

COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
MEETING OF May 25, 2011

**Members Present**

Fred Meder  
Richard Morris  
Jeffrey Carson  
Robin Crews

**Members Absent**

Susan Stilwell  
Cynthia Castle

**Staff**

Renee Blair  
Christy Taylor  
Emily Scolpini

Chairman, Fred Meder called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m. (waiting on quorum)

**I. ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING**

*Item 1. Certificate of Appropriateness PLCAR20110000214, to replace hidden gutters with conventional seamless metal gutters at 150 Holbrook Avenue.*

Open the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of the request was Mr. John Light and Mr. Gary Grant.

Mr. Meder asked Mr. Grant are you going to present for Mr. Light?

Mr. Grant responded if Mr. Light wants me to say something that is the only reason I am here.

Mr. Light stated I would prefer if he would speak. He knows more about what you all do than I; and I will be glad to answer any questions that anybody has.

Mr. Meder stated we are comfortable with that.

Mr. Grant stated my name is Gary Grant at 907 Grove Street. About two (2) or three (3) weeks ago, Mr. Light was on the way to make application for this agenda item. I happened to be here in the Municipal Building and we ran into each other. He told me what was going on in terms of what he was faced with and what he was proposing to do. He asked me if I had any insights on it. I told him that the only thing I could say if it meant anything at all is two (2) things: One (1), there is precedence in the Old Westend for moving away from the original hidden or concealed gutters to hanging style gutters. The building that I would point specifically to that this Commission approved in either the very late 80's or very early 90's was the Langhorne house at 117 Broad Street. I was on the Board at that time working with an historical architect in Richmond about preservation issues for the building. After considerable deliberation, after a redesign of the slopes, and valley configuration of the standing seam tern metal that was subsequently placed on the roof and wondering what to do about concealed gutters at that time as original from the 1874 house they were not functioning very well and apparently were, you might say under built or ill built when the building was new. He recommended in this case, they ended up using half rounds. That would be the first thing, just the very precedence for not staying with the original configuration. The only other thing that I would say is first of all, having served on this Commission before and having the greatest respect for what it does, and having the greatest respect for the Old Westend, questions especially of architectural integrity and I think any of you around the table know how I feel about architectural integrity in the abstract. The reason that I sat on the Board for the years that I sat on the CAR and that you are sitting here now is to weigh issues that are not quite as black and white as going to the Design Guidelines and saying "well, it is this way and so there we are." The Broad Street case that I bring up from twenty (20) years ago does appear to be one where the original system was not terribly well executed. A question you might ask today at 150 Holbrook is how well executed and how well does the concealed

gutter system perform? That of course is not necessarily an aesthetic question. It could be an integrity question. I guess mainly it is a performance question. I guess my sense from what I have been hearing about this is that those concealed gutters perhaps were not terribly well designed from the time the house went up, which I think was around 1880. I would certainly suggest that you think about that.

The Board had discussion about Jerry Brackett doing the repairs. Mr. Light presented a letter to the Board signed by Mr. Brackett acknowledging the poor gutter design.

Mr. Morris asked is he doing your whole roof over?

Mr. Light responded yes. He suggested we go this route because of problems we have had repeatedly ever since I have owned the house, fifteen (15) plus years. We are trying to get some kind of final resolution to the problems that we have been having. That is where we are.

Mrs. Crews asked are they hidden all of the way around the house?

Mr. Light responded no.

Mr. Meder asked is there a possibility of preserving the hidden gutter on the porch?

Mr. Light responded I do not believe so.

Mr. Meder stated you can really see the hidden gutters from the picture.

Mr. Morris stated if you put hanging gutters on here, there is no way to get away from the fact that it is going to change. It is going to cover. Any gutters that you put, whether it is round or O-G, it is going to cover up what is existing there anyway. I think that is why he is suggesting putting a gutter that is similar to what he has.

Mr. Carson stated my guess is they will be carving that cornice piece of wood in order to put in a matching piece.

Mr. Morris stated I think there is sort of a conflict, because we also told the guy on Green Street to take down his gutters that were the O-G design and put round up. That was because he had round ones.

