
Historic District Commission

Special Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2024

Members present: Rhonda Dempster, Marguerite Erwin & Robert Cavell

Members absent: Cody Blanchard & Lance Ledet

Also Present: Monique Reulet, Public Works Executive Secretary; Sonya Cabrera, Public Works Secretary; Trey Waguespack, Assistant Public Works Director

Dempster called the meeting to order.

Erwin moved to accept the minutes presented for the January 11, 2024 meeting. The motion was seconded by Cavell, all commission members were in favor, motion carried 3 to 0, with 2 absent.

Dempster introduced the first item on the agenda – to review proposal by Amy Flores/GFP Architecture on behalf of Lafourche Parish Government for exterior restoration, including window replacement & plaster repair, of the Lafourche Parish Courthouse located at 201 Green Street.

Amy Flores/GFP Architecture, 307 Canal Boulevard, was present to represent her request. She explained that they are proposing to replace the windows on the courthouse with a replicated style and metal-clad material. Chuck Dills of La Maison Complete was also present as a representative of Marvin Windows. This company is the proposed manufacturer of the new windows for the courthouse. Dills stated that these windows would be metal-clad, but would be reproduced with the current pane count and casing design. Flores added that they would also be doing plaster repairs, but it would be as needed and in the same style as the last repairs done in 2002.

Dempster asked if they would be going in with a central unit. Flores said yes, they would get rid of the window units and do a central unit. They would also work to remove some of the existing equipment on the roof. Erwin asked if the National Historic Registry had been consulted and if they approved of the material choices, because she did not understand why they would approve metal clad windows as opposed to going back with wood. Flores said they worked with the same consultant as they did for the roofing project. The consultant told her they did not need to follow Federal guidelines, only State, and when she asked about State guidelines she was referred to the Historic District Commission. Flores added that she assumed the Historic Registry knew about the project based on her conversation with the consultant. Dills added they have done a lot of work on historic buildings.

Dempster would like something in writing from the Historic Registry approving the metal-clad windows. The commission members discussed other historic properties in the City of Thibodaux. Cavell noted the condition of the interior of the court house, particularly the first floor. Flores responded by saying that they are reviewing the entire mechanical and electrical system. Erwin questioned the paint color, and Flores said that they are still considering options and would like the commission's opinion. She added that they considered hiring a company in the past to try to identify the original paint color of the courthouse, but that service was too expensive. Dempster noted that Dennis Gaubert, a retired attorney, may have old pictures of the courthouse. Flores stated she would like to do a better job of getting a historically accurate color for exterior. Erwin added that the commission can advise them and possibly provide contacts of others who could help.

Cavell asked Flores about the date of the previous major renovation done on the courthouse. Flores said she believed it was in 2002. Dempster discussed the desire to stick to historically accurate designs and materials while also having to stick to a budget and go with materials that would be easier to maintain. Flores stated that it had been twenty (20) years since the last re-plastering of the building and, overall, it has held up well. She then suggested that maybe they should repaint in ten (10) years instead.

Dills stated that Marvin can do windows as impact-rated or not impact-rated, it just would depend on their budget. Erwin asked about the difference between wood windows and aluminum-clad windows. Dills said it is mainly maintenance, with wood windows requiring more. He added that the key is the preparation and priming of the wood. Erwin asked him if they have ever used aluminum-clad windows on Historic Registry buildings. Dills said yes, he can provide data on that. Dempster asked who the Historic Carpenter would be on the project. Erwin & Flores stated that the project has to go out for bid. Erwin referred to Jeff Lasseigne's work on the Caillouet building downtown.

Cavell asked if the iron gate was going to be repaired and Flores said yes. Dempster stated that they could approve the design as long as they get something in writing for the National Registry. Upon discussion of the interior work to be done on the courthouse, Erwin stated that this commission does not consider interior, only exterior. She added that the National Registry could give advice on interior design. Flores asked Dills about the life expectancy of some material options. Dills said one option has a 10-year wood rot. Another option would be Accoya wood, which has a 50-year wood rot. Dempster asked what type of wood is there currently, and Dills said he was not sure. Cavell asked for a summary of the interior work. Flores stated they would be mostly painting and replacing flooring. She added that she reached out to the judges for their opinions. Those who responded noted a desire to have a more historic design. Dempster recommended having someone go out to the courthouse to view the property and give them advice. Erwin asked the age of the courthouse. Flores said it was built in 1856. She added that these numbers on the front of building are currently painted in the same color as the building, and she suggested cleaning off the paint. The commission members agreed.

Erwin made a motion to approve the proposal by Amy Flores/GFP Architecture on behalf of Lafourche Parish Government for exterior restoration, including window replacement & plaster repair, of the Lafourche Parish Courthouse located at 201 Green Street, on the condition that the National Historic Registry provides written approval of any design & material choices. The motion was seconded by Cavell, all commission members in, motion carries 3 to 0, with 2 absent.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.