



City of Charleston
Design Review Board
Minutes
February 7th, 2022
4:30 p.m.

A meeting of the Design Review Board was held at 4:32 p.m. on Monday, February 7th, 2022 virtually (via Zoom) and adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Board members present: Erica Chase (Chairperson), Dinos Liollo, Erin Stevens, Stephanie Tillerson, Ashley Jackrel, and Ben Whitener (Andy Smith not present)

Staff members present: David Meeks, Alison Hill DeLong, & Andrea Derungs

Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m., introduced Board members and Staff and explained protocol for the meeting.

The following applications were considered:

(NOTE: Unless otherwise remarked, Chair voted all items, Copy of complete staff comments/recommendations are attached. Copies of all recusals/letters/emails/petitions mentioned during this meeting are on file.)

1. 505 St. Andrews Blvd. - TMS# 421-03-00-156

Request "after the fact" partial demolition approval for a single family residence.

Owner:	Bridget Blakenship
Applicant:	Bridget Blakenship
Neighborhood/Area:	West Ashley

Presenter: Rick Blankenship

Project Detail: Rick said the house had been a rental property for 20 years before they purchased it. It had a lot of water damage due to the height of the slab and poor drainage. Their intent had always been to keep the existing structure, but update it. The garage was not original to the house, but it had a lot of rot and water damage, too. As they were demoing, they kept finding more damage, the project mushroomed, and they ended up removing the roof. He said he knew that wasn't the way it was supposed to go, but that's how it happened. He said they had salvaged about 50% of the original material to be used in the rebuild, and he had submitted plans to extend the living space into the backyard. He had spoken with the adjacent neighbors, and they all approved of what was being proposed. David noted that several interior walls were removed during the demolition. Rick said he had completed more demo than he had been permitted for, but the more they pulled back, the more they found things that needed to be demolished. He said everyone he had spoken to considered the house an eyesore, so he thought renovating it would help brighten up the area. Erica asked if he had called an engineer or anyone from the City to document the additional damage he found after demo had started. Rick said he didn't notify anyone from the City, but he did have a structural engineer on-site several times. Ben asked what the structural engineer had said about the unsupported masonry. Rick said, at a minimum, they were going to

reinforce it with rebar, which would be bored into the existing footing and slab. Stephanie asked David if the house had gone through structural changes throughout time. David said he wasn't sure. Rick said the garage was added within the past 25 years. He noted that no one understood why his house was stucco while the surrounding ones were all brick. He said he had his hat in hand for doing more demolition than had been permitted, and he would never want to change the characteristics of the neighborhood. If anything, his proposal would make a piece of property that didn't fit into something more palatable for the neighboring properties. He said he would be happy to work with anyone in the Moreland neighborhood.

Public Comment:

- **Andrea Woodfield**, president of the Moreland Neighborhood Association, said Moreland had worked hard to preserve the character of the neighborhood, especially since it was one of the major gateways to and from Charleston. She understood that the applicant had completed work well beyond what had been permitted, and she asked DRB to deny the request for an after the fact partial demolition because she was concerned about the precedent it would set.
- **Donna Jacobs**, president of the Ashley River Bridge District Board, said there were no guidelines for review of residential structures along commercial corridors and that demolishing the structure could lead to a snaggletooth look along St. Andrews, which could start them down a road they had worked tirelessly to avoid. She asked DRB to deny the request, to have the owner return the house to its former design, for staff to reinforce communications and guidelines during the permitting process, and for DRB to push for design guidelines within all commercial corridors.
- **Kate Campbell**, a Moreland resident, said the Ashley River Bridge District had worked hard with the City to retain the character of the corridor neighborhoods that led into and out of Charleston. As growth continued to expand, the pressure to improve the structures along those corridors would only increase. She said it would be prudent to look at the process of approvals to avoid further confusion and unintended precedents. She said they wanted to see structures renovated, but they wanted there to be a clear process for doing so.

