



BEAUFORT COUNTY
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD (DRB) MINUTES
July 11, 2024, Grace Coastal Church, 15 Williams Drive, Okatie, SC

Members Present: James Atkins, Kris Feldmann, Roger Jadown and Eric Walsnovich

Members Absent: J. Michael Brock and Peter Brower

Staff Present: Nancy Moss, Beaufort County Community Development Department
Mary Brantley, Beaufort County Community Development Department

Guests:

Okatie Center – Medical Office Building Exterior Renovations: John Powell, Seed Architecture and Andrew Cheatham, KBS Landscape Architecture & Planning

Okatie Center – The “H” Building: Mike Vaccaro, Vaccaro Architecture; Kathleen Duncan, J. K. Tiller Associates; and Steve Richbourg, May River Contracting

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Atkins called the meeting to order at 2:29 p.m.
2. **FOIA:** Chairman Atkins said that “public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act”.
3. **MINUTES:** Chairman Atkins asked if there were comments on the June 6, 2024, meeting minutes. Mr. Walsnovich motioned to approve the meeting minutes and Mr. Feldmann seconded to approve. Motion carried unanimously.
4. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** There was no public comment.
5. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Okatie Center – Lot S-19 - Medical Office Building Exterior Renovations – Bluffton – Conceptual:

Ms. Moss gave the project background. Mr. Atkins asked for public comment, but no comments were made. John Powell, the project Architect, and Drew Cheatham, the project Landscape Architect, presented for the project. Mr. Powell provided some background on the building’s ownership and explained that the building was owned by a real estate investment trust for 20 years that did not maintain the project, the trust went bankrupt, and Lillibridge Health Services currently owns the building and would like to repair & upgrade the building. Mr. Powell said that the rooftop is covered with shingle with a mansard tub on the top which contains the mechanical equipment which is proposed to be replaced with a DOAS system to serve the second and third floors. He said that he was looking for the Board’s approval for the new rooftop equipment because approximately 1’-3” of the unit would be exposed above the mansard. He stated that from a perspective point on the ground, the equipment would not be visible up close, and the perimeter trees would block view to it from a distance. Mr. Powell explained that the existing stucco would have an elastomeric coating applied, that the 2’-8” brick water table would be removed and replaced with a lower brick water table, selective window replacements would be made as needed, and that

the grading issues in the foundation buffers would be corrected that developed as a result of years of accumulated pine straw mulch & the shrub root systems raised the grade level 6" – 12" above the finished floor, that the curblin around the perimeter of the building is slightly below finish floor so gutters and downspouts have been added to capture the water that would be diverted underground and French drains added to collect water under the slab to lower the water table. He said that the top 6"-12" of topsoil will be removed which would likely damage the existing tree root systems so new landscaping is proposed within the foundation buffers. He stated that this was a mitigation project and larger equipment is needed to meet new energy codes which will require a new masonry screen wall in the back to match the building. Mr. Powell said that the existing color scheme was being proposed but that the owner is interested in changing the color scheme and wanted for guidance from the Board.

Mr. Cheatham said that due to the grading & drainage work needed, the existing foundation buffer landscaping must be removed. He said that the building's finish floor elevation was 6" above the top of the sidewalk. He stated that one storm drain inlet existed in the foundation buffer and another one in the maintenance yard and that all of the new roof drains and French drain collecting systems would tie into the existing inlets and outfall into the lagoon. Mr. Cheatham concluded by stating that a trench drain system would be added to the sidewalk and that the ground would be graded to the trench drains and that three existing live oaks within the foundation buffer would be saved.

Mr. Atkins asked where the new screen wall would be installed. Mr. Powell explained that it would be in the back right corner and would not be visible from the highway because of the existing large trees. Mr. Cheatham explained that the tree removals would be mitigated inch for inch and planted back within the areas between the parking lot and the lagoon, that selective tree planting would be done within the perimeter gaps and that they were proposing palms trees and not shade trees within the foundation buffer to prevent this same problem from occurring in the future.

Mr. Walsnovich said that he did not have a problem with the locations of the mitigation trees, that the proposed palm trees made sense, that all of the parking islands had shade trees, but he did have an issue with the fact that foundation shrubs were not being proposed. He said to add a layer of shrubs that would be 24" at maturity with the ground cover below. He said that the plant types and sizes looked fine.

