

RIVER DISTRICT DESIGN COMMISSION

MEETING OF

January 9, 2020

Members Present

George Davis
Andrew Hessler
Peyton Keesee
Adam Jones

Members Absent

John Ranson
Courtney Nicholas
R.J. Lackey

Staff

Ken Gillie
Lisa Jones
Clarke Whitfield

Mr. Dodson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Chairman.

Mr. Keesee nominated Mr. Davis as Chairman. The nomination was approved by a 4-0 vote.

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mr. Davis nominated Mr. Keesee as Vice Chairman. The nomination was approved by a 4-0 vote.

Mr. Whitfield called for nominations for Secretary.

Mr. Keesee nominated Mr. Lackey for Secretary. The nomination was approved by a 4-0 vote.

ITEMS FOR PUBLIC HEARING

1. *Request a Certificate of Appropriateness at 401 Bridge Street to remove the cladding from the bridge spanning overtop Bridge Street and connecting 401 Bridge Street to 400 Bridge Street.*Mr.

Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was Gary Shifflett, I am available for any questions that you may have.

Mr. Keesee stated I see your picture and everything, are you going to strip it and paint it a certain color?

Mr. Shifflett stated yes, we would paint it to preserve the structural integrity of the steel. We would probably paint it black, something that doesn't stand out.

Mr. Keesee stated so my next question is the sign that you are suggesting?

Mr. Shifflett stated yes that is just a suggestion and something that we would like to put up there to as a nod to the River District sign that is currently on the water tower. That is kind of a gateway to the River District. We think that would fit perfect at that location as you come under the bridge into the River District.

Mr. Keesee stated would it be a one sided?

Mr. Shifflett stated it would be on both sides of the bridge.

Mr. Davis stated the diagram that you show, is that the actual steel work that is underneath there?

Mr. Shifflett stated that is the actual work.

Mr. Davis stated has this been presented to the State as far as the Historic Preservation where you get your tax credits?

Mr. Shifflett stated we have our Historians working on the amendment to our proposals, part 2 of our application, because we were approved to have it removed. We need to have it approved to leave it in place and that is in the works. We didn't want to present it to them yet until we got approval from here.

Mr. Davis stated I don't know if any of you from our last meeting had a chance to talk to any citizens about the bridge or not. I was fortunate to be able to talk to Mark Holland and Rick Barker. I talked to them at different times and not all together and to explain the situation and they were very familiar with the bridge itself. Each one of them said that they thought this was very appropriate and a good compromise for not taking the bridge down and for leaving the structure there. Like Garrett said, it would be kind of a gate way going into the downtown area.

Mr. Jones stated I to spoke with about six people, one of them being Mark Holland. They were locals and some runners and out of six, four of them didn't really pay any attention to it. Two, like you, thought it was a great idea with the skeleton bridge and updating the sign. I got very similar responses as well. Is there going to be any type of lightning or anything?

Mr. Shifflett stated I think what we would like to do is some led lightning and I don't know to what extent.

Mr. Jones stated were you able to get your windows?

Mr. Shifflett stated yes.

Mr. Jones stated how large do you think the River District sign would be?

Mr. Shifflett stated I'm not a 100% sure but it is about 10 feet, roughly the two end panels are narrower than the middle. The middle is about 10 feet and the sign is probably about 8 feet wide and about 6ish feet tall. It needs to be large enough to fill the space and legible to see.

Mr. Hessler stated since this is not for a business we shouldn't have any trouble with signage per footage?

Mr. Davis stated that is a question that I was getting ready to ask.

Mr. Gillie stated it's considered just like the other River District signs, artwork, and streetscape improvement.

Mr. Hessler stated can we put a greenlight for any type of lightning so that they don't have to come back again?

Mr. Keesee stated how would you state it?

Mr. Davis stated not sure without knowing exactly what kind of lightning would be put on it.

Mr. Shifflett something like LED lights that can be set in and not visible until the lights are on. It would give a nice glow.

Ms. Sonja Ingram, Preservation of Virginia. I put this out on next door, which is a social media app. I talked to a few people, I had a few people respond to the next-door post, and it wasn't many. They all agreed that they were happy the bridge was going to stay in place but they did not think that they knew treatment was the best way forward. I agree with that personally. I'm really glad that the bridge will stay in place. I think that the bridge itself is not historic, technically fifty years old, but it is locally important, and there is something about the massing of it and when you change it to the skeleton view, it really alters it too much. I think the people sort of expect to see that bridge that has been there all of these years. I don't know many there; won't be any complaints or anything from the public. I think it will be too drastically changed. I thought perhaps a good option would be to repair that siding and to place some small rectangle windows in the sides that would allow light into those apartments. One question that I wasn't sure about are those windows the only ones to those specific apartments? That would be something important to address. If that specific apartment had more than one window that one could look out into the interior of the bridge and have some small windows placed into the sides, that would allow light in.

Mr. Shifflett stated those are the only windows in those apartments.

Ms. Ingram stated I guess then that changes things. It's so drastically different if you look at the skeleton and the trusses, it kind of fits with the downtown area. The bridge is currently and very massive so it gives the streetscape a very different feel to it. If you change it to just the truss, it's going to be a much more industrial kind of look. I just think it is a very drastic change.

Mr. Davis stated I would like to read something if I may. This is from the guidelines set forth to help us in making our decision. Danville and its buildings have grown and changed over time. The purpose of these guidelines is not to preserve historic buildings as exactly as they were when built as a sort of museum but to rather allow them to adapt gracefully to new uses and new technologies and materials. I appreciate very much, what you have said and what you have brought from the people that answered to your website. I also look at what Garrett and Ross have presented and it does fit with the area, I think. Even if it was fifty years old, that is not what we are here for. We are here to try to adapt any new use to the guidelines that are set forth for us. That's just a little enhancement of what we should be deciding on today.

