

COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

August 27, 2020

Members Present

Susan Stilwell
Robert Stowe
Robert Weir
Robin Crews
Jeffrey Bond
Jackson Weller

Members Absent

Michael Nicholas

Staff

Ken Gillie
Bonnie Case
Clarke Whitfield
Ryan Dodson

Ms. Crews called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

Request PLCAR20200000151 filed by, Keisha L. Corbett, requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness at 864 Pine Street to do the following:

- 1. Window Replacement to accessory structure with Pella 250 series windows. The desired windows will be vinyl, but all stops, trim, casing on the interior and exterior will be wood. The Pella 250 Vinyl window will appear to be wooden from the street. The grille on the windows will be Grille SDL 7/8" contour, which on visualization will add characteristic of a wood window. Currently none of the windows in the accessory building are identical. Replacing the windows will correct this issue and make the structure sound and secure.*
- 2. Removal of the window on the front of the accessory structure and placing wood siding to match the existing wood sliding. The front window on the accessory building does not match any of the other windows. This window does not appear to be an original window of the accessory structure.*

Mrs. Crews opened the Public Hearing.

Present to speak on behalf of this request was Ms. Keisha Corbett, owner of 864 Pine Street.

Ms. Crews stated is there anything that you would like to say on this application?

Ms. Corbett stated no, I was here last time and I think that you just needed a little more information. I do know that from the original guidelines that I am not supposed to do the vinyl windows. I am asking permission to do the vinyl windows because to be honest I cannot find anybody in the City that has the time and is willing to do these windows. I am really trying to kick start this project and get the back of the house done. When I originally started this project, it was almost four years ago. I did a lot of work and then I had a very hard time with the bank. I was using American National Bank and they told me to use a local bank because of what I was doing. I had an issue up until everything

was fine until I needed someone to appraise the property. Once that came about, basically, I was told that no one would agree to appraise the property due to what I wanted to do to the property. That nothing was selling, of course things have changed a lot now but nothing was selling at the time. No one would agree to say what I was about to do to this house and what the bank was going to give me was going to vouch if I defaulted on the loan. So, what I am doing with some life changes, I ended up having a baby, and just getting this kick started I wanted to do the back of the house myself. I just want to show them what I can do with the back of the house and hopefully have this done in the next seven to eight months. Then I will get the front of the house going. To be honest I can't find anybody that is not already working on another project somewhere to help me with the windows. I went and spoke to someone at The Roanoke Division of Pella windows that works in the Lynchburg and Roanoke area and he showed me some windows that they put in some homes in the Historic areas. We just came up with a first option that I would ask for to try to make it look as close as possible to a wooden window. What we went with is vinyl, it is going to be with my understanding, it is a pocket window that just slides into the square, and I'm going to keep everything around it. If you notice by the pictures, there are four windows, which are the same size. Then there is a fifth window on the second request and I am just asking for to get rid of that window because it literally looks like a little bathroom window that is in front of the home. Between the two doors I am asking to get rid of that and put the siding back and to put the vinyl pocket window in the others. You will notice it is the third window that looks like it could be original with all the trimmings around the side. I am going to try to model that window from the rest of them because all the windows are very different. I kind of picked one and said I think this looks the closest to what is was before and I am going to try to duplicate it.

Mr. Paul Liepe stated the reason that I am appearing is because I don't believe that this Commission has the authority to approve vinyl windows. Reading from the Old West End design guidelines, use of modern materials will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, which is what you have been doing, as you have allowed new materials to come in, with the exception of vinyl replacement windows, which are not allowed. It doesn't say that you can review and approve, it says they are not allowed. I hate to hesitate that you go off creating a problem by doing that. I suggest to Ms. Corbett that I have checked this morning and that Pella Manufacturing that she is planning on using has wood windows essentially in the same format. I imagine that they would be a few dollars more but that is one of the benefits of living in the Historic District. You get to pay a little bit more for everything. I urge you not to approve vinyl windows for two reasons and one is that wood windows are available in the same format and another is, I believe that you don't have the authority to do so.