Mr. Jadown had no comments about the new rooftop equipment, or the grading and drainage but said that the new screen wall around the service yard would create a blind spot when backing up & pulling in going west to east. Mr. Powell said he would relay this comment to the owner. Mr. Jadown wondered why the existing mechanical area had a new screen wall above. Mr. Powell said it would screen the chilled oxygen tank. Mr. Jadown asked if there would be a noise factor with the new equipment. Mr. Powell stated that noise would not be an issue and that in theory it should be quieter. Mr. Jadown said there was plenty of parking so the removal of one space will not be an issue.

Mr. Feldmann agreed that the mechanical equipment on the roof was not an issue visually and would encourage a new color scheme. Mr. Powell said that they considered a warm white on the majority of the building with gray accents. He stated that the existing brick water table was a handmade Charleston brick and that the replacement brick would be close in color to the existing

but would not be handmade brick. Mr. Feldmann said that the new brick should not contrast with the existing brick that is to remain and should blend in.

Mr. Atkins said that he agreed that the new rooftop mechanicals would be fine but for the record that the Board was okay with it due to the significantly mature buffer that exists on 278 and onto the main road. Mr. Atkins said that he would entertain a new color palette on the building but to be cautious with a new modern color scheme because there is a PUD language about the color palette and to use a traditional Lowcountry color scheme. He said to provide details on the new screen wall and to label the cap material. Mr. Atkins said that there are plenty of modular brick similar to Savannah gray.

Mr. Jadown made a motion to approve this project with the following conditions:

- The Board encourages a new color scheme; provide digital color samples with the submittal and physical color samples at the next meeting.
- Provide details of the new service wall.
- Submit an updated landscape plan incorporating foundation shrubs.

Mr. Feldmann seconded the motion.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Atkins stated that the applicant shall update the drawings and provide the screen wall details, and the actual color samples at the meeting.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Okatie Center – Lot S-15 – The “H” Building, 211 Okatie Village Drive – Bluffton – Conceptual (Revisit):

Ms. Moss gave the project background. Mr. Atkins asked for public comment, but no comments were made. Mike Vaccaro, the Architect for project, made the presentation. He introduced the contractor, Steve Richbourg, and the Landscape Architect, Kathleen Duncan, to the Board. Mr. Vaccaro said that he incorporated the comments from the last DRB meeting and that the major change to the building was eliminating the brick arches and changing them to concrete outriggers. He said that the other big change was refining the detailing on the dogtrots on the roof. He stated that the live oaks were not preserved because the landscape architect felt that there would be a big well around them so there wouldn't be good drainage, that the front sidewalk was narrowed, and the bike rack would be relocated. Mr. Vaccaro said that a significant number of upgrades and changes were made to the initial design and welcomed questions from the Board.

Mr. Feldmann strongly preferred the concrete outriggers over the brick arches, and said they seemed more in proportion with the building. He said that penthouses are always difficult to deal with because they are driven by so many internal things for the building and asked if there was an opportunity in terms of the height discrepancy between them or to align or consolidate them. Mr. Vaccaro said that the two stairwells on either end were taken down to an 8' plate height to match the cornice a little better and added hipped roofs. He said that the tallest one is the elevator shaft tower which requires a 14' clearance and that the central conference room has a 20' ceiling height that drives the roof height. Mr. Vaccaro said that in perspective, from

the backside the elevator shaft tower may be visible from a great distance, and from the front the prominent glass tower for the conference room would be visible.

Mr. Jadown stated that no changes were made to the alleyway between the two buildings and that there was still a glass wall to the offices and a blank wall next to the restaurant and was not thrilled with it. He asked to view the site plan and indicated that the first parking spot on the right would be tight to get into and that the parked car would be in danger. Mr. Jadown said that he liked that the arches were replaced with the concrete brackets and that the building looked better.

Mr. Walsnovich agreed with Mr. Jadown's comment about the first parking space and asked if there would be enough parking if this space were removed. Mr. Vaccaro said that one parking space could be removed and still meet the parking requirements. Mr. Walsnovich suggested that the size of tree island planting area get expanded and that overall, it was a pretty good plan. He said that there was little diversity with the parking lot trees and would like to see more shrub massing, and to change out the redbuds with something else because of a fungus going around that kills them. He asked why there were no trees proposed in either tree island by the back entrance walks and said there were too many wax myrtles and to add more shrub diversity. He said that there were gaps in the foundation buffer. Mr. Vaccaro said that the gaps were where the emergency exit doors were located.

