

Town of Lexington
BOARD OF APPEARANCE
Minutes

March 8, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Larry Wilund and Board Members Wayne Rogers, Carlton “Cocky” Oswald and Ian MacLean were present. Board Member Bob Britts, was absent. New Board Member Jeremy Addy was present to observe the meeting. The meeting was held at Town Hall in the Council Chambers at 5:30 p.m.

Staff members in attendance were Director of Planning, Building, and Technology John Hanson, Assistant Zoning Administrator Jessica Lybrand, and Municipal Clerk Becky Hildebrand.

Four (4) citizens were present and no news media were present.

Chair Wilund read an introduction to the Board of Appearance meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Board Member MacLean and seconded by Board Member Rogers to approve the minutes from the Board of Appearance meeting held on January 10, 2022 as submitted. The motion carried by a vote of three (3) in favor and one (1) recused (Wilund was not present for the 1/10/22 meeting).

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Review of a Proposal from Storage Units Lexington, LLC to a Climate Controlled Storage Facility at 5150 Sunset Boulevard:** Director of Planning, Building and Technology Hanson presented the item. He stated that Frances Webster with Storage Units Lexington submitted a proposal to build a new climate-controlled storage facility at 5150 Sunset Boulevard. The project consists of a three-story building containing 800 storage units. The submitted building elevation depicts a variety of exterior materials including stone veneer, brick, vertical PBU, and two colors of EFIS. It also shows a significant number of red exterior overhead doors on the rear of the building. The mass and shape of the building contribute to an industrial feel that seemed inconsistent with the Sunset Boulevard Commercial corridor and concerned the Staff Committee leading them to refer this project to the Board for review.

Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022

The Board's package included the following Sections from the Town of Lexington's Architectural and Appearance Design Manual as previously submitted.

Section SG1 states to: *“Design new development to be compatible with the general physical character of adjacent neighborhoods. Protect and respond to the positive elements of the existing community fabric by including significant buildings, pedestrian routes and amenities and public facilities in the design by keeping the existing building height orientation and architectural styles of the community.”* This project will be centrally located along Sunset Boulevard. Buildings in the immediate area such as Lidl, Aldi, Walgreens, Doctor's Care, Bojangles and all three shopping centers are generally one or two stories and are primarily constructed of brick, stone and stucco.

Section SG2 states to: *“Ensure that the structure is not of such mass that is dominates its surroundings or adjacent development. Use architectural form and detailing to reduce the appearance of the mass of the structure. Design upper areas of taller structures to minimize their visual appearance. Larger structures will require a greater degree of sensitivity to site location and inclusion of larger forms of landscaping.”* The building will be located 86 feet from Sunset Boulevard and will consist of three floors totaling over 120,000 square feet. Based on previous revises by this Board of similar projects, the Staff Committee felt this section was a primary consideration for this project. Additionally, the submitted landscape plan does not appear to address this section of the manual.

Section SG4 states to: *“Provide significant architectural features to emphasize the public streets and enhance the streetscape.”*

Section SG5 states to: *“Coordinate architectural detail and character within an overall design concept for all sides and components. The proposed use of multiple façade materials as well as the PBU on the rear of the building seems to conflict with this section.”*

Section SG6 states to: *“Use projections, recesses, plazas, awnings color and texture to reduce the visual size of any blank walls facing public areas or streets.”*

Section SG7 states to: *“Design secondary doors to blend with the building façade.”* Multiple red roll up doors on the rear of the building seem to conflict with this section and contributes to the industrial feel of the building.

Sections SG11 through SG14 refer to site lighting. These manual sections require lighting that:

- *“is appropriate to the ground-floor use and that focuses on pedestrian areas”*
- *“creates a natural color balance for safety and security”*
- *“does not spill over onto or cast a glare to adjacent uses”*

- *“is in accordance with the design style of the project and is compatible with the surrounding property lighting”*

The submitted façade appears to show several wall packs around the exterior of the building. Wall packs are specifically prohibited on page 18 of the manual. No additional information was provided about any other proposed parking lot lighting.

Section SG15 states to: *“Enclose all utility equipment within buildings or screen it from both the public street and other public areas.”* It appears that there is no rooftop equipment that may need to be screened. However, mechanical equipment shown on both ends of the building should be screened with a wall that matches the building.

Section SG17 states to: *“Design garbage enclosures that are external to the building with the same materials as the building and ensure that the wall height is sufficient to completely conceal garbage dumpsters.”* A dumpster pad with a screen wall is shown on the site plan but no information was provided on the proposed materials or gates. The manual requires the screen wall to be constructed of materials that match the building and the gates to be made of heavy duty steel.

