

Historic Yorktown Design Committee

Minutes

May 17, 2023
East Room
York Hall
301 Main Street
Yorktown, Virginia

Members Attending: Carolyn Weekley – Chair
Jose Longoria – Vice Chair
Margaret Mack-Yaroch – Alternate – voting member

Staff Attending: Earl W. Anderson, AICP

Ms. Carolyn Weekly called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

New Business

None

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 15, 2023 meeting were approved unanimously.

Old Business

None

Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness

Application No. HYDC-231-23, 115 Church Street, Grace Episcopal Church Foundation

Mr. Anderson stated that this application, submitted by the County of York, requests approval of the design and architectural features of a new building proposed to replace the existing Dockmaster Building and Public Restrooms at the intersection of Water Street and Ballard Street. The proposed two-story structure would support the activities of County operations in addition to providing ADA-accessible public restrooms. The submitted memo outlines the proposed uses for the proposed building. The proposed construction would be brick with roof materials of synthetic slate shingles. The project also proposes signs for the Dockmaster's office and the restrooms. Four double-sided signs would hang

from wrought iron brackets and are approximately twenty-one inches by nine inches. Two other signs would be mounted in the alcove for the restrooms and are approximately sixteen inches by six inches. The sign design would be black and white with decorative lettering.

Mr. Anderson noted that the application had been before the Committee in 2020 and was tabled. Right after that meeting, COVID-19 hit and the applicant was placed on the back burner, so the County could address other issues. They decided to bring it back to the Committee for review after being able to refocus on the proposed development.

In the staff's opinion, the proposed construction is consistent, subject to certain conditions, with the Design Guidelines and with the character of surrounding structures and the Waterfront sub-district. Staff believes that the proposal is well conceived and will represent a significant improvement to this segment of Water Street. Accordingly, staff recommends that the Committee find it consistent with the Yorktown Design Guidelines, subject to the following conditions:

1. The architectural design and features shall be consistent with the conceptual renderings entitled "Dockmaster's Building" prepared by James River Architects, and dated April 25, 2023.
2. A cementitious siding shall be used instead of the proposed cellular PVC siding. Siding and trim applications shall be in accordance with the dimensional and specifications set forth in the Design Guidelines.
3. The brick-and-mortar colors shall match the brick-and-mortar colors used within the Riverwalk development.
4. All doors, siding, fencing, and shutters shall match a color from the Yorktown Color Palette and be compatible with the wall and trim colors used on the building.
5. Color samples for the shingles shall be submitted to and approved by the Zoning Administrator before installation.
6. If any vents are installed in the roof they shall be painted to blend with the roof shingle color.
7. The use or placement of television antennas or building-mounted satellite dishes visible from public rights-of-way, the river or adjacent properties shall be prohibited.
8. Fencing around the outside mechanical equipment shall be made from composite wood, painted white, and screened with evergreen landscaping.
9. The sign brackets shall be black or some other matching color.

Mr. Anderson also showed pictures with the model superimposed to show the approximate height as you come down Ballard Street toward the beach.

Mr. Darren Williams, Chief of Waterfront Operations and Events, represented the applicant and noted that the structure is similar to several other Dutch Colonial-style structures in the Village and the switch to this style was in response to the higher gable-style roof, so it could have a reduced overall height. He explained the new building would replace the non-handicap accessible structures that had limited space and did not provide a comfortable space out of the weather. The facility will not only represent upgraded ADA-accessible facilities, but it will also house four full-time employees including the Dockmaster, Event Planner, Freight Shed Manager/Waterfront Operation Coordinator, and Waterfront Operations Assistant, and will serve as the base of operation for seasonal employees such as Dock Attendants, Event Support Staff, Freight Shed Support Staff, Waterfront Ambassadors, and Parking Attendants. Currently, these positions share the 300-square-foot space in the existing Dockmaster building. The new building would provide ADA-accessible restrooms and facilities in the heart of the Yorktown waterfront and adjacent to the MobiMat, MobiChair, and accessible trolley stop. It would also serve as a hub for public safety hardware and software such as cameras, AEDs, emergency call boxes, and a future public address system. Lastly, the facility will also serve as a guest services and information center, lost and found, and first aid location for visitors to Yorktown.

Ms. Weekley asked for clarification on why all these employees needed to be located in this building.

Mr. Anderson opined that uses within the building did not fall under the purview of the Committee and that they architectural components of the building were what the Committee needed to focus on.

Ms. Weekly noted that she only asked because the applicant stated that they need the second floor to house these employees and that increases the height and massing of the building, which she felt was relevant to the Historic Guidelines review.

Mr. Williams provided an explanation for the need for the employees and the second floor.

Mr. Longoria asked for clarification on what had been submitted now versus what the Committee reviewed and tabled in 2020.

Mr. Anderson stated that the building before them tonight was the same information that was presented in 2020. No changes had been made.

Mr. Longoria stated that he did not understand why the previous changes were not made to the plan to make this an acceptable plan.

Mr. Williams stated that the County reviewed the information requested by the Committee and found that the proposed needs for the new building and the inability to place the facilities at any other location on the beachfront, where the employees needed to be present, was why the same plans were presented again for review.

Ms. Mack-Yaroch stated that she sees the need for this facility, as all citizens and visitors should be able to enjoy the beach and receive services. She also has no problem with the style or height. She asked how much taller the new structure was than the two existing buildings.

Mr. Anderson stated that the new building is about ten feet taller than the existing one, but that does not include the cupola which adds several more feet.

