

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD OF THE TOWN OF STRASBURG HELD ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 2016 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL.**

ARB Members present: Chairperson Massey and Board Members Keefe, Kimmons, Lefkowitz, Poling, Rathore, and Wheeler.

Staff: Town Manager Spitzer, Planning and Zoning Administrator Pearson, and Clerk of Council Keller

**Chairperson Massey** called the meeting to order.

Introduction:

Chairperson Massey introduced new Board Members, Daniel Lefkowitz and Linda Wheeler.

**Action Item:**

***Approval of Minutes: October 22, 2015***

**Board Member Rathore moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2015 meeting as presented; second by Board Member Kimmons. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

**Discussion Items:**

***1. CDBG Community Improvement Grant***

**Town Manager Spitzer** gave a brief synopsis of the \$700,000 grant the Town has received from DHCD. After meeting with DHCD, the Town was advised to look more closely at what the Town was proposing to do with the Brill Building and the taxi stand. Only about \$168,000 was allocated for the rehabilitation of the Brill Building. To make it safe, it will take between \$550,000 and \$600,000. It was the consensus of Council to tear the taxi stand down due to the way it was built; it is only held up with stones on each corner and two in the middle. The Town Council would like to receive input from the ARB on what should be done with both buildings. They are looking at demolishing the entire Brill Building which would cost about \$40,000 or keeping the façade of the building and putting a structure behind it or demolishing and reconstructing a façade like it and having an open air market behind it.

**Chairperson Massey** said there is a management team that is guiding this project and he has been asked to represent the ARB on this and will be glad to do so. The Brill Building is designated as an historic building by the state. The taxi stand is also a contributing structure, but he agrees that the taxi stand is probably a lost cause. There is not enough money in the grant to do the restoration of the building. Because this grant is federal money so there has to be approval from the state to tear it down. He reviewed the different options. It has been a quandary for the management team. This is not a formal application, but the Council is asking for input. He then asked Council Members in attendance to give their viewpoints.

**Council Member Newman** said he does not want to tear down the building. He thinks preserving the front of the building and doing a stepdown on the sides and then an elaborate gazebo in the back for a market space is a good option. He thinks something like this would stay under budget. He feels it is important to keep the streetscape of Strasburg. He has talked too many in the town who have stories about the building and he thinks it would be tragic to lose it. He thinks the history of the façade could be tied in with something new and fresh.

**Mayor Taylor** said he likes the makeup of the management team as it represents many facets of the community and the majority were comfortable with tearing it down. Personally, he is indifferent. He thinks it is an opportunity to be creative and it seems more people want to keep the sign. He thinks the majority of Council is leaning toward tearing it down, but there was not a price given for rebuilding the façade. Most of the

management team is fine with tearing down both buildings. The one factor that comes into the grant is the economic development aspect and how the market space needs to be seen. It was brought up that if the façade is kept, would people be able to see the market space. He is more interested in keeping the stories of the people who lived or worked in the building. He can live with it either way.

**Council Member Orndorff** said he has lived in town all his life and can tell stories, too, of the store. The Brill family understands the cost involved. He said he could not in good conscience vote to spend a half million dollars when the town needs so many other things. This is an economic development grant and not an historic grant. He doesn't want to see it torn down, but he doesn't think it can be restored correctly. He would be in favor of keeping the façade if it could be done at a reasonable cost. The management team seems to feel the Town needs to start fresh on the site. As far as the thought of keeping the two story façade and stepping it down, it was questioned how long it would be structurally sound. Also, how would this look? The cost is a consideration since anything over \$168,000 would come out of the Town's coffers. He would like to save the sign and also the Masonic symbol and put in the park somewhere. Continuing to revisit this, we have strict timelines and a decision needs to be made.

**Chairperson Massey** said it is an economic grant, but because it is federal money, it has to follow historic guidelines and so will need to go through the DHR. The building has not been looked at by a competent structural architecture. He doesn't think the façade would fall apart if it were stepped down, but that is a personal opinion. He would like to keep the streetscape.

**Council Member Newman** said he is not structural engineer, but he sees the potential for bathrooms on each side of the building. You can secure the brick and you could then have a gazebo that would be flashed onto the building. He further explained his idea. He doesn't think the costs shown are really accurate, but using the costs given would only cost about \$70,000 to tear down part and stabilize the façade. The magnitude of the cost is not a half million dollars. He thinks it would cost about \$200,000, but that doesn't include anything put on the back part of the property.

**Board Member Kimmons** asked what kind of time restraints are on this. **Town Manager Spitzer** said we are nearing the end of the 90 day initial phase and we will ask for a 30 day extension and then we have two years to do the project. **Board Member Kimmons** asked if there were any other grant opportunities and **Town Manager Spitzer** said other grants would not be given until later in the fall and that cuts down on the timeframe. He said it is hoped to have an architect hired by February and so a decision should be made on what to do before the architect is in place so money isn't spent on several options.