Chapter 4 of the manual addresses landscaping and site design and recommends:

- *“landscape features to emphasize the public streets and enhance the streetscape”*
- *“landscaping that is of a scope and size that is in proportion to the scale of the development”*
- *“landscaping the areas in front of blank walls that face public streets or other public areas”*

A landscape plan was provided for this project and is currently under review. However, this plan does not appear to address the scope and size of the project nor provide landscaping along blank walls adjacent to the building to assist with reducing the overall mass of the project.

Chapter 6 of the manual addresses sign related items. Signage is permitted under a separate permit but, the elevation and site plan show signage that exceeds the allowance of signage for the site. Mr. Hanson added that he spoke with Mr. Patel about signs because there are two billboards on the site now. He added that one billboard is to be removed and the second one is under an extended lease which will impact the number of signs allowed. Mr. Hanson stated that with the remaining billboard, they would only be allowed one additional since the elevation has three wall signs and a monument sign. He asked the Board to keep that in mind when they discuss the project.

Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022

The Board was asked to review the proposal to determine whether it meets the Town's appearance standards. Mr. Hanson stated that there were several people here representing Storage Units Lexington to answer any questions.

Chair Wilund called on the applicant for comments.

Mr. Steve Patel, 1022 West Georgia Road, Simpsonville, SC, stated that he and Mr. Brad Brodie are partners on the project along with the site engineer. He directed the Board to the package of information they were given regarding the project and added that they would be happy to answer any questions.

Board Member Rogers stated that Staff did a nice job of writing their concerns and how it addresses all the issues. He added that he could not get past Section SG2 and the big box mass of the building when surroundings buildings were primarily one story. Board Member Rogers stated that it is important for the building to be set back off the street.

Chair Wilund agreed and added that this building does not meet the standards of the site in that it dominates the site and the fact that it is 282 feet wide, it takes up the whole site which leaves little room for landscaping. He was concerned that the building is large for the site as well as the buildings next to it. Chair Wilund stated that the building is also narrower at the frontage instead of wider, plus lacks detail on the front and side. He stated that these are his main concerns along with keep up with landscaping. Chair Wilund added that he appreciated Mr. Hanson's comments which was noted and noted that larger structures require a greater degree of sensitivity to the site location and landscaping. He stated that this is where the challenge is with this project. He added that there is a lot going on with the building with different materials and colors that help break it up to some degree, but it needs more windows because it is such a big box even if it got shrunk down. Chair Wilund understood it is a storage building, but they have to make it work for the site.

Mr. Brad Brodie, 230 Colleton Avenue SE, Aiken, SC, stated that Mr. Hanson brought up a lot of points that he had not heard before so he was surprised to hear some of them. He added that a three story self-storage building is a big box and when he first purchased the property he thought they had done enough research in terms of what could be on the property regarding height, etc. Mr. Brodie stated that they are constrained by the size of the property and how far they can go back because he would love to go back 150 feet off the road but there is a severe drop off in the rear. He added that when they did their GO Report they hit rock at approximately four feet in the front and eight feet in the back. Mr. Brodie stated that in a building like this the escalating cost is very expensive which makes the numbers hard to work with and to have enough square footage to accomplish that. He added if they built the building half its size then the numbers would not work and you would have to go four stories. Mr. Brodie recommended that if there is so much restraint on the property then why doesn't the Town change the ordinance to allow for a large box building.

**Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022**

Chair Wilund explained that as members of the Board of Appearance they do not have the jurisdiction to change the ordinance. He added that the scale of the building causes it to be reviewed by this Board, even though by code you can build it, but it still has to meet the appearance standards as set by the Town Council.

Mr. Brad Brodie stated they have been working with the Town for about three months to determine what the Town wants in order to put a three story storage facility on the property. He added that in terms of materials on the building, they can do anything and could have a combination of brick, stucco, slate or others. He stated that they could create any type of architectural features with a bump out here and there, but all of that is to no avail if they cannot have a three story building.

Board Member Rogers stated that he appreciated the energy to create the elevation and the different pieces of that, but the Board was given a manual to help make this work. He added that he could not get past SG2 which states “ensure that the structure is not of such mass that it dominates its surroundings or adjacent development”. Board Member Rogers stated that the proposed building would be 282 feet long and three stories tall which makes it a big box. He did not think it was just how you articulate the outside, it would still be a very large box.

Mr. Steve Patel stated that may be understandable that it is a large box, but if you look at the property to the west and east, this property is much less width wise than it is to the left and the right. He added that height is a different issue, but if you look at the jewelry store it may seem like a one story building but it is actually one and one-half stories.

Board Member Rogers agreed that the jewelry store is one and one-half stores tall, but with punched openings and canopies and is not a 282 foot building.

Mr. Brad Brodie inquired if it would matter if it were gilded in gold. Board Member Rogers responded that Mr. Hanson’s comments addressed several issues that were solvable, but he still could not get past SG2.

Mr. Steve Patel asked if SG2 specially decided the project. He added that zoning allows it so he did not know how to get past that. He agreed with Mr. Brodie earlier in that compared to the property value and what they paid for it, they need to make the numbers work. He added that at one point they were even going to increase the size when their Site Engineer came back and told them they had to lower the size of it. Mr. Patel stated that at that time they were told it could be 150,000 square feet and they have lowered that to 120,000 square feet. He added that unfortunately there is not much they can do unless the Board had a suggestion.

Chair Wilund stated that he did not have a good suggestion relative to Mr. Patel’s particular circumstance. He added that the building is so wide and so high, the

Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022

only thing they could do would be make it narrower, which may mean it has to go further back, but it needed to be significantly less than 282 feet long.

Mr. Brad Brodie asked if 280 is too much, what is not too much and is it 200 feet or 210 feet. He asked then how can he add storage in the rear with a 38 foot drop off. Mr. Brodie stated that he was all for trying to figure out a solution. He stated that they have a retaining wall on one side.

Mr. Steve Patel stated that if they could have moved the building back they would have, but the drop off is so tremendous.

Mr. Tom Britt, Site Engineer, stated that it was a matter of cost regarding how far you go back with a retaining wall because the further you go back, the taller the retaining wall. Mr. Brodie stated that he would be worried about the base of the structure to build the retaining wall on such a severe slope when they don't know the exact issue of the rock in that area. Chair Wilund responded that they would be adding a lot of fill dirt and not building on top of the rock.

Board Member Rogers asked if the building had to be rectangle to make it work. Mr. Brodie responded that they had looked at all configurations. Board Member Rogers stated that there are ways to think of a building with an offset in it to break up the façade. Mr. Brodie stated that there is parking in the middle with a tower on each end.

Director of Planning, Building and Technology Hanson wished to offer an additional item that was not in the write up. He stated that SG3 indicates to *“create a transition in the scale and density of the built form on the site when located next to lower density neighborhoods to mitigate any potential impact”*. He suggested that there could be two stories on the front and three stories on the back.

Board Member Rogers stated that it continues to be hard to get past SG2 with integrity given the manual of standards as set by Town Council. He stated that understanding the economics of it, the cost of construction, constraints of the site and the topography, the challenge is to figure out how to break this building apart. He recommended to reduce the height somewhere and create offsets that are meaningful.

Mr. Brad Brodie asked Site Engineer Britt if there was any way to go down a floor in the rear only with a retaining wall. Mr. Britt responded that it would depend on the rock. Mr. Brodie stated that he likes bi-level buildings and with the slope it might work. He confirmed with Board Member Rogers that he had recommended only two floors. He added that once they lay it out they might could make three floors work. Mr. Brodie stated they could look at that and bring their GO group back to look specifically at the rear of the building. Mr. Brodie asked the Board if that was something they could live with. Chair Wilund responded that without seeing the product that would be hard to answer. He suggested that Mr. Brodie come back to Mr. Hanson with a rearranged site plan

Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022

that narrows the building and shift some things that show a different scale either with a two story or three story building based on your review of the site analysis.

Board Member Rogers stated that if the building had more articulation to it in terms of height and how the building is configured because the building could be designed differently both vertically as well as arrangement. He added that landscape and trees would also do a lot for it.

Mr. Steve Patel asked why they couldn't improve the landscaping to help visually cut the building up. Mr. Britt confirmed that the Board recommended landscaping closer to the building. Mr. Patel stated that if landscaping was every 20 to 30 feet or so. Chair Wilund stated that they would still need to see more breaks in the wall itself on the front and the sides.

Mr. Brad Brodie stated that it was a given that if they want to build this they will have to come back because it is not happening tonight which he figured out as soon as Mr. Hanson left the podium. Mr. Hanson responded that he has been over the issues with him numerous times.

Board Member Rogers stated that it is all those things and they may consider bringing it back after looking at the height, the building could be taller in the back than in the front, the building could have a jog in it and trees would help. He thought it was about the fact that they need to figure out how to make it not look like a 120,000 square foot box. Board Member Rogers stated that this Board is not a land use group or a zoning group, but they are about what it is like to be on the streets of Lexington and how to make Lexington a more beautiful place which is why Town Council adopted guidelines and ways to help quantify that mission.

