



Design Review Board
Tuesday, August 26, 2025 - 5:30 PM
MINUTES

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Board Chair Heather Green called the Design Review Board to order for August, 2025 at 5:32 pm.
Present - Heather Green, Andrew Hale, Craig Bohning
Absent - Franz Stein, Dustin Gerken

Staff present - Sean Staneart - City Manager, Trevor Traphagen - City Planner, Teresa Monroe - Clerk of Council

Public present - Bradley Blumensheid, Rob Whipple, Ryan Crossley, Mark Landquist, Dale Leatherborry, Ryan Mason

2. Public Comment on items not on the agenda

No comments.

3. Approval of Minutes

a. August 12, 2025

ACTION: Craig Bohning moved to approve; Andrew Hale seconded and the vote was as follows:

AYES: Andrew Hale, Craig Bohning

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: Heather Green; absence

Passed 2 - 0

4. Application # 7-15-25 Certificate of Appropriateness; 67 S Main Street - Exterior Changes

a. Application & Staff Report

City Planner Trevor Traphagen noted that the application was amended by the applicant on Friday and the staff report was written prior to the application being amended, so there are some inconsistencies. Mr. Traphagen said the initial application was for a traditional aluminum storefront system to fill both of the bays of the building and that is what his staff report was based upon. He said he pulled some historical photos from the Johnstown Historical Society and made some recommendations to add some insets to the storefront. The application was then amended to utilize some of the existing materials to try and add that inset back in. The revised application shows the awning and existing paneling would stay but the inset would be there so there would be some depth to the front of the building. Or the board could ask the applicant if they would be agreeable to using the storefront system originally proposed.

Sean Staneart provided some additional background saying that originally the applicant reached out wanting to do some changes to the storefront, they were also notified that some of the changes that had happened in the rear, related to the electrical, would also need to be evaluated as well as the windows on the side that had been altered. The applicant had submitted the COA just for the front but it was communicated to them that those other components were going to need to be reviewed as well, so they are a part of this packet tonight. It was also communicated to the applicant that they should stop additional work because if these items were not approved, they could potentially need to be removed and done in a different way.

Bradley Blumensheid with Rhythm Architecture and Design was present for review of the submitted application and to answer board member questions. Andrew Hale asked for the reasoning behind abandoning what was submitted the first time, which he said was more attractive on every level, with the exception of the aluminum framing. He asked why they would abandon an attractive storefront for this. Craig Bohning asked why the metal canopy is now going to remain when originally it was going away, what is the purpose. Mr. Blumensheid said they are trying to not touch the exterior as much as possible and do as little as possible to make any changes to the exterior, just bring it up to where it was. Mr. Bohning asked what the reason for that was. Mr. Blumensheid said financial reasons, timing reasons, lots of reasons. He also said since it already has a recess in it, instead of trying to reconstruct a recess, they would use the recess and storefront that is already there, it just made more sense. Craig Bohning asked what was happening with the canopy where all the signage was, that all the bolts are still there from the old Shull's Hardware sign and it really looks terrible right now. Mr. Blumensheid said that is outside their scope, they were just going to focus on the storefront, Mr. Bohning said that is part of the storefront. Mr. Blumensheid asked if that could be addressed under a separate sign application, Mr. Bohning said this is not a signage issue. Heather Green asked if this would remain multiple tenant, with two separate storefronts; Mr. Blumensheid said yes. Sean Staneart said if they were to keep the building as is, no changes at all, they would not need to come before the board, he assumes there is a need for the additional door, and because of that, there is an alteration to the front requiring approval from this board. Heather Green said currently, the applicant is proposing clear anodized framing. She said the side windows have a black frame and asked if the original frame design was going to be black, Mr. Blumensheid said yes. Mr. Bohning said he is having a tough time understanding the applicant's answer about not wanting to touch the existing exterior, trying to minimize changes, but five weeks ago a plan was submitted showing that was all being done. He said it doesn't make any sense, for all of a sudden it to become a financial concern to touch the outside of the building, there is something not quite right for him. Andrew Hale said the anodized storefront is a problem in a historic building downtown, it is something they are trying to eliminate, not add more of, so right away they have a material problem and it is just not attractive, if they are going to make a change to this and take the T-111 off, this is not what he wants to see downtown. All board members expressed that they have an issue with the design and the materials. Some further discussion on the electrical changes made to the back of the building and inclusion with the application. Mr. Staneart said if the board does in fact approve of the electrical changes made as part of the application, it would no longer be in violation. Heather Green asked the applicant to elaborate a little on what actually happened with the panels. Andrew Hale said there are significant changes back there.

Sean Staneart said he would like to jump in. He said there are a lot of questions that are legally related, and he feels like there is legal counsel on behalf of the applicant here, where there is a higher level of scrutiny being given to this as there is video recording happening. An option, and he can check with the city attorney, is to table this until our attorney can be present to give advice. Ryan Crossley introduced himself and said he was with Kooperman Mentel Crossley Yaross, a law firm in Columbus present on behalf of the applicant. He said he wanted to bring some clarity to how they got here. Andrew Hale said he would stop there, he would like to move to table until city counsel is present. Craig Bohning said he would like to let him explain, but that he did agree with Andrew. Ryan Crossley said the entire reason for the shift from the original application and plans for the storefront system they saw was because it was their understanding they did not have staff support because of the two comments made to recess the entryway and use a different storefront system. Those comments caused them to step back. Andrew Hale asked him if he was informed that this board ultimately makes those decisions or were they informed that the staff report was the final decision. Mr. Crossley said they understand. Mr. Hale asked why they would make that determination without coming before this board. Mr. Crossley said they like to go into these meetings with the support of city staff understanding that similar boards typically follow the direction of the staff. Mr. Hale said they have done a disservice to themselves by pulling this back, there are certainly merits to the original submittal and this board has a very qualified membership

and certainly could have come to some agreements that would have preserved the historic character they are looking for downtown, as well as made everyone happy, there are compromises that can be reached, and certainly not with a room full of attorneys and scowled faces. Mr. Crossley said there is nothing intimidating by them being involved, they saw a problem and helped with the issues, he said the application was changed because they want to get support and approval and they thought this would do that. He said there could be a desire to go back to the original submittal if there was support from the board for those plans.

Sean Staneart said he was on the phone with legal, checking to see if tabling is a process that is allowed at this point. City legal counsel said that the codified ordinances state that a decision on the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is to be made within thirty working/business days from receipt, and that the thirty days may be extended by mutual agreement of the Design Review Board and the applicants. Based on his understanding that there was a supplement or amended application, the board would have at a minimum thirty days from that working day, that means that the board can either hear the application today and issue a decision, or hear the application today and then make a decision in the future, within thirty working days, or alternatively it could table the application and hear it another time so long as the decision is issued within the thirty working days from the date the application was received, and if the board wants, and the applicant agrees, they can mutually agree to extend the date by which the board is to act. The board does have the discretion to table this.

Andrew Hale asked if the windows that were already installed and the electric, something they are hearing tonight or something that will be addressed at the city level. Clerk Monroe said that the windows and electrical are part of the COA and referenced an email with those changes outlined along with pictures submitted. Mr. Hale said since they have heard from the applicants' counsel that they may be willing to revert back to the initial application, do they have the ability to withdraw this. Trevor Traphagen said the board could ask if they are agreeable to consider going back to the original. Craig Bohning said he thinks just tabling and giving their opinion on what things they need to look at and getting an updated plan works. Mr. Bohning said he would like to have a discussion, they do kind of like the original submittal, but they don't like aluminum, they would like to go with materials that have more of a look from back in the day, he asked if that was something the applicant would be willing to take a look at.

Trevor Traphagen said that he did not recommend denial or non-approval of this document, he identified some additional areas that more character could be incorporated. He said if he is being asked if he likes the application before them tonight or the original, better in terms of what aligns better with the Design Guidelines of Johnstown, he far and away thinks that the original application, not the one presented tonight, fits the city better in alignment with the overall goals of the design guidelines. He thinks it is worthwhile to continue the discussion with the applicant this evening to see what they are willing to work with them on. The applicant was agreeable to continuing discussion. Mr. Bohning referenced the historic photo, there was discussion on the face of the building, the water table, the entry doors, placement and materials proposed. Mr. Traphagen said the current water table is not original to the building. Mr. Bohning asked if the board was OK with having a flat storefront, Ms. Green said she would like to see some depth to it. Mr. Hale said he was much more concerned about the material proposed, the aluminum framing is what he objects to, Mr. Bohning said he agreed. Mr. Hale said while he would love to see the entryways inset as they were historically, the biggest issue he has is the aluminum, there are plenty of examples downtown of direct set glass into wood framing, we certainly don't need to do the storefront stuff, it just isn't historically accurate and isn't terribly attractive in a building like this. He said as much as he would like to see it be inset if we can, and he would request that, the materials override that for him, he really wants to see that material change, Ms. Green and Mr. Bohning were in agreement. Craig Bohning said with regard to the electrical on the back, is there an opportunity to paint it to blend in, he referenced the original image of the rear of the building, he would ask them to look at that. Andrew Hale asked if there was an opportunity to take the

electrical underground. Mr. Staneart said the city encourages new services to be taken underground, it is visually more appealing, underground could have been explored rather than adding an additional weather head and removing the old one and the location of the gang boxes, could they have been placed in a different location to be less conspicuous. The side windows will need to be discussed as well. Ms. Green asked about the fence removed in the rear, was it the plan to leave as it is now with just the posts. Mr. Hale said that is a liability but would fall under the building department. The applicant requested a recess to discuss.

ACTION: Heather Green moved to take a ten minute recess; Andrew Hale seconded and all were in favor.

AYES: Heather Green, Andrew Hale, Craig Bohning

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

Passed 3 - 0

The board returned to session at 6:36 pm.

Another representative of the applicant (name not stated) said they broke out to talk about what they can do and make some proposals. He said the greatest concern he heard was the framing on the windows which is currently slated to be anodized aluminum. He asks if composites that look like wood would be doable for long-term maintenance. Mr. Hale said the color would be important, and a material that will take a paint that is historically relevant. This is a historic building, he thinks a composite material there that comes with a profile, referenced other buildings downtown, is fine. Mr. Bohning said he would actually prefer a composite. The representative said as far as the box (electric) on the back of the building, Ryan Mason, the property owner is present, and they will commit to burying it, if that will help aesthetically. As far as the front, it would be two doors, they propose that the doors be flush and centered. The representative said when they pivoted back, their goal all along was to try and find the support needed to get this project moving forward and they may have misread that. Their commitment is to get it right and hopefully come away from this evening's discussion with a path forward and a high level of understanding of what the parties have agreed to that will allow them to move the project forward and satisfy the board and what is wanted for downtown Johnstown. Craig Bohning said they greatly appreciate when Trevor does staff reports for them because he does a deep dive and gives historical photos and it is a great comment he made, but from their perspective, trying to get it to something they would be proud of downtown, they could give up on the recessed part of it to get all of the other stuff they are talking about. Andrew Hale said they have not talked about the side windows and the fact that they have pulled them flush to the brick, that is offensive to him in every way. He said the way that the storefront sits under the ledge, he would really like to see this with that architectural detail where the storefront is set back, while he understands they are not going to create the alcove, he still wants to see that depth as it exists in the historical photos. He added that the partial height wall, if redrawing for submittal, he would like that a little bit taller to also reference the historic photo. Andrew Hale said the aluminum on the side windows is also an issue, they should reflect the windows on the back, and they should not be pulled forward to the face of the brick, they should be back set. Mr. Blumensheid said those were existing, they had wood paneling over them that was pulled off. Mr. Staneart said his recommendation is for the applicant to take the recommendation of the board and include the windows in the new model and that way they would not have to come back if they were to do anything to any of the windows at a later date. Mr. Hale noted that the applicants statement says that the windows were already installed because when the owner acquired the building, no windows existed, there were just thin sheets of particle board with holes and gaps, they wanted to secure the interior space. Ryan Crossley said the owner is telling him that he took the plywood off and those windows were existing behind the plywood. And they have not touched the upstairs. Mr. Hale said he wonders what is under the plywood on the second floor. Mr. Bohning said his opinion is that those windows are in an alley, he doesn't want to

spend too much time looking at them when he really wants to make sure that the storefront is addressed properly. Heather Green said the windows up top are boarded up, they look like they are framed in. The owner said there are still existing windows up there, they just haven't taken the boards off, their main objective is to get new windows like the board wants and make it look good for everyone. Mr. Traphagen asked if they were planning on replacing the upstairs windows at some point, Mr. Mason said yes, eventually. Mr. Traphagen said if they could pick out a window product they intend to use and match overall and include that, it would avoid them having to come back to the board when they do choose to make the improvements.

Chair Heather Green summarized the changes requested:

1. Change the storefront material from what is shown in aluminum to a composite or other material, black is OK.
2. Raise the partial height wall at the bottom of the storefront.
3. Recess the storefront back further from the cap and from the stonework as historical photos show.
4. The electrical in the back will be buried.
5. Include the plan for the future windows to match storefront material.

ACTION:	Heather Green moved to table; Craig Bohning seconded and the vote was as follows:
AYES:	Heather Green, Craig Bohning, Andrew Hale
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Passed 3 - 0

5. Other Business
No further business.

6. Adjourn

ACTION:	Heather Green moved to adjourn; Craig Bohning seconded and all were in favor.
AYES:	Heather Green, Andrew Hale, Craig Bohning
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

Passed 3 - 0

The meeting ended at 6:56 pm.