**Chairperson Massey** said an architect could sketch out this idea pretty easily.

**Board Member Wheeler** said this is "demolition by neglect" and it is remiss that this is owned by the Town. You can't leave a building alone and not do work on it. Minimal care was not given to either building. If we demolish both buildings, what is the message being put out to others in the historic district? We are saying we can't afford it and that sets precedent. She is sure some people will take advantage of that. When a gazebo is talked about, it sounds like the taxi stand could be picked up and moved and used as a gazebo.

**Board Member Keefe** said the Brill Building is a contributing factor for Strasburg. When a building like this is removed, does it affect the status of Strasburg as an historic designation? **Chairperson Massey** doesn't think the town would be delisted due to the demolition, but it does have to be approved by DHR for demolition. **Board Member Keefe** said if DHR gets involved, what will that look like. **Town Manager Spitzer** explained the process further. An environmental record review has to be done and once that is complete, it can be decided what the town wants to do and DHR will be given the ideas.

**Board Member Poling** said there is no way she can be happy with tearing down both of the buildings. She doesn't think we have actual amounts of doing something with the buildings. She thinks the buildings could be taken care of and then the gazebo could be held off on and maybe citizens could build the gazebo and not cost the town any money. **Town Manager Spitzer** said through the grant, we have to do certain measurable aspects. If we don't do all of the things, then the town could have to pay back the grant money. He further explained how the \$700,000 will have to be spent and said the town also gave \$300,000. **Board Member Poling** said first things should come first. If the buildings had been kept up, maybe we could have done something better. She hasn't seen any figures on it.

**Chairperson Massey** said from an historic preservation standpoint, it would be easy to say these buildings need to stay, but the town is tied to this grant. **Board Member Poling** said this has been in the works for a long time. **Board Member Wheeler** asked if the money could be given back. **Town Manager Spitzer** said we can do all of it for \$700,000. If we don't complete all the deliverables, the state could come back and ask for all the money back.

**Board Member Rathore** said he can agree with both sides of the fence on this. He has many memories from the store. The memories will always be with him. He agrees with **Council Member Newman** that we would take a chance to lose either of the buildings. Retaining the integrity of the buildings is important to him. He thinks the community will come together to build some of what is needed. The Town loves each other and they will come together. He thinks it is a great idea to make the taxi stand the gazebo and he is fine with moving the building. He would like to have some memorabilia on the buildings. Without clear knowledge of demolishing the buildings, he doesn't know how a decision can be made. Realistically the guidelines should make the decision and not the cost. This is a money game. He thinks **Council Member Newman's** idea is great.

**Council Member Newman** said he has some pictures of the gazebos that could be put on the back of the building.

**Board Member Rathore** asked if the boards from the taxi stand could be used on the gazebo and it could.

**Town Manager Spitzer** said the architect would be on board by January 22 and he thinks an idea of what is wanted should be had by then. It was said that the cost will not be known until there are engineered designs. A sketch would not give the cost.

**Board Member Lefkowitz** thinks it is hard decision because it doesn't seem like the estimates are truly realistic. Tearing down might be realistic, but the \$600,000 to demolish and then look at the bricks and then rebuild doesn't seem realistic and he thinks that is crazy to do that. He thinks it would be crazy to rebuild new. He thinks if there is more time to work toward a more realistic figure, he thinks we should wait for the decision.

**Council Member Newman** said we need to have a recommendation on what the ARB would like to see done. When we hire the architect, we need to have an idea of what we want.

**Board Member Rathore** said if you look at the historic significance of both buildings, there was never a taxi in front of the taxi stand. The store speaks more of the town history. More people are connected to the store than the taxi stand.

**Board Member Wheeler** asked why it has to be either/or. **Board Member Rathore** said it will come down to a financial issue.

**Council Member Orndorff** said a structural engineer was hired and they gave their best estimate on this so we are working with real figures. An expert was gotten and the buildings were evaluated. His fear is that we have

two years and if we change course many times, more money will be spent. We might get to the point that we only have 12 months to get it done or be in violation of the grant standards. We have to have a plan. If we are going to spend tax payer money along with the grant money, he would rather give the grant money back and not do the project at all than strap the taxpayers with this project. He is not sure how much volunteer work can be done within this grant as he doesn't know how much flexibility there could be. There are certain things that have to be done. We can't pick and choose.

**Council Member Newman** said he doesn't want to look at this as a money thing. We need to look at this as saving an historic building and then the economic development. Can we preserve a part of the building to keep our streetscape and he thinks we can. Can we put something in this building that will draw people to the town and he thinks this will be a draw. More people will want to come to see this.

**Chairperson Massey** said the town has secured a substantial grant to enhance the economic portion of the town and how the economic development portion is handled is by tearing down a building that makes it historic. Looking at the practicality of it, we have to look at what can be done. He thinks **Council Member Newman's** idea is good and the façade would also provide some sound insulation for the bandstand. He thinks compromise is something the board might recommend. As a preservationist, it is not acceptable to tear it down and rebuild. You either keep it or lose it.