Mr. Atkins stated that landing pads were needed outside the emergency doors. Mr. Atkins said he did not like the location of the dumpster enclosure because it was in direct axis and exposed to view with the entry drive and next to Highway 278 buffer and asked that it be moved. He said to refine the elevator, that he liked the concrete brackets more than the brick arches but still struggled with the execution of the details. He referred to the building perspectives and said that it appeared that there was a thin metal roof that cut through the brackets & columns resulting in a big concrete bracket expression with a thin metal roof, so it looked like the entire the second floor was sitting on a thin metal roof instead of the brackets. Mr. Vaccaro said that there is an 8" concrete slab with flashing and that a true roof extended out over the patio at the restaurant. Mr. Atkins asked why it extended out if there's already 3' to 4' of overhang to cover the space below. Mr. Vaccaro said that it extends over the restaurant patio on the corner and the columns are 3' square and the concrete second floor slab extends out to the face of the columns and the second-floor wall sits back from the edge of the bracket. Mr. Atkins said that the thin horizontal element is bisecting the heavy second floor structure and made it look like it's floating, and the structure needed to be more authentic. He said the thin metal roof band appeared to be sitting on a thin metal flashing band and there was no expression of the horizontal beam supporting the second floor and that the columns look like they come down and sit on a bracket. Mr. Vaccaro said that from underneath at the grade level looking up to the second floor, the concrete slab extends out 7'-9" with big outriggers and on the column lines there are slab bands resulting in a 20" thick slab at the columns and will appear solid. Mr. Atkins said that the slab band and columns are fine but in between there is no horizontal beam structure expression between the columns. He said that the details complement the design intent but are void of horizontal expression. Mr. Atkins referred to sheet A2.03 and stated that there was a lot of brick articulation at the entrance with a heavy horizontal overdoor with thin brick pilasters on each side of the doors. He said that the building started off as a concrete structure and now the columns are all brick and not concrete but liked the overall

concept. Mr. Atkins suggested that they look at other elevator options that have less overhead requirements. Mr. Feldmann said it would be nice if the elevator height could align with the conference room roof height.

Mr. Vaccaro responded to Mr. Jadown's earlier comment about the blank wall in the passageway and stated that he had discussions with the owner about the blank wall, but the owner liked it. He said that he took pictures of surrounding buildings in the neighborhood to demonstrate that there were a lot of blank walls. He presented pictures of the auto parts store north of Highway 278 and Mr. Atkins said that this building was not in Beaufort County's jurisdiction. Mr. Vaccaro showed a photograph of the Food Lion building and said it had a 120' blank wall. Mr. Vaccaro asked that the Board approve this project so they could move forward.

Mr. Walsnovich made a motion to approve this planting plan subject to the condition that there was more plant diversity. Mr. Atkins asked for a second to the motion and said that the Board could amend the motion once the motion was seconded.

Mr. Jadown seconded the motion.

A discussion ensued between the Board members about the motion.

Mr. Feldmann said that the details were hard to understand and referred to the lower right elevation and said it showed the alignment of the slab, the outrigger then the column above and the flashing piece that continues and said that there's probably room for an extensive outrigger relative to that heavy mass coming down from the second floor. He said to resolve the detail on sheet A-310 since it seems to be the crux of the discussion. Mr. Feldmann said that the detail showed that the outrigger was not structural and to revisit the detail on sheet A-310 for the slab / second floor transition. Mr. Atkins said to re-study the dumpster location.

Mr. Atkins asked Mr. Walsnovich if he would like to amend the motion. Mr. Walsnovich said that he would like to amend the motion with the following conditions:

- The Landscape Plan should have more plant diversity
- Revisiting the detail on sheet A-310 for the slab / second floor transition.
- Re-study the dumpster location.

Mr. Jadown seconded the motion.

Motion carried with the approval of Feldmann, Jadown, and Walsnovich. Mr. Atkins did not approve the motion.

7. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Atkins stated that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 1, 2024, at Grace Coastal Church, 15 Williams Drive, Okatie, SC 29909.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Jadown made a motion to close the meeting and Mr. Walsnovich seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.