Mr. Steve Patel asked the Board what they wanted to see when they drive by. Chair Wilund suggested significant glass on the building. Mr. Patel thought added landscaping and breaking up the building was easy to resolve. He added that comparatively what zoning allows is different and they need to come to some sort of meeting of the minds.

Mr. Brad Brodie commented that they could do anything with the building, but they had to get someone on the Board nodding today and not detesting self-storage and they were willing to work with them. He added that Mr. Hanson's had mentioned their display windows. Mr. Hanson responded that he was referring to the ones in the back. He confirmed that the metal roof on the jewelry store was built before they annexed into the Town. Mr. Brodie stated that they could get rid of the rollup doors on the back and getting rid of the metal in the back was the least of his worries. Chair Wilund added that there was also a color issue. Mr. Brodie stated that their display doors are about self-storage and they are actually dummy doors just to show off that they are self-storage and are proud of it. He asked the Board if they had a problem with the doors. Chair Wilund responded that when he mentioned windows, he would like to see more of that.

**Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022**

Board Member Oswald asked the applicant if they could get past the massive building issue, did he have any issues with other requirements of the Town. Mr. Patel responded that he would like to see a copy of the manual and if he had a copy beforehand they would not have some of these issues. Board Member Oswald stated that if they decide on a building design, they still need to make sure the other items are in order. He added that it appears they can be, but they have not gotten that far yet and may have gotten ahead of the game. Mr. Hanson stated that a copy of the manual is on the Town's website. Mr. Brad Brodie stated that he certainly didn't want to spend all this time redesigning a building only to have other issues. Board Member Oswald stated that it did not appear that the applicant had even seen the items that Mr. Hanson mentioned. Mr. Brodie responded that they had not. Board Member Oswald stated that should be addressed by the applicant as soon as possible because it could be something easy to fix or it could be something they do not want to do. He added that the Board runs into this problem at times, but he did not see anything insurmountable with this project other than the building. Board Member Oswald stated that Chair Wilund and Board Member Rogers are architects and are very familiar with design. Mr. Brodie stated that he was surprised by some of the issues but everything is about dollars and cents. Board Member Oswald agreed that the Board would probably not make a decision tonight. Mr. Hanson stated that the Board is required to make a decision tonight or the applicant can withdraw their request which would give them an opportunity to bring it back rather than have it voted down.

Mr. Steve Patel asked the Board Members, considering their background, if they saw something on any of the issues that would help them. He added that unfortunately they had gone over and over the square footage and did not see any other way, other than landscaping, to cut the building up. Board Member Rogers stated that it seemed to him that you could take the left two-thirds of the building and shift it back one bay to offset the mass which would make the building look like it is 100 feet wide instead of 282 feet. He added that they need to rethink the design and how it fits in Lexington because right now it does not fit. Mr. Patel stated that one major concern was traffic, but they would only have 10 to 12 cars a day which is the beauty of this project because it would be very different with a restaurant.

Mr. Brad Brodie stated that they would redesign it based on whatever the Board had to vote on to allow them to do it.

Board Member Rogers asked Mr. Hanson would it be appropriate for the Board to table this item or turn the project down. Mr. Hanson stated that to table it would imply that you are close to a decision and you may not be especially if Mr. Brodie is going to redesign it. He added that the applicant can withdraw it and bring it back when they have a different plan. Mr. Brodie confirmed that they could withdraw their item or let the Board vote on it and they knew what that vote would be. Mr. Patel asked if he could get a copy of Mr. Hanson's write up. Mr. Hanson responded, yes and that Mr. Brodie had received an email copy on January 10, 2022. Mr. Brodie asked if he could have a work session with the

**Board of Appearance Minutes
March 8, 2022**

Board along the way if he emailed them some stuff or ideas on the plan. Chair Wilund advised Mr. Brodie that his point of contact is Mr. Hanson.

Mr. Brodie stated that they, Storage Units Lexington, wished to withdraw their application at this time and resubmit it at a later date.

Mr. Hanson advised the Board that this item could be resubmitted to them as early as April 12, 2022 which would be their next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, comments or questions, Chair Wilund made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Board Member MacLean seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried by all those present. The Board of Appearance meeting adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky P. Hildebrand, CMC
Municipal Clerk

APPROVED:

Larry Wilund
Chair

FOIA COMPLIANCE – Public notification of this meeting was published, posted and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Lexington requirements.