

SOUTHERN BEAUFORT COUNTY  
CORRIDOR REVIEW BOARD (CRB) MINUTES  
May 8, 2013, Bluffton Library  
120 Palmetto Way, Bluffton, SC 29910

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**Members Present:** Joe Hall, James Atkins, Daniel Ogden, Ed Pinckney, Pearce Scott

**Staff Present:** Ian Hill, Beaufort County Historic Preservationist; Erin Schumacher, Town of Bluffton Senior Planner; Shaun Leininger, Town of Bluffton Principal Planner

**Guests:** Mike Small, Thomas Viljac, John Binder, Michael Brock, John Deering, Judson Hancock; Tabor Vaux

1. CALL TO ORDER – 3:04 P.M.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT: Thomas Viljac said that he owned a business on Calhoun Street and was also chairman of the Bluffton Planning Commission, but was addressing the Board as a local businessman. He stressed the visible importance of the May River Road corridor. He said that the intersection where the Parkers Convenience Store is proposed serves as a gateway to Old Town Bluffton. He wanted the Board to pay careful attention to the architecture and landscaping of the proposed convenience store with thought given to how the development is consistent with the character of the Old Town. He felt that the current plans needed a more Lowcountry design approach with respect to the main building and the gas pump canopies. Joe Hall informed Mr. Viljac that the purpose of the public comment agenda item was to address issues that would not be addressed further in the meeting agenda.
3. MINUTES – Mr. Pinckney motioned to approve the minutes of the April 17 CRB meeting with the correction that the sixth bulleted condition for the action taken on Parkers Seafood and Produce Stand, should read: “Consider using canopy trees instead of palmettos for the landscaping in front of the building.” Mr. Atkins seconded. Motion carried.
4. NEW BUSINESS:
  - A. **Beaufort County: Target-Bluffton Mitigation Plan, 1050 Fording Island Rd, Bluffton, SC.** Mr. Hill read to the Board the staff comments. He informed the Board that the applicant planned to bring a revised landscaping plan to the Board that addressed staff comments with respect to view corridors. He also informed the Board that once the plan was approved, the applicant has 30 days to install the plant materials.

A recess was called at approximately 3:17 until the presenters for both projects arrived at the Bluffton Library. The meeting resumed at approximately 3:30 pm.

Mike Small presented for the applicant. He said that after discussion with Mr. Merchant, he decided to design an alternate landscaping plan that did not include overstory trees. He said that the alternate plan allowed for an area between the height of the shrubs and the bottom of the canopy where views into the site were possible. He said that the fear was that if they planted a solid buffer, they could run into the same situation in the future

where the buffer is cleared illegally because the tenants want more visibility. Mr. Small passed out the revised plans to the Board. Mr. Pinckney asked the size of the existing trees that remained on the site. Mr. Small said that they range in size from 4" caliper to 16" caliper. Mr. Hall asked what led to the non-compliance. Mr. Small said it was removing the shrub layer. Mr. Pinckney said he wanted the applicant to change the proposed azaleas to a more native looking plant. He also said he didn't like removing all of the understory trees. He understood what the applicant was trying to achieve, but felt that there should be understory trees. Mr. Small said that they could modify the revised plan to introduce understory trees. Mr. Ogden commented that it was the intent when the site was originally developed to keep the natural buffer, so the mitigation plan should keep the buffer looking natural. Mr. Pinckney said that he preferred the first plan that was submitted to the Board. Mr. Small asked if there was room to open up windows into the site by decreasing the understory trees by 20%. Mr. Pinckney said that unless the applicant could provide some elevations that showed the appearance of the windows through the buffer, he was inclined to only approve the first plan as submitted.

Mr. Pinckney motioned that the Board approve the mitigation plan dated March 22, 2013 as submitted with the exception that the azaleas be substituted with a similar sized native or native looking shrub.

Mr. Small asked if it would be ok to just remove the azaleas and keep all the proposed understory trees. Mr. Hall asked the applicant if he would like to go back to the owners and determine if they would be ok with the first plan or would like to modify to allow for some windows into the site. Mr. Small agreed. Mr. Hall informed the applicant that they would table the submittal and wait for a resubmission.

