

MINUTES

Valdosta-Lowndes Zoning Board of Appeals
Valdosta City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose Room
300 North Lee Street, Valdosta, Georgia
July 7, 2020 2:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nathan Brantley
Victoria Copeland
Nancy Hobby
John Hogan III

John Holt
John "Mac" McCall
Marion Ramsey
Allan Strickland

MEMBERS ABSENT

<None>

STAFF PRESENT

James Clinkscales
JD Dillard
James Horton
Tracy Tolley
Debra Tulloch

VISITORS PRESENT

Angie Chavez

Agenda Item # 1: CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman McCall. It was determined that a quorum of members was present. Chairman McCall thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the meeting procedures with those in attendance today.

CITY OF VALDOSTA CASES

Agenda Item # 2: APP-2020-08— Angie Chavez (110 N. Ashley Street)

Chairman McCall announced the case. Ms. Tolley stated that the applicant, Angie Chavez, was asking for a variance to the supplemental regulations for loft dwellings found in LDR Section 218-13(U). The applicant is asking for a variance to utilize only one entrance/exit rather than the two required. The property is located at 110 N. Ashley Street and is zoned C-D. The applicant is proposing to develop the second floor into two dwelling units and a workspace (including shower space) for the restaurant below. The proposed dwelling units are above a recently renovated restaurant. Ms. Tolley stated that plans were being routed through the review process for the loft dwellings. The supplemental regulations require two entrances/exits separate from the commercial space exit/entrance, and at least one of those should access a public street. Currently, the applicant is proposing one entrance/exit, utilizing the alley along the back of the building. Staff understands that the building is a historic building and has limited room to add two entrances/exits between being an interior building and having an alley along the rear of the building. Staff reviewed the request, determined there was hardship, and recommended for approval with the condition that only two dwelling units be allowed.

Chairman McCall stated that he understood that plans were currently being reviewed, and asked if the Inspections/Building Department had approved the plans yet. Ms. Tolley stated she was not sure, but she did know the Fire Department had not approved the plans as of the day before. Chairman McCall stated that he wanted to make it clear that the Board was considering relief only from the LDR's supplemental regulations, not the Fire or Building code. Ms. Tolley stated that staff understood that, and that she had a conversation to that effect with Fire Department staff the day before, and that the applicant had to meet all applicable regulations. Mr. Brantley asked if the applicant would have to install sprinklers. Ms. Tolley stated that Chief Clinkscales had explained that

the applicant had two choices—either to provide two methods of ingress/egress, or to install a sprinkler system. Chairman McCall asked if the applicant would reside in one of the dwelling units. Ms. Tolley stated that it was her understanding that the applicant would reside in one of the units. Chairman McCall asked if she could rent them out. Ms. Tolley stated she could, that there was no regulation that any of the loft dwellings be owner-occupied. Mr. Ramsey asked what might happen if she chose to utilize them as rentals (not owner occupied). Ms. Tolley stated that there were no regulations regarding renter versus owner occupied spaces. Vice-Chairman Strickland stated it was currently proposed for the applicant to live in one unit, and her son and his family to live in the second unit, but she could move out and rent it out, with no regulation that she would violate. Mrs. Hobby asked about the bathroom affiliated with the workspace. Ms. Tolley clarified that each dwelling space had its own bathroom, but that the workspace would have its own shower for use by the employees should they get dirty during their shift. Ms. Tolley stated that one of the reasons staff recommended the condition of two dwelling spaces only was because of that shower/restroom area and the fact that space is limited, and there may not be enough room for a third dwelling unit. Chairman McCall asked if the first floor had gone through plan review. Ms. Tolley stated it had gone through plan review for the restaurant, and she believed it had gotten a CO as well, but that the first floor plans were separate from the second floor plans, and that the plans now were purely for the second floor. Mr. Hogan asked if there were other similar set-ups in the downtown area. Ms. Tolley stated she was aware of several loft dwellings throughout downtown, but that she had not reviewed plans for any of them.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman McCall asked if anyone would like to speak on behalf of the application. Ms. Angie Chavez, 218 W Jackson Street, Thomasville, spoke in support of her application. Ms. Chavez stated that the residences would be occupied by her and her son, that not all departments had approved the plans, and that she would be soon submitting revisions. Ms. Chavez stated she was working with an architect to work on a second emergency fire exit. Chairman McCall asked if the exit would be off the roof or out of a window. Ms. Chavez stated it would be out of a window. Chairman McCall asked if it would be accessible from the second dwelling space. Ms. Chavez stated that was correct. Ms. Chavez stated she had asked to reopen a door that was covered by cinderblock, and intended to have the dwelling spaces electronically monitored for emergencies such as fires. Chairman McCall asked if she was pursuing the second exit. Ms. Chavez stated that was true. Chairman McCall asked if the restaurant below had fryers. Ms. Chavez stated it did. Chairman McCall asked if there was a sprinkler system for the restaurant. Ms. Chavez stated the restaurant has fire extinguishers as well as a monitoring system that would alert to fires. Vice Chairman Strickland stated that staff had referred to a second exit but that Ms. Chavez had mentioned that she would like to reopen a door that had been covered up if at all possible. Ms. Chavez stated that the door in question was along the outside wall, and that a fire escape would be the second means of exit; Ms. Chavez passed out proposed drawings of the fire escape. Vice Chairman Strickland noted that the fire escape exited the bedroom of dwelling space two, and noted that the person from the front dwelling space did not have access to that fire escape. Ms. Chavez noted that the person who lived in the front dwelling space would be able to exit through the door at the back rather than the fire escape in the bedroom window. Ms. Chavez stated that the hallway would be sheet rocked with fire-rated one hour sheet rock. Mr. Ramsey asked if the double doors were accesses to her building. Ms. Chavez stated that one set of doors belonged to her restaurant, and one set of doors belonged to the jewelry store.

There being no further discussion, Chairman McCall asked if anyone else would like to speak in support of the application. No one spoke. Chairman McCall asked if anyone would like to speak in opposition to the application. No one spoke. Chairman McCall asked if anyone had contacted the

office. Ms. Tolley stated that the jewelry store had called to ascertain what variances were being requested.

There being no further discussion, Chairman McCall opened the floor for a motion. Vice Chairman Strickland made a motion to approve as presented with the condition that it be for two dwelling units only. Mrs. Hobby seconded the motion. The motion was called and carried unanimously with a vote of 7 to 0.

Agenda Item # 3: Approval of Minutes: June 2, 2020

Chairman McCall asked if any changes needed to be made to the draft minutes. There being none, Chairman McCall called for a motion regarding the June 2, 2020 meeting minutes. Vice-Chairman Strickland made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was called and carried with a vote of 7-0.

Agenda Item # 4: Attendance Review

Chairman McCall noted that all ZBOA members were in attendance this afternoon.

Agenda Item # 5: Welcome: New ZBOA Member Marion Ramsey

Chairman McCall welcomed Mr. Marion Ramsey as the newest ZBOA member.

Agenda Item # 6: Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:56 PM.

/s/ Allen Strickland, IV
Allen Strickland, IV Vice-Chairman

August 4, 2020
Date