Mr. Guy Dyer stated was there a structure there before they remodeled and was there a bridge across Bridge Street before Diamond remodeled?

Mr. Davis stated yes.

Mr. Dyer stated so the structure itself is over fifty years old. The fact that it was a structure there, it just has been recladding. If you look underneath the bottom, it looks like you can see some green floorboards that have been painted. So I'm sure they have been through it and they know what the structure is, because my main concern is that if you removed the cladding and the super structure underneath the cladding, is that appropriate to be exposed to the elements? I do not want this to be a deal that you take the cladding down and you go oops, guess what, we can't let all of this be exposed to the elements and we have to take the whole bridge down.

Mr. Shifflett stated the structure was built I believe in 74 or 75. The steel is there as long as it is painted and maintained, it will last for a long time as long as it is maintained.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Jones stated I think it's a good idea and listening to Sonja and you read, I think we are in a position where there comes a time where change is needed and comfort zones and nothing ever grows there. You can look at things from several different perspectives and say hey this bridge has been standing there and it's not quite fifty years old and it was probably a nice beacon for the cobblestone bridge street at the time. Now we have

fast forwarded and here we are thirty plus years later and the bridge is still standing and now we are in a different part and we are trying to reimagine Danville. I like what is being presented, and I like the skeleton bridge as the man mentioned, the structure stays and Garrett and his team will maintain it properly. I see a nice trim lightning going around it and the sign is large enough to be exposed for people to see if from two different directions. I think there has to become a time where you see a history in the bridge itself. I like the idea.

Mr. Hessler stated I would second that and I like how it is moving forward and almost a ghosting of what is was. I do think it would be nice if it were lit up at night. I think there is a lot of the River District that is dark at night.

Mr. Keesee stated I think they came up with a good compromise. What is the perfect fit for this I don't know? I think this will be fine. I don't disagree with that young woman in the back for what she is saying but we have to come up with some solution here.

Mr. Gillie stated from a staff's perspective if you want it lit, my suggestion is if you are going to approve it now with it subject to the condition that they bring the lightning plan back in the future. Do they just light the bottom, top, do they light one side, because this is a box structure that we have three dimensions and what part is being lit? In order for me to enforce it, that information is difficult. I think you let them take the cladding off and leave the structure painted and put the signs up and bring lighting plan back in the future and give them 6 months to a year to respond that way they can do the design work come back to you and we can work those details out.

Mr. Hessler made a motion that it meets guidelines as presented and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the structure and signage with the staff recommendations. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.

Mr. Hessler made a motion that the previous approved motion being continued upon a future lighting plan to be discussed within a year. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0 vote.

- 2. Request a Certificate of Appropriateness at 629 Craghead Street to add artwork on the Community Garden shed at the Community Market.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

After discussion between Mr. Bruce Wilson and members, they agreed that he will come back with a design and colors for their approval.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

The commissioners voted to hear another request.

- 3. A request has been filed for a Certificate of Appropriateness at 413 Memorial Dr. to add rock facing to the front of store.*

Mr. Davis opened the Public Hearing.

Present on behalf of this request was James Buckner, with Wilkins & Co. Realtors. Mr. Buckner stated, we own that particular property and all we want to do is secure the front of this building. It had glass in it, and over the years, several windows have been broken and they have replaced them several times and they continue to get broken.

Unfortunately, there is only one parking spot and its thirty-minute parking, in front of the building. There is not much of that property other than what they propose which will be a storage facility. They are just asking for a variance to block up the front of it with decorate rock.

Mr. Davis stated how did you come up with the idea of rock?

Mr. Buckner stated I didn't.

Mr. Hessler how recent was the roof put on?

Mr. Buckner stated in the last two years.

Mr. Jones stated is that 6 or 8 feet in height?

Mr. Buckner stated yes sir.

Mr. Jones stated any idea on the paint color?

Mr. Buckner stated it won't be a dark gray that is up there now.

Mr. Jones stated I think the drawing is throwing me off a little bit.

Mr. Davis stated I think it's an interesting idea.

Mr. Keesee stated you are not the only one that is thrown off.

Mr. Davis stated there is nothing to compare this to.

Mr. Jones stated is there any other concepts in there other than rock?

Mr. Buckner stated and you are asking all the questions that I asked. I just got this maybe an hour ago. Mr. Johnson would have been here but he had to rush off to Lynchburg. The rock is the direction that they want to go in.

Mr. Jones stated I think the brick would be better and just paint the whole building one color. I'm not a fan of the rock.

Mr. Davis stated anything they do to it will enhance the look.

Mr. Jones stated this was dropped in your hand about an hour ago it is kind of a rough draft. I think it would help if there were a better way of getting a professional drawing.

Mr. Buckner stated they don't want a property that is hideous looking no more than we as a City want. I'm at your mercy and whatever you think or want I will present to them and see what they say.

Mr. Keesee stated I don't think they are going to go for the rock. It does look like you know what. I don't know what the answer is but I don't think this Committee will go for that. I think brick would work and paint it and you have to make it look better than this somehow.

Mr. Davis closed the Public Hearing.

Mr. Davis stated I think we are going to have to be specific if we decide to allow brick and we have to decide on colors.

Mr. Jones stated it looks like brick would be so much cheaper.

Mr. Whitfield stated another thing you could do is postpone this to the next meeting and have them bring back a better rendering. Then present that to you and then you have taken action on it and it is not denied and they don't have to worry about any time limits. They just come back to the next meeting with a proposal.

Mr. Hessler made a motion to postpone till the next meeting. Mr. Keesee seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 4-0- vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The December 12, 2019 minutes were approved by a unanimous vote .

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Approved By: