

# TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

A regular meeting of the Town of Sullivan's Island Design Review Board was held on the above date at 4:00 p.m. online via Zoom. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act were verified to have been satisfied. Present were Board members Beverly Bohan, Luke Lewis Ron Coish, Billy Craver, Steve Herlong, Kevin Pennington and Bunky Wichmann.

Town Council Members present: No members of Council were present.

Staff Members present: Joe Henderson, Director of Planning/Zoning Administrator, Randy Robinson, Building Official, and Jessi Gress, Business Licensing and Permit Technician.

Members of the public: No members of the public were present.

Media present: No members of the media were present.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Herlong called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and stated that the press and public were duly notified pursuant to State Law and a quorum of Board Members were present.

- I. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve the May 20,2020 Design Review Board Meeting Minutes. Mr. Pennington seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.
- II. **PUBLIC INPUT:** No public comment was made.
- III. **COMMERCIAL DESIGN REVIEWS:**

**Sullivan's Restaurant:** Luke Jarrett, of Synchronicity Design, requested conceptual approval of exterior façade renovations, signage and outdoor patio design modifications for an existing restaurant use at 2019 Middle Street (TMS# 529-09-00-014)

Mr. Henderson stated that the Sullivan's Restaurant is a legal nonconforming use and therefore may not be increased in size, degree of intensity (number of seats), or expand exterior outdoor dining space per Zoning Ordinance Section 21-150. Mr. Henderson stated that the submitted plans confirm no expansion will be taking place and the number of seats will remain 114 inside and 32 outdoor dining.

No public comment was made.

The Board was in favor of the application submitted.

**Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve this application for final approval. Mr. Pennington seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

#### **IV. HISTORIC DESIGN REVIEWS:**

**1752 Central Avenue:** Heather Wilson, architect and applicant, requested approval to construct two accessory structures, swimming pool and modify an historic cistern structure on a designated Sullivan's Island Landmark property (TMS# 523-08-00-041)

Mr. Henderson stated that 1752 Central Avenue is one of the 10 Junior Officers' Quarters. The cistern is one of several intact cisterns 14' in diameter and 10 feet high. Mr. Henderson stated that a structural engineer's letter has been submitted indicating potential failure due to cracks.

No public comment was made.

Ms. Bohan requested that the applicant decrease the height of the accessory structures and asked the applicant to consider saving a little more of the cistern. Mr. Wichmann agreed with Ms. Bohan's comments and suggestions. Mr. Coish, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Pennington, Mr. Craver and Mr. Herlong were in favor of the application presented.

**Mr. Coish made a motion to approve the application for final with the exception that the applicant adjust the height of the accessory structures and to keep the cistern to 36 to 40 inches in height.**

**Mr. Craver amended this motion by granting final approval for the application presented with no modifications. Mr. Lewis seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Bohan made a request that the applicant still consider the suggestions she recommended in reference to the accessory structures and cistern.

**413 Station 23:** John Romano of Drafted Architecture, requested final approval to construct an accessory structure and swimming pool on a designated Sullivan's Island Landmark property (TMS# 529-06-00-0108)

Mr. Henderson stated that the historic renovation of the home was approved in April of 2020. Mr. Henderson stated that the applicant requested approval for an accessory structure and swimming pool.

No public comment was made.

The Board was in favor of the application presented.

**Mr. Wichmann made a motion to approve the application for final approval. Ms. Bohan seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

**V. NON-HISTORIC DESIGN REVIEWS:**

**2256 Myrtle Avenue:** John Romano of Drafted Architecture, requested conceptual approval to enclose a second story covered porch with modifications requested from the zoning standards for principal building square footage (TMS# 529-06-00-025)

Mr. Henderson stated that the applicant requested conceptual approval to enclose a second story covered porch with modifications requested from the zoning standards for principal building square footage. Mr. Henderson stated that the existing home is 4,152 in principal building square footage.

No public comment was made.

The Board was in favor of the application presented.

**Mr. Wichmann made a motion to approve the application for final approval. Mr. Pennington seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

**2714 Brooks Street:** Carl McCants of Mc3 Designs, requested approval for modification of the zoning standards for principal building square footage for a new home construction already issued building permits at the Staff level (TMS# 529-07-00-047)

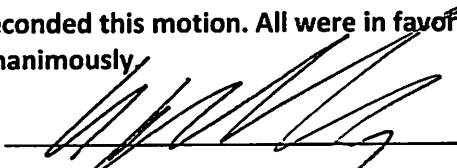
Mr. Henderson stated that the applicant requested conceptual approval to covert attic space with modifications for principal building square footage. Mr. Henderson stated that the existing home is 3, 814 in principal building square footage.

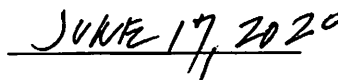
No public comment was made.

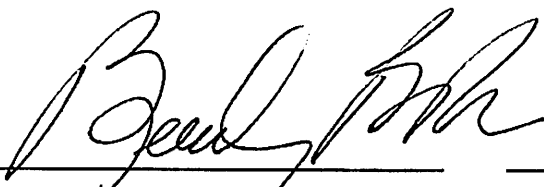
The Board was in favor of the application submitted.

**Mr. Pennington made a motion to approve this application for final approval. Ms. Bohan seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

**VI. ADJOURN: Mr. Wichmann made a motion to adjourn at 5:23 p.m. Mr. Craver seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.**

  
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Steve Herlong, Chairman

  
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Date

  
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Beverly Bohan, Vice-Chairman

7/16/2020

Date

14 June, 2020

## Personal Comments and Thoughts re Design Review Board Granting of Variances from Residential Building Code

1. In the early 2000's the Town of Sullivan's Island undertook an effort to identify and classify houses on the Island that had architectural and /or historical significance deserving of preservation in some way. The Design Review Board was born of this. Changes to those designated properties needed approval from the DRB....relief from certain provisions of the building code was possible as an incentive for those taking on what could be a lengthy and expensive task. In my judgement this has been a successful process in preservation albeit resulting in some structures oversized relative to the lot. But, clearly, an overall good for the Island and future generations.
2. There was also concern for those properties NOT on the "historical" list that in many cases were reflective of the "Island atmosphere" and seemed to have value in representing aspects of architecture thought unique to Sullivan's Island. Many older houses were/are torn down and replaced with new structure. In an effort to ensure this special flair of older, non-historical houses was not lost, the Town ordinances provided for building code relief through DRB variances for builders who "ensured neighborhood compatibility". A list of considerations for the DRB was drawn up in an attempt to describe "neighborhood compatibility" (sec 21-111). I think it missed the mark in guidance to the DRB.
3. In the early 1900's very few houses were elevated as they are today. The incentives provided for in today's ordinances were largely to encourage lower elevations...4-6 feet...as houses were in "the old days". (examples of new construction along these lines 2802 Middle, 2708 and 2614 Goldbug, 2624 Myrtle) Of course with no usable space under the house, relief was needed, particularly in ground coverage, for separate garages and outbuilding as was common in that era. It seemed a good plan at the time, encouraging a "look" we'd all seen in older houses. This was, in my view, "neighborhood compatibility". But, despite a few houses being built, with variances, at reduced elevation, this did not prove a good plan.
4. First, flooding and then the threat of Global Warming put an end to slight elevations and the attendant need for lot coverage relief to accommodate garages and outbuildings. So much for capturing that early 1900's look. But the incentives and variance options remained and "neighborhood compatibility" gave way to, "...I need more space for my grandkids..." or in short, "...I want more...".
5. Meanwhile other factors came into play for non-historical variance requests to the DRB. As lot values started at \$1M for about any lot on the Island, builders came up with maximizing strategies....not an accusation, just a recognition of economic realities. Builders would request variances from the DRB without any rationale even remotely connected to "neighborhood compatibility". Many were approved, some scaled down, few denied. The end result: too many houses too massive for lot size, let alone a blending with neighbors, and of course increased flooding.

6. So, what's the result of all this? Does anyone think the Sullivan's island "look" has been enhanced by the DRB approving these non-historical variances? I don't think so. The trend seems to be building more of a complex rather than a house. Maximum elevated houses running from front setback to rear setback...side to side...scant yards, pools, long breezeways and porches everywhere, finished off with fencing and landscaping so as to enclose the lot as if it were a fortress separate from the neighborhood, not a part of it. This is neighborhood compatibility? Fact is these complexes work counter to the goal of maintaining a Sullivan's Island atmosphere.
7. What's to be done? It's my take variances for non-historical properties are not necessary or desirable. They have proven counterproductive, require too much DRB time, have been subject to abuse, and have on occasion pitted neighbor against neighbor. For those still holding the notion we need to protect the unique architecture on the Island, I'd recommend they visit 2714 Atlantic, 910 Middle, or the corner of Ion/Ft Moultrie. These houses surely are a welcome architectural addition to the Island but in no way try to capture the "Sullivan's Island look". My recommendation would be for the DRB to start simply saying "no" to non-historical variance request, begin working to change the building ordinances, and get out of the non-historical variance business entirely. This really is about keeping Sullivan's Island, Sullivan's Island. What we're doing now is not working. JD Winchester 2720 Brooks St.