Staff Recommendation: Denial.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Dinos said this was a complicated and sensitive exercise. He clarified that the permit that had been granted was for specific and low-impact demolition and that the demolition, to the extent that it had been carried out, would have come to DRB for approval. Erica asked if the rear portion that had been demolished was older than 50 years. David said Mr. Blankenship had indicated it was less than 50 years old, which would make that portion outside of DRB's purview. Stephanie said that if they decided that the garage was contributing to the house, it would fall within their purview, even though it could be less than 50 years old. David agreed that anything attached to a structure over 50 years old would be included in their review. Dinos noted that approvals were required for compliance with life safety and flooding issues when demolishing a structure. He said DRB had been very diligent and judicious when it came to demolition packages, and they had created a hard line with respect to what was allowed. He said the applicant would and should have known that anything requested beyond the permit would constitute a breach of what was allowed. He said staff's recommendation was the most appropriate and that the project would have had to gain DRB approval for the extent of demolition that had already occurred. Ben said he agreed, but there had been so much demolition that it would be a challenge to build the roof and garage back. He also noted that if they had manipulated more than 50% of value, it would have to be brought up to code. He agreed with staff that a denial was appropriate. Ashley said it was mentioned there had been an expansion on the backside of the house, which was the reason for the pitch of the roof shifting. She asked who would approve the plans for the future addition to the house. Erica said it would be approved by City staff, but no one was looking at it from an aesthetic perspective. Ashley confirmed they would have reviewed the demolition request and that City staff would only review an addition based on code compliance. She asked David what led to the staff recommendation of denial. He said it had more to do with the City process, and that he had taken the neighborhood association's concerns into account. Ashley said she was concerned they were stepping outside of their purview. If the decision was to be made solely based upon historical character and architectural significance, and you

took out the fact that the process had not been correctly followed, she thought they would still be in the same spot. She said it would have been best if the proper channels were followed, but the best way to preserve buildings was to have people in them. She said the decision to deny was more of a punishment, which was stepping outside their purview. She said she agreed that the process for design standards along the corridor was lacking, but the ordinance didn't give DRB the authority to punish a homeowner by saying they didn't want to approve something based upon rules that weren't in the ordinance. Dinos said that was a wonderful argument, but it left out procedure and protocol. He said the work done had exceeded the permit that had been approved by staff. He said DRB was never given the opportunity to evaluate demolition merits, so they were now being asked to review it in spite of a breach of trust. He thought it was setting a negative precedent. He said there was also a possibility they would have to upgrade everything to flood and life safety standards since it could have exceeded that 50% value threshold, so the entire house could be demolished without any input from DRB. Ben said it was a slippery slope since they had removed so much of it already. Erin said she agreed with a lot of Ashley's concerns. She said if DRB denied the request, the applicant would be required to build it back, but she asked what that meant and how it was judged. Dinos said if the applicant had come before DRB seeking demolition before doing any work, and they had denied the request, the applicant would be required to keep the footprint and the existing aesthetics. Erin asked if an approval meant the applicant could only demolish the roof and garage and that any further demolition requests would have to come before DRB for approval. David said that was his understanding. Dinos said building officials might require the owner to demolish the entire structure in order to be compliant with flooding and life safety standards, at which point he would have to come back to DRB to get approval. Erica asked if that could be the case either way. Dinos said as long as the owner hadn't exceeded 50% value, they wouldn't be required to. Ashley said she struggled with Dinos' point because, per the ordinance, they weren't looking at future plans. They were only supposed to look at what was in front of them. Dinos said they would have eventually seen the demo request if the proper process had been followed. Ashley said they were punishing the applicant instead of making the proper decision. Dinos argued that they weren't trying to impose their will upon the applicant, they were looking at it like any other project that would come before them. Ashley said there had been a lot of discussion about how procedure wasn't followed and what kind of precedent this could set, but she didn't think that should be included in the decision. Erin said they hadn't even talked about if changing the roof would detract from the architectural integrity and aesthetics, which is what she thought it should be about, more so than procedure. Dinos said they had been focusing on the overall quality - you couldn't take a roof off and try to talk about the balance of the walls that were left, you had to look at it holistically. Erin clarified that only one exterior wall had been removed, not 50%. Erica questioned whether the exterior wall that had been removed contributed to the architectural character and value of the home. Dinos said they were now being asked to dissect the structure to determine what constituted a change in the aesthetics, which he didn't think you could do. They had to look at the structure holistically and the manner in which it presented itself, dissecting structures would be recreating architecture.

MOTION: Denial for after the fact demo request.

MADE BY: DL SECOND: BW VOTE: FOR 4 AGAINST 2

2. Maybank Hwy. @ Timberline Dr. - TMS# 313-00-00-530

Request preliminary approval for a new Spinx gas station and convenience store.