- B. Town of Bluffton COFA-2-13-5330. A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the development of a Parker's Convenience store consisting of a 3,875 SF building, 7 dual gas fueling stations, and associated site improvements on 1.71 acres of property located at the intersection of Buck Island Road and May River Road and zoned Neighborhood Core:** Erin Schumacher, Town of Bluffton, gave staff report. She passed out to the Board some of the correspondence between Town staff and the applicant since the issuance of the staff report. She said that the application was for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Parker's convenience store. The building would be approximately 3,800 square feet with 7 dual gas fueling stations and be located at the intersection of Buck Island Road and May River Road (SC 46) just outside the Town's historic district. The site is identified as the western gateway to Old Town in the Old Town Master Plan. She showed the Board the existing site conditions, site plan, landscaping plan, lighting plan, and architectural elevations.

John Binder presented for the applicant. He said that the challenge of this site is that there is no access off of the two main roads in the intersection, but off of Jennifer Court. The access constraints limit how much the buildings, driveways and stormwater features could be moved around on the site.

Ms. Schumacher summarized the staff recommendations. She said that the CRB should approve the landscaping plan provided that the applicant submits to staff a revised plan that addresses staff comments. The staff comments pertaining to the lighting plan are minor and therefore staff recommends that the CRB approve the lighting plan with the staff comments addressed by submitting to staff a revised plan. Town staff does not have a recommendation for the architecture and is looking to the CRB to provide direction to address staff concerns. One concern is the rear façade, which is long and unarticulated. Because future development is planned on the other side of Jennifer Court, this elevation will be visible. The applicant has chosen to address this by vegetative screening. Another concern is the canopy which spans 185 feet. The code prohibits long unarticulated roofs and the canopy does not have materials and design features that reflect the primary structure. Additionally, the dumpster enclosure should have materials and design that reflect the primary structure. Ms. Schumacher provided the Board material and color samples for the project.

John Deering of Greenline Architecture presented an alternate design for the dumpster enclosure that had tabby piers and hardiplank. He also presented an alternate approach for the canopy which included a sloped, standing-seam metal roof. John Binder explained to the Board that the 50 foot buffer along May River Road prevented them from double stacking the gas pumps which results in the 185 foot long canopy.

Mr. Hall asked the applicant to address the material, color and lighting levels of the underside of the canopy. Mr. Deering said it was a white aluminum ceiling with LED fixtures that meet the lighting requirements. Mr. Hall asked Mr. Binder to compare the proposed Parker's with another store in the region. Mr. Binder drew comparisons to the Parker's near the intersection of SC 46 and SC 170 next door to Wendy's. However, he said that the proposed store was custom designed and therefore had no match in the county. Mr. Pinckney said that he thought the site plan looked similar to the gas station at the corner of Buckwalter Parkway and Buckwalter Place which he did not like.

Mr. Pinckney commented about the quantity of azaleas in the landscaping plan. He said he wasn't as concerned about the staff comments concerning the percentages of species types. Ms. Schumacher said that the primary concern of Staff was the quantity of "cathedral" oaks on the plan.

Mr. Ogden asked about the staff concerns about meeting the deed restrictions and whether that affected the architecture. Ms. Schumacher said that staff needed a letter stating that the development met the covenants for that property. Mr. Hall asked the applicant how they proposed to address the rear façade with additional landscaping to break up the façade. Mr. Brock said that he would propose trellises along the façade with Confederate or yellow jasmine in maybe and alternating pattern.

Mr. Scott commented on the long nature of the canopy. He suggested jogging the design or breaking up the canopy with two or three sections. Mr. Pinckney commented that 14 pumps seemed excessive for Highway 46. Mr. Binder said that the traffic counts demand the number of pumps and if they do not meet market demand, people will go to other gas

stations. Mr. Pinckney suggested that the applicant should remove a couple of pumps to shorten the canopy. Mr. Binder said that they have the number of pumps to avoid lines and traffic conflicts. They want people to easily come in and exit with little conflicts. Mr. Atkins asked if they considered having the pumps along Jenifer Court and the building closer to the intersection. Mr. Binder said they explored multiple approaches to laying out the site and only the plan that was submitted was possible because of access, the highway buffer, and stormwater requirements.

