently with the beginning of the public hearing when details of the plan were worked out.

FINDING OF FACT

Craig Roberts moved that, based upon the evidence presented in the application and during the Board discussion the Board finds the facts in the Staff report. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Decision on the Application

Craig Roberts moved that, based upon the facts found by the Board, that the application does not impair the historic integrity of the district or the building and that a Certificate of Appropriateness be issued. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appropriateness Expiration Date: 12/03/09.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

182-08-CA: 1123 Church Street
Applicant: David L. Barnett
Received: 11/10/08
Meeting: 12/03/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: Church Street East
Classification: Contributing Property
Zoning: R-1
Project: Install fence.

BUILDING HISTORY

This two-story masonry home was most likely built in 1896 and is an early indicator of the trend from Victorian to Neo-Classical Revival architecture.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. The applicants are seeking approval to install new fence along the west property line to match an existing fence already on the property.
- B. The Mobile Historic District Guidelines provide for the following:
 - 1. Fences should complement the building and not detract from it. Design, scale, placement and materials should be considered along with their relationship to the Historic District. The height of solid fences in historic districts is generally restricted to six feet.
- C. Applicants propose:
 - 1. build wood privacy fence
 - a. along western property line
 - b. extend from the rear to the front of the existing house
 - c. will match existing fence
 - d. 8’ high
 - e. Painted to match existing

STAFF ANALYSIS

The existing fence, which is 8' tall, was built in the 1980s without a COA. Currently, the guidelines state that fences may not be taller than 6'. Therefore, Staff recommends denial unless the property owner is willing to lower the height of the fence. Further, Staff is concerned about how the proposed fencing will be situated along with the plantings on the property line. Finally, a side yard fence may not extend beyond the plane of the house and therefore must stop parallel with the front wall of the house.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Mac Lewis was present to discuss the application. He noted that there is currently an eight foot fence on the property. He stated the new fence would be planted with greenery to downplay the structure.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion occurred concurrently with the beginning of the public hearing when details of the plan were worked out. Craig Roberts noted that 8 foot fences are only allowed adjacent to commercial properties and that a six foot fence would be acceptable.

FINDING OF FACT

Bunky Ralph moved that, based upon the evidence presented in the application and during the Board discussion the Board finds the facts in the Staff report. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Decision on the Application

Bunky Ralph moved that, based upon the facts found by the Board, that the application does impair the historic integrity of the district or the building and that a Certificate of Appropriateness be issued with the condition that the fence be limited to six feet in height. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appropriateness Expiration Date: 12/03/09.

APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
CERTIFIED RECORD

183-08-CA: 309-311 Conception Street
Applicant: Chris Barazza for Neighborhood and Community Services
Received: 11/06/08
Meeting: 12/03/08

INTRODUCTION TO THE APPLICATION

Historic District: DeTonti Square
Classification: Non-Contributing Property
Zoning: R-1
Project: Community Garden

BUILDING HISTORY

This double vacant lot was the site of the Clark School, constructed in 1902. The Clark School burned in 1964.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Section 9 of the Preservation Ordinance states “the Board shall not approve any application proposing a Material Change in Appearance unless it finds the change...will not materially impair the architectural or historic value of the building, the buildings on adjacent sites or in the immediate vicinity, or the general visual character of the district...”

STAFF REPORT

- A. The City of Mobile’s Department of Neighborhood and Community Services has been working with the neighborhood and the county extension office to plan a community garden for this vacant space in the heart of DeTonti Square. The lot is situated between two contributing, significant buildings within the district.
- B. Applicants propose:
 - 1. installing raised beds in the southwest corner of the lot, per submitted plan;
 - 2. installing a cistern along the south border of the lot to catch water from the X, per submitted plan;
 - 3. landscaping, per submitted plan;
 - 4. fence to be installed at a later date and is not up for approval at this point.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff has discussed the project with the applicants. The applicants are amenable to building the raised beds out of masonry and have indicated they would like any suggestions we may have.

The proposed cistern is approximately 7' tall, with an 8' diameter. The tank will be white, heavy-duty plastic; however the applicants intend to box it in with lattice work and concealed by landscaping. While there is certainly precedent for cisterns in historic districts, they were generally located behind the main building, on an interior elevation. Given the significance of the building at 305-07 North Conception – the Parmly House is one of Mobile's finest Greek Revival townhouses, circa 1852, Staff recommends the cistern is located as far back to the rear of the building as possible. Staff further recommends any drain pipes running from the roof be painted the same color as the brick.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Chris Barraza was present to discuss the application. She explained that the neighborhood had been working on the plan for many years and something was finally happening. Though an overall plan was submitted, the only parts they wished considered by the Board were the water container and the raised beds. She stated that they were willing to put the water tank at the back end of the house and there was a dark tank available. She also agreed to use plantings instead of a lattice screen to hide the tank.

BOARD DISCUSSION

The Board discussion occurred concurrently with the beginning of the public hearing when details of the plan were worked out.

FINDING OF FACT

Harris Oswalt moved that, based upon the evidence presented in the application and during the Board discussion the Board finds the facts in the Staff report amending them to reflect the agreement reached between the Board and the representative: the tank would be either dark green or black; the tank would be placed at the far back corner of the house and wing; and that tall plantings would be installed to hide the tank. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Decision on the Application

Bunky Ralph moved that, based upon the facts as amended by the Board, that the application does not impair the historic integrity of the district or the building and that a Certificate of Appropriateness be issued. The motion received a second and was unanimously approved.

Certificate of Appropriateness Expiration Date: 12/03/09.