Ms. Corbett stated I do agree with everything that he is saying but the wooden windows are going to be double the amount for the window. I get it, and I chose to buy this house and I get it all. I have a lot of money to spend on this house. It's not just I have to fix windows and I understand that this is my problem. If it was just the windows, I would spend the \$16,000.00 for the windows but I have about \$400,000 to \$500,000 worth of work to do. I am trying to see if that is an option. I probably need correction on this and someone here can tell me. What is the communication when or if it can be seen from the road or not. Is that something that just floats around in the community that people say? What is the truth about that or is there no truth with that? I have been told before that if it's not seen from the road or you can't see it from the road that there is a different opinion about that. I don't know the rules on that. I am asking because now I feel like I'm in a hard space trying to move on a project because I may have some misinformation. I'm not asking to change anything on that house in the front. I am just asking for this accessory building in the back to be reviewed, but if you can't then you can't. I'm just asking for permission to do that and if there is no permission to do that, if there are some resources in the community that you know about that can help me for like paying \$16,000 for windows because I have the quote for that. He told me about those windows and those windows are amazing but I have a lot of money I am required to spend and if it is not true that, it has to be that you can't see it from the road. Can someone tell me is that like a myth? Is there some truth to that, because I have been told that a lot?

Ms. Stilwell stated that building is visible from Pine Street and it is probably visible from the street behind there. I don't know if you can see it from Chestnut Street or not. Probably, because with the Church being torn down and you have so many houses around there, you have a clear view.

Ms. Corbett stated is there any truth to that saying? That is what I am asking.

Mr. Whitfield stated yes, if you can see the structure or any part of the structure from the public right of way, which is a road, a sidewalk, a cut through that is actually publicly owned, public alley, or anything that is publicly owned on the right of way that this Commission has jurisdiction over that. Then you would have to follow under those rules.

Ms. Corbett stated so that means if the corner of the house has nothing to do with the window, it is just the structure itself.

Mr. Whitfield stated I think it would be the placing that can be seen from the public right of way.

Ms. Corbett stated I have walked it before and the only window that you could see is the one on the corner. I am just asking for a little bit of assistance and yes, it is my responsibility when I decided to do this project.

Ms. Stilwell stated I would to comment I am very familiar with this home. It was one of the most stunning homes on Pine Street. It has had a very tragic history. Since Biltmore Bank and C B Maverick's has bought, that building and they restored the soffits all the way around and cleaned the brick. It looked so good. Then a property owner on Main Street wanted to buy it and paid \$15,000 for this building. She never did anything to it, it started to deteriorate, and she owed a contractor for work that he did on her house on Main Street. Instead of paying him, she gave him this building. He was the owner that would not do anything with the back of the house and it sat for years. The City is aware of all the additions that were ripped off that main house. The worst thing that he did was he painted the Historic brick and that is an absolute no-no. He did more damage to that house than you could imagine. The roof was leaking and he was a jackleg contractor that ended up with it. I am bothered about putting vinyl windows anywhere in the Historic District. As Paul Liepe stated, it is prohibited by the design guidelines. There are people that do restore those windows and to my understanding, there are people in Martinsville that would make those windows.

Ms. Corbett stated I grew up in Milton and I bought this home here because I wanted this house here. I live in Charlotte and I have called around and everybody is busy. I am ready to go and I feel like with all of the delays that I need to make some kind of move. There are many people that do not want to do labor and I do not know how to do these things but I am willing to pay somebody to do it.

Ms. Stilwell stated how long have you owned this house?

Ms. Corbett stated almost four years.

Mr. Bond stated could the City give us a little guidance on what Mr. Liepe brought up about us being excluded from taken this into consideration.

Mr. Gillie stated I am addressing a couple of concerns. Article 3 Section C Item 2 talks about where they do it and if it is visible from a public way, so it is in the code. The Commission has approved vinyl clad windows in the past once, at 878 Main Street in January of 2015. You do have the authority and the code says they're not permitted but again this is a two-step process. You review it whether it complies with the guidelines and the guidelines simply says that is not allowed. You can still make that determination that the guidelines say it is not allowed. You make that second determination, you have that authority in our opinion and as the Zoning Administrator, I feel you have that authority to do it and you have precedent in the past by doing it once previously. I know it has been a number of years since it has been done, but it has been done.

