

**MINUTES**  
**TOWN OF FORT MILL**  
**HISTORIC REVIEW BOARD**  
**February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**112 Confederate Street**  
**4:30 PM**

Present: Vice Chairwoman Megan Brinton, David Booth, Scott Couchenour, Elizabeth Leventis, Jessica Scarlett, Nikki Todaro, Planning Director Penelope Karagounis, Senior Planner Alex Moore

Absent: Chairman Louis Roman

Guests: Derick Moyle (Sign Techniques), Chris Pettit (Assistant Town Manager), Jonathan Fortes (Fortes Mill Eatery), Chris Melton (Fortes Mill Eatery)

**CALL TO ORDER**

Vice chairwoman Megan Brinton called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Vice chairwoman Megan Brinton entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, HRB meeting. Scott Couchenour made a motion to approve the minutes. Jessica Scarlett seconded the motion. Then, by a vote of 6-0, the minutes for the December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, meeting were approved.

Vice chairwoman Megan Brinton entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting. Elizabeth Leventis made a motion to approve the minutes. Jessica Scarlett seconded the motion. Then, by a vote of 6-0, the minutes for the January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, meeting were approved.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Request for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**

The first item on the agenda included a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) submitted by the Town of Fort Mill for the installation of new playground equipment, and a poured-in-place, rubberized surface to replace the existing playground equipment and base material at 345 N. White Street (Walter Y. Elisha Park).

Senior Planner Alex Moore gave a brief overview of the application and associated materials for this COA request.

Vice chairwoman Megan Brinton asked why the project was now coming before HRB since it appeared construction had already begun.

Assistant Town Manager Chris Pettit responded to this question and noted that speed has been a priority for the project in trying to minimize the time that the playground would be unavailable for use. He added that no building

permits have been issued for the project and that what was currently taking place at the playground was demolition rather than construction.

David Booth stated that construction for this type of project would take six to eight weeks.

Mr. Pettit responded that actual construction would be several weeks out with demolition and site preparation occurring in the meantime.

Scott Couchenour asked if the footprint of the playground would be enlarged.

Mr. Pettit responded that the footprint would generally stay the same. He noted that when the town took over the park from Springs that it was understood that it was an open space park and that it would essentially remain that way.

Mr. Booth asked if the playground manufacturer was providing the design bid build.

Mr. Pettit indicated that the playground manufacturer would be providing all the specs and would be doing the installation.

Mr. Booth then noted that inclusive, accessible elements were being provided but that there was no connection from the existing paved path to the playground.

Mr. Pettit responded that there was an ADA parking space close to the playground on Ardrey Street. He then noted that much of what the town was doing at Walter Y. Elisha Park would be a phased approach. Currently, the town is not taking on the existing paths. It is the town's plan to eventually widen the existing paths at the park and including lighting. At that juncture, the town would then improve the existing grades in terms of accessibility and include a concrete connection from the playground to the path that rings the park.

Jessica Scarlett thanked Mr. Pettit for providing shading within the new plan. She then noted that currently, the material surrounding the surface of the playground causes an issue of inaccessibility from an ADA perspective. She asked what the elevation of the new playground surface would be.

Mr. Pettit responded that there would remain a step-up from the grass to the playground surface, but that an ADA accessible entrance would be provided. Additionally, he noted that the town would investigate how to improve upon the current grade differential from the grass to the playground surface.

Mr. Booth asked Mr. Pettit if drainage considerations would be addressed regarding the way the new playground ties into existing infrastructure so that the site drains properly.

Mr. Pettit responded that there will be a subsurface design included which will improve the current drainage capability of the site so that there should be no issues.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton noted that the illustrative drawing appeared to indicate that turf would be provided for the new playground surface.

Mr. Pettit responded that it would be a pour-in-place, rubberized surface like what exists at Banks Athletic Park.

Mr. Booth responded that he would recommend not doing a pour-in-place, rubberized surface. Rather, he stated that a synthetic turf should be implemented as the playground surface.

Mr. Pettit responded that the town did consider synthetic turf for the playground surface. Ultimately, the poured-in-place, rubberized surface was chosen because the town has had good experiences in using this material at other park locations.

Mr. Couchenour asked if the color would be green as shown within the illustration.

Mr. Pettit indicated that the playground surface would indeed be green as illustrated.

Mr. Couchenour then asked about the width of the sidewalk in the area of the amphitheater and if the long-term plan was to extend this throughout the park.

Mr. Pettit responded that the town intended to do a phased approach in upfitting the park with improved pedestrian paths as it would be a significant and delicate project due to the trees. He stated that the town may not be able to install an eight-foot-wide path in some areas due to trees, but that the intent is to maximize the width around the perimeter of the park.

Mr. Booth stated that the swing structures will likely prohibit the implementation of an eight-foot path in locations where they have been installed. These will need to be removed, or the path will need to be adjusted to account for them.

Mr. Pettit indicated that this issue would certainly need to be addressed.

Mr. Couchenour stated that he has observed that the current pedestrian path is not appropriately accessible due to the damage that tree roots have done in expanding beneath it. He indicated that he would like the town to address this issue concurrently with the installation of the new playground equipment.

Mr. Pettit responded that this would unfortunately be outside of the current scope of the project in that only the playground replacement has been budgeted for.

Mr. Couchenour asked if hospitality tax funds could be used for replacement of the pedestrian path.

Mr. Pettit responded that this project has not been budgeted this way but that it likely could be funded with hospitality tax funds. However, he again noted that pedestrian path issues were outside of the scope of the current project but that the town could look at trying to add this in.

Mr. Booth asked Mr. Pettit what the budget is for the playground replacement.

Mr. Pettit stated \$450,000.00.

Mr. Couchenour asked how this was funded.

Mr. Pettit responded that it was funded via the general fund.

Mr. Couchenour added that if hospitality funds could be used then this would be a good time to implement the pedestrian path phase into the current scope since the playground would already be closed.

Mr. Booth asked Mr. Pettit where the staging area would be for construction equipment involved in this project.

Mr. Pettit indicated that the construction site would be accessed from Ardrey Street.

Mr. Booth then concurred with Mr. Couchenour thoughts on implementing the pedestrian path portion of this project concurrently with the playground replacement.

Ms. Scarlett then noted that the Strawberry Festival in May could have an impact on the timeline of this project.

Mr. Pettit stated that the festival would be on May 6<sup>th</sup> and that the town planned to have the playground completed prior to this.

Mr. Booth asked Mr. Couchenour how far he estimated the length to be for a pedestrian path to connect to the playground.

Mr. Couchenour stated he estimated 300 feet.

Mr. Booth stated this could be a one day pour for a concrete company. He then also noted that the town would be relying on the contractor to place the equipment properly as there is no site plan.

Ms. Scarlett then asked if the picnic tables and the makeshift sandpit adjacent to the playground would be within the scope of the project.

Mr. Pettit responded that the picnic structures would either remain or replaced with new tables. He indicated that he could not speak to the informal sandpit.

Mr. Booth then noted that there was no proposed pedestrian path within this project to the restrooms. He stated that this was why he had previously noted in the planning for the restrooms that they should have been placed adjacent to the playground. He asked if there was a planned connection between the playground and the restrooms.

Mr. Pettit responded that such a connection was not planned at this time.

Mr. Booth indicated that this was poor planning and not understanding the accessible needs of others and that the town was opening itself up to liability issues in not including this.

Ms. Scarlett then asked if the old drinking fountain that was nearby remained in use.

Mr. Couchenour stated that this had been cut off for the winter.

Ms. Scarlett said that there should also be a drinking fountain in closer proximity to the playground.

Mr. Booth then stated that he felt the board could move to approve the new playground equipment, but they needed to have staff come back with a plan of action in understanding how the playground will be fully accessible and functional.

Vice chairwoman Megan Brinton then stated that in the illustration, the wheelchair ramp looks as if it is too close to the perimeter edge of the playground.

Mr. Pettit responded that each piece of playground equipment in fact has its own fall zone which is an area surrounding it showing that various requirements are met, such as what Vice chairwoman Brinton had noted. Thus, this would be accounted for within the fall zone plan.

Ms. Scarlett then asked for clarification from Mr. Pettit on whether the manufacturer of the playground structures had been awarded a bid.

Mr. Pettit responded that they have indeed been awarded the bid.

Vice chairwoman Brinton asked if there were any other questions from the board.

Mr. Couchenour responded that he liked the idea of moving ahead with approval of the playground replacement but that he still had concerns with ADA accessibility issues.

Mr. Pettit responded that the town's building official and staff would review the project for ADA compliance.

Vice chairwoman Brinton stated that she wanted the town to make the HRB aware earlier before such a project was made known to the public.

There being no other discussion, Vice chairwoman Brinton entertained a motion.

Mr. Booth made a motion to approve removal of the current playground equipment and replacement thereof with new playground equipment and a poured in place rubberized surface based upon the attached schematic illustration, with the condition that town staff return to the HRB with a plan of action to be reviewed which addresses accessibility and connectivity from the playground to and from restrooms and parking facilities.

Scott Couchenour seconded the motion.

By a vote of 6-0, the HRB voted to approve the application for a COA at 345 N. White Street with the condition as noted.