Mr. Atkins said that he preferred a hip roof rather than a mansard. He also said that he felt that the applicant was taking a prototypical Parker's and refacing it with hardiplank. He felt for this particular site as the gateway to Bluffton, the approach to the building should be different. He suggested sloped roofs on the building, redesigning the canopy to eliminate the flatness of it. He hoped that the building could be redesigned so that it could be more of a landmark serving as a gateway into Bluffton. He agreed with Mr. Scott's suggestion to break the canopy up into two or three elements.

Mr. Ogden said that he felt the dumpster enclosure had lowcountry detailing but the building did not. He asked why the plinths were removed from the canopy. He said they would have worked well with a tabby shell base. Mr. Deering said his intent was to keep the design simple. Mr. Binder said tabby would be a problem in that area because it doesn't hide dirt well.

Mr. Hall invited the public to speak on the project and asked them to limit their comments to five minutes.

Thomas Viljac asked the Town staff if the revised plans had been submitted to the Town yet. Ms. Schumacher said that the revised plans hadn't been formally reviewed by Town staff but reflect discussions that have taken place between staff and the applicant. Mr. Viljac praised the landscaping plan for the project but said that the architecture was lacking. He said that the canopy was so large that it was in effect the primary structure. He said it needed to be broken up. He felt that the revised drawings needed a proper review and felt that action on the project should be tabled. He cited Lawton Station as a good example of Lowcountry architecture that could be reflected in the Parker's store.

Judson Hancock cited the Drayton Street Parker's in Savannah as a good model of what can be done at this location. He felt that the proposed store had too many pumps for the site. He said that the Jennifer Court intersection with Highway 46 was directly across from his driveway and was concerned because the intersection was already dangerous. He also felt that it would be hasty to take action on the revised plans.

Tabor Vaux was concerned about May River Road being a scenic highway. He wanted a gas station that looked like it belonged in the neighborhood, rather than one that looked like it belonged on a 4 or 6 lane highway. He agreed that the project should be tabled so that there is time for more public comment. He was especially concerned about having a 185 foot long canopy. He said that there was a proper way to address the gas station, but the existing plans did not achieve this. He took offense to the architect saying that

Bluffton wasn't a "grand town" and felt that the current design reflected the architect's view of Bluffton.

Ed Pinckney asked if the applicant had considered placing the pumps on the rear of the building near the entrance. He felt that this would address many of the concerns of the Board and of the public. John Binder said that he had been working with the Town of Bluffton since before October 2012, sought a variance in December 2012, and felt that the process was not rushed. He said that the length of the canopy had been approved by Town staff. He said that the revisions in the plans were made to address public and Town staff comments.

Shawn Leininger, Principal Planner with the Town of Bluffton, said that Robert's Rules gave the Board the ability to table the motion. He said that the applicant applied for a variance before the Zoning Board of Appeals in December 2012. He said that the BZA approved the variance to allow additional fueling spaces from 8 to 14. He said that the final development plan was being reviewed concurrently with the Certificate of Appropriateness that the CRB was reviewing at this meeting. He said that the Certificate of Appropriateness could only consider the lighting, landscaping, and architecture. He said that the Town's preliminary development plan approval allowed the site plan that the Board was reviewing at the meeting with the building in the back, the pumps in the front, and the access on Jennifer Court. He said that for final development plan approval, they were only focusing on the details that included the final engineering for stormwater, access, and landscaping. He said that the issue before the CRB was the canopy and breaking it up architecturally.

Mr. Atkins felt that the 19 Town staff conditions on this submittal seemed like too much to be resolved at this meeting. Mr. Pinckney asked if the item was tabled, what the next step would be. Mr. Hall said if it is tabled, then the applicant would submit to Board a revised plan that addressed the comments of the Board and the public concerns. He reminded the Board, staff and the public that the CRB was a review board, not a design board.

Mr. Atkins motioned to table the project for further discussion and allow the applicant to address the 19 conditions placed by Town Staff. Mr. Pinckney seconded. Motion carried.

5. OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business.
6. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Hall informed the Board that the next scheduled meeting was Wednesday, May 22 at the Bluffton Library.
7. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.