



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH HISTORICAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 16, 2025
4:00 P.M.

Planning and Community Development
Building 3, 2403 Courthouse Drive, Conference Room 134

Approved August 20, 2025

Members Present

Steve McNaughton, Chair; Richard Poole, Vice Chair
Jeff Pierce, Bernice Pope, Jim Vachon

Members Absent

Hayden DuBay, Leanna Humphrey

City Staff Liaison Present

Mark Reed

City Staff Present

Ellie Dauernheim

Applicants/Applicant Representatives Attending

Alex Dye (#25-15)
Myra Hamlett (#25-15)
Jon Natividad (#25-13)
Brian Allen (#25-13)

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by the chair, Steve McNaughton. Mr. McNaughton mentioned a new member would be joining the Board and be present at next month's meeting.

Minutes

Mr. McNaughton asked the members to review the minutes from the June 18, 2025 meeting. Jeff Pierce made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Richard Poole seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 against (Bernice Pope had not yet arrived).

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- Certificate of Appropriateness Application #25-13 – Old Donation Farm Home Owners Association – Request to install new fence and gate; 4141 Cheswick Lane, GPIN 14789285650000 – Ferry Plantation House Historic and Cultural District

Mark Reed, Historic Preservation Planner, introduced COA application #25-13. He said the application was for installation of a fence and gate on the boat launch parcel in the Ferry Plantation House District.

Mr. Reed noted that the owner experienced unauthorized, non-home owners association member use of the boat launch, despite having a chain across the access and signage to inform the public that it is private property.

Mr. Reed said the boat launch parcel is located across Cheswick Lane from the Ferry Plantation House parking area. He said the parcel is not generally visible from the Ferry Plantation House, and the installation of the fence will have no impact on its viewshed.

Mr. Reed stated that the proposed fence and gate will be set back approximately 40 feet from the roadway where a post and chain barrier is currently located. He said the proposed fence is a 5-foot-high black aluminum ornamental picket, with 9-foot sections on either side of a 14-foot gate opening. The gate will consist of two 7-foot sections of the black aluminum picket.

Mr. Reed noted that the Design Guidelines allow for prefinished aluminum that is visible from the public right of way to be used if it has a living fence in front of it. He said the applicant has agreed to plant evergreen shrubbery in front of the stationary sections of the proposed fence.

Mr. Reed said the design of the pickets, with approximately 4" spacing, will provide reasonable transparency through the gate. He said the fence and gate will not block the view of the waterway from the Ferry Plantation House walkway, which maintains that important connection between the house and the water.

Mr. Reed stated that staff finds the proposed installation of a black aluminum picket fence and gate to be in general compliance with the Design Guidelines and the character of the district and recommends approval subject to the conditions as noted in the Staff Report.

Mr. Reed noted that Brian Allen and Jon Natividad, representatives from the fence company and the home owners association, were in attendance and could answer any questions the Board may have.

Mr. McNaughton asked about the type of lock for the gate. Mr. Allen said it would be a fork latch, but the applicant could install a padlock.

Mr. Pierce asked if it had a wheel. Mr. Allen said no, you would lift up the gate and move it. Mr. Reed said there was space on the bottom of the gate for it to swing.

Mr. Pierce asked about 9-foot versus 6-foot on the drawings. Mr. Allen clarified that there would be 9-foot sections on either side of the gate.

Mr. Natividad said that on the left side of the fixed portion of fencing there was existing vegetation that they intended to keep.

Mr. Poole made a motion to approve the COA subject to the conditions listed in the Staff Report. Mr. Pierce seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

- Certificate of Appropriateness Application #25-14 – Ashdon Builders 1, LLC – Request to install a playground in North Landing Estates; 2502 Peaceful Lane, GPIN 14948057870000 – Courthouse Historic and Cultural District

Mr. Reed noted that there was no representative present for the next item. He asked the Board members if they wanted to proceed with hearing the item. There was a general consensus to proceed.

Ellie Dauernheim introduced COA application #25-14. She said the application was for installation of a playground in the park area of North Landing Estates in the Courthouse Historic and Cultural District.

Ms. Dauernheim said the playground will be located between lots 5 and 6, as indicated by “park area” in the site layout and will take up most if not all of the park area.

Ms. Dauernheim showed the previous COA approval that included a conceptual play area sketch for reference. She said that although the design has changed it helps to provide context to the surrounding environment.