## **2. Request for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**

The second item on the agenda included a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for a replacement canopy, using the existing support system, at 217 Main Street. This application was submitted by Jon and Amy Fortes, owners of the Fortes Mill restaurant at this location.

Senior Planner Alex Moore gave a brief overview of the application and associated materials for this COA request. He noted that the applicants had originally come before the HRB in October 2022 for several exterior improvements, one of them being the installation of a black, exterior canopy. However, since that time, the applicants had determined that they did not like the look of the black canopy as it contrasted with the dark blue façade. Thus, they requested that a COA be granted to allow them to replace the black canopy with a new one which would consist of a grayish, tweed color branded as “Seagrass.” He also stated that the new awning would have no signage as part of the design. He then noted that staff recommended that the COA request be approved as submitted.

Vice chairwoman Brinton asked if the style of the awning would be the same on the sides as before.

Jon Fortes responded that it would be the same.

Ms. Scarlett asked Mr. Fortes if the triangular endcaps on the awning would remain.

Mr. Fortes responded that they would remain.

There being no other questions or comments from the HRB, Vice Chairwoman Brinton entertained a motion.

Ms. Leventis made a motion to approve the COA request.

Mr. Booth seconded the motion.

By a vote of 6-0, the HRB voted to approve the application for a COA at 217 Main Street to replace the canopy.

## **3. Request for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)**

The third item on the agenda included a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for a projecting sign and a wall sign at 124 Main Street. This application was submitted by Morgan Lashley, the owner of Vestique, which is the business at 124 Main Street.

Senior Planner Alex Moore gave a brief overview of the application and associated materials for this COA request. He noted the two signs for which the application was submitted. He stated that the proposed projecting sign would use the existing bracketing on the façade of the building and that the wall sign would be attached to the wall facing Confederate Street. Senior Planner Moore then indicated that staff recommended approval of both signs with the condition that the signage meet all zoning criteria at the time of permitting.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton noted that the application indicated that the wall sign would consist of the company name painted onto the wall.

Senior Planner Moore replied that the applicant originally did intend to have a painted, wall sign but that she changed her mind and now wished to use drilled-in lettering to comprise this sign.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton asked how deep the drilled holes would be to attach the letters to the building.

Derick Moyle with Sign Techniques was at the meeting representing Ms. Lashley. He indicated that the studs used on such a project would be quarter-inch studs, and they would go into the wall approximately two inches. He stated that he expected to use three studs per letter and that they would go into both the brick and mortar depending on the location.

Mr. Couchenour asked Mr. Moyle what the profile of the respective lettering would be.

Mr. Moyle replied that the letters are one-quarter inch thick, aluminum composite material and that they would be flush-mounted to the building.

Ms. Scarlett asked if there were any other examples of this type of signage system in downtown Fort Mill.

Senior Planner Moore responded that much of the signage downtown consisted of projecting signs. He then asked Mr. Moyle if he had used this type of signage on older buildings in other locales.

Mr. Moyle indicated that he had done this in other places.

Mr. Booth stated that there were concerns he had about drilled studs being placed into the brick and the damage that might be left if or when they are removed.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton expressed concern about this as well.

Ms. Scarlett stated that this type of sign with individual letters would create a pattern on the wall which she indicated would not be optimal.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton asked Mr. Moyle if the applicant could do a vinyl sign.

Mr. Moyle responded that if she did vinyl then it would stick to the paint. If the paint chipped off the wall, then the sign would be compromised and need repairing. He added that with the stud mounted signage, they filled the holes with silicone. This should prevent moisture or water from getting into the holes. Additionally, he stated that at such time the signage is removed from the building, they will fill the holes with silicone or a masonry product. Then these areas can be painted over.

Ms. Leventis indicated that there was nothing in the historic district guidelines that addresses a stud mounted signage system. She stated that perhaps it's not such a big deal in this instance since the wall is painted. However, in situations where someone is proposing stud mounted signage on an unpainted brick wall within the historic district it would be much more of an issue since the HRB has previously stipulated that unpainted brick remain unpainted. She asked that if this case was approved, should there then be an amendment to the historic district guidelines to clearly establish what would be expected for the next similar project that comes before HRB.

Vice Chairwoman Brinton noted that page 42 of the agenda, as taken from the historic district guidelines, included an example of a wall sign, like that being proposed at 124 Main Street, which perhaps is pin mounted to a brick wall.

Scott Couchenour noted that there was artwork at 100 Main Street which was most likely pin mounted to the brick wall.

Ms. Leventis interjected that her previous point was that it is just not clear within the historic guidelines whether signage can be attached to brick in this manner.

Ms. Scarlett indicated that she was a bit hung up on the current wall sign proposal because it was individually mounted letters rather than a single signage piece.