Mr. Meder stated it was because he did it without approval too.

Mr. Carson stated there was everything wrong with the Green Street project. The original had half that were copper or zinc. He wanted to put in the aluminum gutters that looked like the type that go on suburban houses. We needed the materials and the design of the building itself. That is why we turned that down. Here we have a separate problem and it is sort of a cascading problem. There are a lot of things that you would like not to happen. Luckily you are replacing the whole roof which will mitigate the question of what to do with the existing trough.

Mr. Morris asked when are you planning on doing this?

Mr. Light responded as soon as we can get approval.

Mr. Carson stated the thing about this interior gutter system is that it is not complete. Most houses, especially later houses where you have interior gutters, the downspout is also inside, which creates a whole bunch of other problems.

Mr. Meder stated my house is leaking right now.

Mr. Carson stated it is horrible. I understand where you are coming from. The thing about it is, in order to do it; you are going to have to remove the existing material. That would be the other portion of cornice. Any gutter that went up would have to mimic as closely as possible the original cornice, the O-G, or whatever it might be that currently exists.

Mr. Light stated I do not know much about gutters. I am not a construction person at all.

Mr. Carson stated Gary can give you a clue.

Mr. Light stated I hope to be getting advice. I am sure that they will do as good a job as they have done with the rest of the house.

Mr. Morris asked did he say that they were not repairable?

Mr. Light responded you put me in a little bit of a bad position. I do not want to utilize words that he may or may not have used. What he said was that they were poorly designed to begin with and not effectively functioning.

Mr. Morris asked have you had structural problems at your house?

Mr. Light responded I have had some water issues.

Mr. Morris asked was that because of the gutters themselves or just because the roof was bad to begin with?

Mr. Light responded I am sure a lot of it is because of the gutters themselves. I get the impression in talking with Mr. Brackett that I thought it was something of the matter of replacing metal and he said that I had lousy design work. Making this function within the original design is not favorable.

Mr. Carson stated the thing in looking at the house today is the exterior downspouts, where they come out, how they interrupt the cornice itself. The original design is awkward. Again, I commiserate with you. My biggest concern were we to approve something like this, is exactly what the new gutter would look like. Its material, its finish with the downspouts above and how they connect, and with this we do not have enough information. Even if we were totally in favor, we would still need more information on how this would be constructed.

Mr. Morris stated I would agree with that. It is not a difficult thing. I mean we all know Jerry here. We just need to make sure that however he is constructing the roof to fit over the hidden gutters and how it is going to change that roof line, also how the gutters are going to be attached with the existing trim. We do not know any of that. It is beneficial for you too. Being a historic house, you want it to look right. You do not want it to look odd. We hate to hold you up like this.

Mr. Carson stated we are leaving you with some instructions and that is to bring more information, because you do not have enough information.

Mr. Meder stated people think the role of the Commission of Architectural Review is to deny people from doing things. That is not really our role. Our role is to make people think about what is happening. Mr. Light has put in exterior storms with Plexiglas. He is very cognitive of the look of the home. I think we all

want to get to the same place. I really feel like the people that are employed here are going to want to get to the same place we do. It is our responsibility to see that drawing. I agree with my colleagues.

Mr. Morris stated and to help you along, I am an architect. I could not charge you anything for being on this Board, but if Jerry cannot draw you something, I would explain to him what we need and what we are looking for in detail. If he cannot do it, I will be more than glad to sketch it out for him.

Mr. Light stated I do not know anything about how gutters are shaped. I understand where you are coming from. I have tried to look around here since this issue came up. I do not think a half round is going to be anywhere close. You need something with some shape to it.

Mr. Carson stated and they cannot be aluminum.

Mr. Meder stated if we approve this, we do not want to screw up. We want to keep your house looking as beautiful as it is. Rick and I did some drawings and work at my house. I screwed them all up. I could not figure it out by looking at it. That is a real life situation that happened only a year ago. I feel for you, but I think if we had more information we would all go away comfortable saying that my house, your house is really going to be done well, to the level of expertise that you would like to see it at. You are having Gary help you. You are having Jerry help you. These are all experts in their fields, but bad things happen to people all the time. I agree with what they are saying.