Mr. Weir stated that particular case was high. It was on the third floor.

Mr. Gillie stated correct.

Mr. Weir stated there is no way that anybody could make out what that was.

Mr. Gillie stated it was visible from the public right of way and it was quite a distance being on the third floor. Not defending either way, there is a garage in the back and it is visible from the public right of way and is visible from Pine Street. It is not just visible right now because there are leaves on the trees. We say it is visible anytime and in the middle of winter, things that were not visible currently are visible. Your building can be seen from different places during different times of the year. That is why in our determination it is visible and that is why you are here.

Mr. Whitfield stated Mr. Gillie stated you might want to tell everybody what that second step is because she has not been here.

Mr. Gillie stated it is a two-step process where the Commissions say whether it meets the guidelines or it doesn't. If they feel it does not meet the guidelines they can then make a second motion to deviate from those guidelines. If they feel it meets the guidelines it is one-step. If it doesn't then it goes on and if they feel, it doesn't meet the guidelines but they want to approve it, that is the second step. If they feel it doesn't meet the guidelines and they don't want to do anything, then it stops at that point. It gives them the option. You are the board that looks over possible modifications.

Mr. Whitfield stated there is a standard for that second step; you have to determine that it is not a detriment to the District or to the structure.

Mr. Weir stated we made that one exception because it was so high off the ground. I think we need to be very careful because this is going to cause us some problems in the future. This is something that we want to be careful about and I do not know what the answer is to satisfy the guidelines and satisfy the citizen that wants to do this.

Ms. Crews closed the Public Hearing.

Ms. Stilwell stated if we don't protect the image of the Old West End, we will devalue every house in there. I know it is not cheap and I have restored many houses here and in Colorado and Commercial buildings here. I had to work to pay for each thing that I did. I thought okay that is going to cost \$5,000 dollars and when I get \$5,000 dollars I can do that. Every now and then, some crisis came up and I would have to spend the \$5,000 dollars somewhere else. Why make these up into Barbie dollhouses just because you think that you can't pay for something. Then you should not own something that you cannot afford to take care of. I mean we have seen the destruction on Pine Street. It was brutal what happened on that street and nobody wanted to live there. One house had eight apartments in it and they were like a boarding house. There was crime, drugs, and prostitution. We have people coming from all over from the United States that are appreciative of what we had to offer and especially at the prices

that we have to offer. Many of them have the facades redone but they need everything inside. I think we would be making a mistake to open this up to vinyl windows.

Mr. Bond stated is the previous case on the main structure or the accessory structure?

Ms. Stilwell stated main structure and there is only one structure there but it is way up in the trees.

Mr. Bond stated I'm kind of on the fence listening to both sides. There should be some weight placed due to the fact that this is an accessory structure. If this were a main house, I would agree with what you are saying. Being that it is in the back with limited view. I don't know, it kind of blurs the line a lot to me.

Mr. Weller stated the other property, it was only because of the distance being up high and you couldn't really see it very well. That was the rationale from now to then. I agree that this is an accessory structure. What is the distance from any sidewalk or street? How far back on the property is it?

Ms. Stilwell stated it is right on it and it is the big house.

Mr. Weller stated it is the yellow one. In my mind, it is a very similar rationale. It could be used there.

Mr. Gillie stated 88 feet approximately.

Mr. Weller stated I know that house on Main Street is not 88 feet tall and I am on the fence with this one too.

Ms. Stilwell made a motion to deny the installation of the vinyl windows based on the guidelines. Mr. Weir seconded the motion. The motion to deny was approved by a 6-0 vote.

Mr. Weir made a motion to approve item 2 as it meets the guidelines as submitted. Mr. Stowe seconded the motion. The motion was approved by 6-0 vote.

APPROVAL OF THE MINTUES

Mr. Weir made a motion to approve the July 23, 2020 minutes. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

Approved