David Booth stated that he would like to make a motion to approve the COA request with the condition that the application is adjusted to indicate that the wall sign will be comprised of pin mounted lettering and flush mounted to the building and that it meets town building code and zoning requirements. Mr. Booth added that this motion to approve is brought forth due to the brick of this building being already painted and that any repair to the brick that is necessary after removal of the pin mounted signage shall include repair of this wall section with the filling of holes in the brick with an appropriate material, and then covering the repaired section with a like-kind paint. This condition shall be placed into the approval language of the zoning permit for this wall sign at such time it is reviewed by the town zoning administrator. It is understood that the HRB intends for this motion to be referred to when considering similar wall sign applications in the future. Mr. Booth indicated that this motion also includes a recommendation for approval of the proposed projecting sign with the stipulation that the signage area not exceed 12 square feet in area.

Ms. Leventis seconded the motion.

By a vote of 6-0, the HRB voted to approve the application for a COA at 124 Main Street for a new wall sign and projecting sign with the conditions as noted in the motion.

Vice chairwoman Brinton then noted that a business has opened at 105 Clebourne Street without obtaining approval from the HRB for window signage.

Planning Director Penelope Karagounis stated that staff would investigate this.

Vice chairwoman Brinton then asked if there was an update on the demising wall issue at 219 and 221 Main Street.

Senior Planner Moore stated that staff would do their best to have Mr. Kuester at the meeting in March to discuss the findings that HRB had previously asked him to research involving removal of materials from the demising wall.

Planning Director Karagounis then noted that she had sent board members information on the South Carolina Historic Preservation conference to be held in Columbia on April 28<sup>th</sup>. She indicated that the town would pay for any HRB members who wished to attend. This conference would provide HRB members with their required continuing education credits. She asked the board members to contact her if they were interested in attending this conference so that she could register them. Ms. Karagounis also noted that there would be a virtual continuing education session available on March 9<sup>th</sup> which would be hosted by Charlie Barrineau who is with the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The subject of this virtual session will be development agreements in South Carolina.

Planning Director Karagounis then noted to Ms. Leventis that she needed a half of an hour credit more of continuing education by April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Ms. Karagounis then noted to Ms. Todaro that her continuing education reporting period for the required three hours of credit begins on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and goes through April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Ms. Karagounis noted to Ms. Scarlett that she needed 1.5 hours of continuing education credits by April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Ms. Karagounis stated that Mr. Booth has completed his required continuing education credits and that his continuing education reporting period starts April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and goes through April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. She then noted that Mr. Couchenour needs 1.5 hours of continuing education credit by April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Ms. Scarlett then asked about the agenda for the historic preservation conference in April.

Ms. Karagounis stated that the agenda had not yet been published and that it is a one-day event and would last until approximately 4:00 PM.

Mr. Booth asked if some of the credits that he is required to obtain as a registered landscape architect might qualify for the historic review board continuing education.

Ms. Karagounis replied that she would check on this with the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

Ms. Scarlett asked Ms. Karagounis to check on this for her as well since she must also obtain continuing education credits with her work as an engineer.

Mr. Couchenour then noted that he had previously inquired with Ms. Karagounis about the possibility of increasing the amount available to recipients of façade improvement grants in Fort Mill. Additionally, he noted that he had inquired about the possibility of painting benches and poles downtown along with fixing drainage issues which have resulted in a muddy area adjacent to Hobos.

Ms. Karagounis noted that she had forwarded these requests on to the town manager and assistant town manager.

Mr. Couchenour then asked if it would be effective for the HRB to make resolutions to town council for such items.

Ms. Karagounis stated that the way in which Mr. Couchenour had inquired about these items was the correct way.

Mr. Couchenour asked if it might carry more weight if the HRB provided resolutions in such instances.

Ms. Karagounis replied that typically only town council establishes resolutions and the way that Mr. Couchenour had brought these items to her attention was good. But she did indicate that if the board members wanted to get together and put requests in writing that would also be acceptable, though it would not be termed a resolution.

Ms. Leventis stated that the west side of Main Street was looking really good with the projects going on there such as the Fortes Mill restaurant.

Mr. Couchenour then reiterated that the current \$5,000 amount for façade improvement grants could perhaps be increased.

Ms. Karagounis noted that any consideration for an increase in the \$5,000 amount would be part of the overall town budget preparation which would begin in the July/August timeframe.

Vice chairwoman Brinton then noted that the historic plaque located by the caboose was looking really worn and in need of attention.

Ms. Karagounis stated that she would investigate this.

There being no further business or discussion, Vice chairwoman Brinton adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex J. Moore, AICP

Senior Planner

February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023