Owner:	The Spinx Co.
Applicant:	Ken Betsch
Neighborhood/Area:	John's Island

Presenter: Greg Minton, Ken Betsch

Project Detail: Ken said they had addressed all the comments given during conceptual approval. They had widened the end masses of the building by several feet, notched the corners where the shakes and the board and batten siding intersect, and added base trim to the board and batten siding. They eliminated the doors opening on Maybank Highway. They extended the canopies over the storefront entrances and added pervious pavement throughout. He said they had meetings with the president of the neighborhood association and with the councilmember who represented the area, and both seemed cordial to the project. They also had several meeting with TRC to resolve any site planning issues. Erin clarified that there would be concrete under the gas canopy and pervious pavers elsewhere. Ben asked if they had looked at different ingress and egress locations. Greg said when they first looked at the project with City staff and TRC, it was established that access would have to be on Timberline Drive since there was an existing access curb cut and an easement that ran across the property to Meeks Farm. He said with the way the roads were set up, there wasn't any spacing on Maybank Highway for entry points. Erica asked if they had looked into using the Meeks Farm right-of-way as an access point. Greg said they had, but there was an easement that ran through the access drive. Dinos asked if they had spoken with the neighborhood. Ken said he had met with the president of the HOA and walked through their plans. Erica asked if the wooden fence at the rear of the property was existing or proposed. Ken said it was existing and, per the ordinance, they had a 25ft. landscape buffer prior to the fence. Erica clarified that the detention swale was part of the buffer. Ken said 98% of their stormwater system was underground.

Public Comment:

Erica said they received letters of opposition from Jordan Manger, Amanda Peterson, Edward Burns, Chad Dillon, Rhiannon Dillon, Carmela Mandala, Deborah Ferrell, Stephen Baxter, Nicholas Falvo, Pamela Gage, Marnix Hoogewerff, Shawn Crisp, Councilmember Brady, Leah Plumblee, Peter Rubino, Sharon Antonucci, and Brandon Alexander. James Hudson had submitted a letter in support of the project.

- **Peter Rubino** said he would like to see the training plan and specifications for spill retention or mitigation since any major spill had the potential to spread to the neighboring houses and create a huge safety issue. He understood there were preexisting curb cuts, but he still didn't understand why the entrance wasn't on Maybank. He said the storage tanks and safety valves were very close to neighboring houses, and he questioned if they were within code standards. He asked where water would be going since they were doing underground stormwater storage.
- **Jamison Cox** said he was representing St. Johns Common Property Owners Association, who had governance rights and responsibility over three parcels, including Meeks Farm Road. He said no request had been made for changes to the property and that Meeks Farm Road was a private road that was never dedicated for public use. He said the plans looked like they were trying to access Meeks Farm Road. He said they were unaware of the easement that had been mentioned earlier and that the three parcels were considered as one, so accessing Meeks Farm Road amounted to an unauthorized annexation. He said any signage along the road would have to be approved by the St. Johns Common Property Owners Association.

Staff Recommendation: Preliminary approval with the condition to further study the north façade that faces Maybank Highway with final review by the Board.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Ken said that the lights would be in the upper slope of the gas canopy, so there wouldn't be any spillover light into the adjacent neighborhoods. Greg said they were meeting the appropriate setback for gasoline tanks and petroleum equipment - the hatch line circles on the plans showed their limitations. He said their petroleum systems were double wall tanks and piping that were constantly monitored and met all the State and DHEC guidelines. He said he would reach out to Mr. Cox to address his concerns. Dinos noted that the project had come before them in July for conceptual approval. He asked if there had been any opposition at that point. David and Erica confirmed there hadn't been any. Dinos clarified there were no subject variances that were required to advance the project. Erica said the only thing that had been brought up that evening that could be a potential issue was access on

Meeks Farm Road, but that was something that really should be handled with TRC and not DRB. Ben said the building was fine and would be nice on Maybank. He understood the neighborhood's issues, but most of those complaints were handled by zoning and TRC. He liked David's suggestion to add denser vegetation along the southern perimeter of the property. Erica said she agreed about the rear buffer and with staff's comment to replace the wood fence with something more substantial. Erin said it was unfortunate that most of the buffer was consumed by the swale, but she didn't know how it could be reworked because then it got into stormwater and engineering. She said further attention should be paid to the landscaping between the store and Maybank. She said most of the plant selection was native, but several of the plantings were deciduous and their evergreen selection was not the most robust species, so she asked that they reconsider the pallet and placement. Erica noted there was a 3ft. slope from the bottom of the swale to the top, so she advised them to be cognizant of that, too. Ben suggested adding a masonry wall to the southern portion of the property. Erin said she didn't disagree, but it was also the only area they had for plantings. Stephanie said, as a resident, she would prefer a sturdier retaining wall since a wood fence would fall and wear over time. Ashley said if it was her home, she would prefer to have more plantings. Erica advised studying it further and speaking with the residents whose properties abutted the project. Erin said the whole area needed more study since the swale took up so much space. Erica said the drive aisles between the fuel pumps and parking spaces were wide. If they pinched that a bit, it would help create more space for the buffer.