Mr. Morris stated as a matter of fact I am going to be working with Jerry on his next job, so I can talk to him about this.

Mr. Light stated I am sure that you can articulate this far better than I can.

Mr. Morris stated this is a little tricky. I mean you have got the roof coming down over the gutters and then you have a flat spot. He has got to figure out how to do all that and get the water to drain properly. I am sure that you do not want to change your roof line either. I actually like that house. It is a very pretty house.

Mr. Carson stated for your benefit, the more you know about what is going to be done, and the more you understand about why it is being done, the more you will understand about why it is costing so much.

Mr. Light stated let be clear. I already understand that.

The Board members had some discussion with Mr. Light about the work being done to the roof not relating to the request.

Mr. Meder stated so Mr. Light needs to come back.

Ms. Blair stated we need to make a motion for that.

Mr. Meder asked do we do that, or do we deny this one?

Ms. Blair responded you can make a motion to table it for further information.

Mr. Carson stated I think that is a better idea.

Mr. Meder stated I need someone to do that, please.

Ms. Taylor stated close the public hearing first, please.

Close the public hearing.

**Mrs. Crews made a motion to table until more information is presented. Mr. Carson seconded the motion.**

Mr. Light asked would the motion be in order to clarify what you are looking for. Members that are here are generally okay with the concept that you are looking for a drawing to determine application.

Mr. Morris stated we are looking for more detailed information.

Mr. Carson stated on materials.

Mr. Morris stated how the existing gutter will be covered and the new gutter applied to the outside fascia.

Mr. Meder asked do you agree with the amendment?

Mrs. Crews responded yes, I would like to make a motion.

Mr. Morris stated we need a detailed drawing or sketch.

Mr. Meder asked you are asking to amend the motion?

Mrs. Crews responded I would amend the motion to include more details on materials and structure on what is proposed.

Mr. Meder asked do you have that?

Ms. Blair stated you need to second the amendment.

**Mrs. Crews made a motion to amend the motion to include more details on materials and structure on what is proposed. Mr. Carson seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.**

Mr. Carson asked once we have a new member selected, can we have a new list of the members?

Ms. Blair responded sure.

Mr. Meder asked typically we find ourselves asking applicants for more detail. Is there any way we can have them get a clue?

Mr. Carson stated when you receive something, we are hoping that maybe you will be able to field it.

Mr. Meder stated I mean they can come and not bring anything, but I am thinking you are asking this. Maybe you could.

Ms. Blair stated I would be happy to.

Mr. Crews asked do they know it is recommended for denial when they come in?

Ms. Blair responded yes, they receive packets the same time that you do.

Mr. Carson stated I hope that you understand where we are coming from.

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Carson stated I saw nothing wrong. I approve. I do have a question. It seemed like every time that someone mentioned one or two, the first issue I have taken up with is that there would be a numerical one in parenthesis. You do not have to do that. If I am saying there are 3-2 feet in the length of this building, then yes do the parenthetical. There seem to be a lot of parenthetical here.

Ms. Taylor stated it is just habit from Council agendas and stuff.

Mr. Carson stated it does not affect the minutes at all. The minutes are just perfect.

Mr. Meder stated they really do not miss anything.

Ms. Taylor stated verbatim.

Ms. Blair stated we need a second.

**Mr. Carson made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 28, 2011 meeting. The minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.**

## IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Meder stated we are having a preservation task force meeting June 16, 2011 7:00 PM at the Preservation Center. We had great success with the last meeting. There were around sixty (60) people. They have been working in our neighborhood going after the bad guys.

Mr. Morris asked who has?

Mr. Meder responded the police. I do not know what the agenda is yet, but I think we are looking for some more input.

Mr. Carson stated I was amazed at how much feedback we have gotten from the community, especially the people who are the perpetrators. There were eight specific letters that we sent out, and there have been five responses. I was stunned.

Mrs. Crews asked were the responses were upbeat?

Mr. Meder responded the Deputy Chief of Police was there. It has been very positive.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.

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APPROVED