**Board Member Lefkowitz** asked how the decision will actually be made. The Management Team will approve the design and make a recommendation and this will then go to DHR and then Council will make the final decision. **Town Manager Spitzer** said if it is decided to demolish it, to follow our guidelines we would have to wait a year so we would be into the grant time.

**Chairperson Massey** said a decision has to be made on the future of the Brill Building. He thinks the ARB needs to make some sort of recommendation and it needs to be realistic and not idealistic.

**Board Member Keefe** said he likes the idea of the keeping of the façade and he was asking for the history or if this has been done in other places. **Town Manager Spitzer** said when this is done, usually a comparable building is put in behind the façade.

**Council Member Orndorff** said there were several members of Council who said if the façade could be preserved reasonably and soundly, they would like to do this. He wouldn't want to see anything torn down, but it needs to be done realistically.

**Board Member Rathore** thinks the ARB has split feelings on the taxi stand so asked if there should be separate motions on the buildings. He thinks there is a consensus to keep the façade structure of the Brill Building.

**Board Member Rathore moved for the ARB to give their support to the Town of Strasburg and to give their support to the Town Council, in keeping the location of the façade structure of the Brill Building and giving the Board's support so it fits the Council's economic activity for the grant applied for; second by Board Member Kimmons.**

Discussion:

**Board Member Wheeler** asked if a second paragraph could be added to the motion as she thinks it needs to address economic development, but it also needs to address the historic aspect.

**Chairperson Massey** said he would like to see the motion as made and seconded and then approved and then add recommendations.

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**Mayor Taylor** said the comments from **Board Member Wheeler** were the exact reason why they were asking for the ARB's opinion. As an ARB member, they are doing exactly what they should be doing in asking for the buildings to be saved.

**Chairperson Massey** said **Board Member Wheeler** wrote a great article in the Basye Mountaineer (Mountain Courier) and he asked if she would write something about this. She said she was not comfortable in writing this. She said she wrote the article as a reporter and did not put her personal feelings in it.

**Chairperson Massey** said in discussion, it is his opinion that the taxi stand is gone beyond worthiness. **Board Member Wheeler** asked if anyone knows the history of the taxi stand. **Chairperson Massey** said the building was built in the 1920's and moved to the location after the 1930's. Does the ARB wish to make a recommendation on this building, too?

Discussion followed on the taxi stand and what it was used for.

**Board Member Rathore** said his recommendation would be to use economic common sense and not spend more money on it.

**Council Member Newman** said the building is damaged and if you try to pick it up, it will fall apart.

**Board Member Wheeler** asked if we could give it to someone or use in LEED materials.

**Council Member Newman** said the motion should be to keep it or not and then give recommendations on giving away the building or materials.

**Board Member Wheeler** asked why this could not be included in the motion. **Board Member Rathore** said this would be part of the discussion, but the motion has to be made on a decision of what to do with the building; anything about the decision is in the discussion portion.

**Board Member Rathore moved to support the Town of Strasburg in the removal of the taxi stand; second by Board Member Wheeler.**

Discussion:

**Board Member Wheeler** thinks it would be good to offer other options than just tearing it down.

**Chairperson Massey** said Southern States is planning to demolish a building and they are offering a building for free for anyone who will remove it. The town could do this with this building.

**Board Member Lefkowitz** said he thinks it is a lovely thought to preserve the materials. He regularly uses old materials, but he doesn't think it is in the town's best interest to force this to happen.

**Board Member Rathore** said **Council Member Newman** said he had wanted to see the building used as a kiosk so would it be reasonable for the town to save it for future use. **Council Member Newman** said he doesn't want to speak to this unless the town is seriously considering doing something like this.

**Chairperson Massey** said the town could offer the building to someone willing to move it and **Council Member Newman** said he is in favor of this.

**Board Member Wheeler offered an amendment to the motion. She moved to amend the motion to read that in the interest of the building that is part of the Strasburg history, the ARB suggests the building be offered for free to someone to use or disassemble and use it; second by Board Member Rathore.**

**The amendment passed unanimously.**

**Amended motion passed unanimously.**

**Chairperson Massey** said there is money in the grant for the rehabilitation for 20 facades. When this work goes forth, all of this will come before the ARB. **Town Manager Spitzer** explained the grant more and more discussion followed on the grants and how the money could be used or why the property owner would or wouldn't use it. **Mayor Taylor** gave some history of the grant and the buildings.

Due to the length of the meeting, **Chairperson Massey** suggested putting off the discussion on the annual report.

**Action Item:**

***Election of Officers:***

**Board Member Rathore** volunteered to chair the ARB and **Board Member Poling** volunteered to be the vice-chairperson. As there were no other nominations, the nominations for the ARB were Board Member Rathore, Chairperson and Board Member Poling, Vice-Chairperson.

**Board Member Kimmons moved to accept the nominations; second by Board Member Lefkowitz. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.**

**P&Z Administrator Pearson** said he was trying to apply for the CLG designation and he needs a resume from each member. He gave some ideas of what can be added to the resumes. He asked that all send him this soon.

**P&Z Administrator Pearson** said there has been a lot of interest in the internship, but most want a paid internship. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.