Ms. Mack-Yaroch noted that she did not feel it would block anyone's view from Chischiak Watch and would only marginally block the view of those coming down Ballard Street.

Ms. Weekley asked if there were any comments from the audience.

Mr. Jack Davis asked for further clarification as to why the County needed the second floor.

Mr. Williams reiterated the need for employees that work on the beachfront to be located there and to have facilities that they could use as a base of operations during events and during the summer beach season.

Ms. Angier Brock stated that the scale of the structure is what she did not prefer. She agreed with the need for ADA-compliant facilities, but she did not agree that the employees needed to be housed there. It is just too large for that space.

Mr. Robert Hodson noted that he believed everyone here agreed that the ADA-compliant bathrooms and other facilities on the first floor were great for the beachfront. He was concerned with the height and style proposed. The need for the second floor has not really been satisfied enough for him to agree that the height is required. There have to be other locations where the employees could go. Additionally, he stated that the roof style chosen makes it look like a barn, which is not an appropriate style for this area. You can see that many of the existing buildings have gable roofs and this new building will stand out too much for the existing structures.

Ms. Cindy Adkins opined that the proposed building does look like a big barn and is not an appropriate structure for Yorktown. The cupola looks out of place with the barn and should at a minimum be removed. Lastly, the overall scale of the structure for this space on the beach is too much. It will loom over the pedestrian area and will block the views of the river.

Ms. Beverly Krams posited that the structure would block views coming down Ballard Street, which should be reserved as an outstanding view of what visitors should see as they come down the street. She felt the building was out of scale for what the County should want in that location. They should want to highlight the beach and river, not block it. She felt the Village was a very historical area with much history that continues to be reduced with continued encroachment onto historically significant areas and views. She stated that this area used to be the docks for all the ships that came to Yorktown and should be recognized and revitalized as those docks again, rather than a large out-of-place building.

Ms. Mack-Yaroch stated that she disagreed with Ms. Krams' assessment and that it would be difficult to revitalize every historical site back to its original condition. She felt the proposed building is within a scale for what is needed for handicapped citizens and visitors and the Committee should focus on the architectural review of the building and not on what was there previously.

Ms. Krams challenged Ms. Mack-Yaroch's assertions and noted that she was part of the group that helped to establish the Guidelines and the historical significance of Yorktown. She reiterated the need to keep the historical significance of Yorktown in mind with any decision that happens in Yorktown.

Mrs. Betsy Taylor stated that she lives in Chischiak Watch and has a deck on Ballard. She felt the proposed building would block the river view that is so essential to what is Yorktown. She posited that she has heard many times children gasp and be excited as they walk down the sidewalk on Ballard Street when they first see the river and beach. She thinks this building will remove that anticipation that visitors have as they travel to the beach.

Mrs. Julie Reichle agreed with the perspective that this new building would block the view of the water. She also thought the barn-style building was not in keeping with the historic nature of buildings in the Village.

Mrs. Terri Hodson stated that she understood the need for ADA compliance and wanted to see if a compromise could be had with removing the cupola and making it a gable-style roof. She felt that it would at least look like other structures and not look similar to a barn.

Ms. Charlotte Neil stated that she agreed with many of the other speakers that she did not like the size or height of the building.

Mr. Rich Alexander stated that he is not a resident of the Village and was attending the meeting at the behest of his employer. He did not have an opinion about the building and suggested that because Yorktown is historical any changes on the waterfront should look historical and be usable by the citizens and County.

Mr. Williams responded that the need for ADA-compliant facilities on the waterfront and any reduction of the height and loss of the second floor will negatively impact operations on the waterfront.

Mr. Longoria asked if the County considered making it a larger one-story building.

Mr. Williams noted that making the building larger would create additional impervious surfaces and would reduce the limited green spaces in historic Yorktown, therefore, the County would not be open to making it larger.

Mr. Longoria stated that he did not think the proposed design met the Historic Guidelines. The barn-style building would be out-of-place and would not be attuned to the other buildings in the area. Also, the cupola needs to be removed, because it adds to the height and is further out of place. Furthermore, he felt there were many other locations where employees could be housed. The County owns the land behind the parking deck and elsewhere within Riverwalk that could be used to house the employees. In his opinion, the Committee should table this request and asked that the building be lowered and if necessary be stretched out toward the Freight Shed side.

Ms. Weekley agreed with Mr. Longoria and noted that she felt the building was out of scale for the location. She thinks it should be tabled and the County needs to redesign the building to remove the second floor and use a different roof style.

Ms. Mack-Yaroch stated that she disagreed. The need for these facilities is great and the style of the building is appropriate and similar to other buildings in the Village and in Riverwalk. She did not feel the height would block any views except those right in front of Ballard Street and Water Street intersection, which is negligible. She felt the building needed to be approved.

Mr. Longoria moved to table the application asking that the following items be addressed:

- A new elevation that showed a compatible roof line with the rest of the waterfront;
- Reduce the massing of the building;
- A height reduction;
- Incorporate materials as recommended in the proposed conditions.

With no other discussion, the Committee by voice voted on the motion to table and it was approved on a vote of 2:1 with Ms. Weekley and Mr. Longoria voting in approval and Ms. Mack-Yaroch dissenting.

Ms. Weekley thanked Mr. Williams and asked him to bring back changes to the building design as requested for the next meeting on June 21, 2023.

Reports and Committee Requests

Mr. Anderson reported that there had been two administrative approvals since the last meeting to repaint houses within the Village.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Earl W. Anderson, Secretary

Approved by HYDC: Earl W. Anderson