MOTION: Preliminary approval, with staff comments # 2, 3 and 4. Further study of the rear (south) buffer to provide a more substantial screening for the neighbors to the south. Restudy the landscape along Maybank Hwy, consider a more robust evergreen plant pallet than what is proposed.

MADE BY: DL SECOND: BW VOTE: FOR 6 AGAINST 0

3. 3486-3492 Maybank Hwy. - TMS# 279-00-00-055, 056, 057

Request conceptual approval for a new multifamily development.

Owner:	Hamlet at Maybank, LLC
Applicant:	Steve Farmartino
Neighborhood/Area:	John's Island

Presenter: Laura Helminski

Project Detail: Laura said they had received Board comments about the landscape and plantings, so they had created groupings with similar species and shape that would provide a unifying pattern across the site. The new beds and groups were designed to frame and accent the adjacent architecture and complement existing tree canopies. They had also added benches to create passive green space throughout the site and more native plantings. They had relocated units from pod 6 to create more greenspace overlooking the wetlands. In pod 7, they rotated the townhomes to be parallel with the street in order to create a green corridor. In pod 11, they decreased the unit density and spread out the townhomes to give more greenspace between each unit. They had also added a new pocket park with a walking path. The clubhouse had been rotated 90 degrees so that the front façade was the view terminus when you entered from Maybank Highway. The front porch and windows gave it a pedestrian scale. The pool was now centered on the fitness center, not the clubhouse. They also added an additional park behind the clubhouse and another pocket park along the main drive.

Public Comment: N/A

Staff Recommendation: Conceptual approval.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Dinos thanked the applicant for digging into the previous Board comments. It was a successful project, very vernacular, and it worked well in the context of Johns Island. Erin said she agreed. The landscape had come a long way, but there were native plants that could be used as alternatives in the ornamental plantings.

MOTION: Conceptual approval with Board comment to include more native alternatives in the ornamental plant pallet.

MADE BY: BW SECOND: ST VOTE: FOR 6 AGAINST 0

4. 1475 Folly Rd. – TMS# 334-00-00-048

Request preliminary approval for a new automotive repair shop.

Owner:	1475 Folly Road LLC
Applicant:	LeCraw Engineering, Inc.
Neighborhood/Area:	James Island

Presenter: Thomas Dugan, Billy Green, Jr., Dana King, Larry Lesser

Project Detail: Thomas said they had revised the grading plan. The infiltration trench now had a turf grass cover. They had looked into doing a bio-retention facility, but due to site restrictions, they weren't able to make that happen. He said nothing changed on the utility plans. Larry said they had included a walkway through the landscaping along Folly Road and a bench. The landscaping on the northern side of the building was a looser, more native area and had taller shrubs for screening. They were using a number of grasses along the pond to echo the rest of the landscaping. Dana said the roof structures were the same, but they had removed the exposed rafter tails to create a solid fascia around the building and give it more of an industrial feel. On the office side of the building, they had added 12ft. awnings that projected 4ft. from the building. The awnings had two tie-backs that connected them to the building. The window height was the same, but they created a panel look below the window, so that the full picture matched the image of the garage door. They had also added a masonry screen wall to cover the utilities. Ben said they had previously talked about having larger overhangs, but now it looked like at least a foot had been taken off. Dana said the depths had changed because the current design had awnings over every window and the front door, so the extension of the roof eaves wasn't necessary for protection from weather.

Public Comment: N/A

Staff Recommendation: Final approval.

Board Comment(s)/Action: Ben said he felt like a building this massive should have more than a 1.6ft. overhang. He appreciated that awnings were added to the front, but they weren't added to the back. He said the proportions worked better in the previous iteration. Dinos said he agreed that longer overhangs would be appropriate.

MOTION: Final approval with staff comment # 1 and 2, and Board comment to bring back the roof overhangs as shown previously, without the rafter tails. Final permit set to be submitted to staff for a final sign off. No mock up panel required for this project.

MADE BY: ST SECOND: ES VOTE: FOR 6 AGAINST 0

5. Approval of the minutes from the 1.3.22 DRB meeting.

MOTION: Approval.

MADE BY: DL SECOND: ST VOTE: FOR 6 AGAINST 0

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Submitted by Andrea Derungs
Clerk of Council's Office