Ms. Dauernheim noted that the area nearby the proposed playground is wooded and away from the public right of way and North Landing Road. She said the proposed Ponderosa design is green and a wood material which would blend appropriately with the surrounding environment. She noted that the applicant proposed to have the playground on a surface area material of mulch.

Ms. Dauernheim said proposed playground will take up approximately 29 feet by 18 feet with proposed heights of 48 inches and 84 inches excluding the roofs. She showed a diagram with all of the playground elements and their proposed locations. She said that the applicant stated that if they were to do a containment barrier it would be black plastic and staff recommends that they omit this border and allow the mulch to feather out instead.

Ms. Dauernheim noted that the proposed playground equipment includes two green slides and other elements. She said green handles will be metal, other elements will be wood and composite.

Ms. Dauernheim showed examples of playgrounds within Historic and Cultural Districts of Virginia Beach. She said none of them seem to have prior COAs. She showed an example from the Thomas Murray House District, noting that it was a similar example to the proposed design. She said it was installed around 2020 and as far as staff is aware it is still present. She showed an example in the Courthouse district close to the North Landing Estates. She said the design was significantly more colorful but blocked by Building 23 from the public view and seemed to be installed in the late 1990s.

Ms. Dauernheim noted another example from the Lovett House District. She said the design pictured seems to be installed in the early 2000s and was changed in 2023 to a less colorful and simpler design. She showed another example from the Pembroke Manor which she said was present at the site from about 1998 to 2020. She noted that it has since been removed along with the black padding.

Ms. Dauernheim said that staff recommends approval of the playground as it is simple and consistent with the surrounding park environment.

Mr. Pierce and Jim Vachon commented on the location and lack of visibility from the Historic District.

Mr. Poole asked for confirmation on the wood roof. Mr. Vachon wanted confirmation that there was no fencing for the site. Mr. Pierce wanted to ensure the mulch material would be wood or organic.

Mr. Pierce made a motion to approve the COA subject to the following conditions and conditions listed in the Staff Report. The conditions were as follows:

1. Approved playground structures with green elements are:
 - a. Ramp
 - b. Small Rock Wall
 - c. 4-foot Waterfall Slide in green
 - d. Angled Climber
 - e. 7-foot Straight Slide in green
 - f. Standard Swing Set
 - g. Soft Grip Belt Swing x2 in green
 - h. Trapeze Bar with Rings in green
2. The applicant is to use wooden/organic mulch and omit a plastic containment barrier.
3. Prior to installation, the applicant provides details on height of the structure at the highest point to staff/HRB.
4. Prior to installation, the applicant confirms the roofing material for the decks will be wood.

5. The COA does not provide approval for installation of a fence or signs for the playground.

Mr. Poole seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

- Certificate of Appropriateness Application #25-15 – City of Virginia Beach (Cultural Affairs Department) —Request to install 3 new signs; 3131 Virginia Beach Boulevard, GPIN 14971512270000, 14971437700000 – Francis Land House Historic and Cultural District

Mr. Reed introduced COA application #25-15. He said the application was for installation of 3 new signs on the grounds of the Francis Land House to provide visitors with an Augmented Reality (AR) experience. He said the application also proposes to replace 3 existing interpretive signs in the Francis Land Park to match the design elements of the new signs and provide visitors with an Augmented Reality experience.

Mr. Reed stated that the Francis Land House provides educational programs and has created an AR program and app that visitors will be able to use to enhance their experience or to get information about the site before/after hours and when the historic house is closed.

Mr. Reed said the signs are proposed to be premium wrap, digitally printed outdoor vinyl signs with an opti-clear laminate mounted on 1.5” black aluminum poles. He noted that the applicant brought a sample of a sign made with this material to the meeting.

Mr. Reed said the introductory sign will be 35” x 23” mounted on two poles located near the visitor entrance. He said the other two signs will be 8” x 12” and each mounted on a single pole located on the east side of the historic house.

Mr. Reed stated that the signs proposed for the Francis Land Park will replace three interpretive signs installed in 1999. He said the sign installation will utilize the existing metal stands and will slide into the stand once the existing signs are removed.

Mr. Reed noted that the Design Guidelines recommend no more than 3 colors for a sign and suggests “keep it simple” is a good rule to follow. He said Cultural Affairs has made some adjustments to the signs as recommended by staff, primarily changing orange to beige on banner backgrounds, lettering, and logos. This change reduced the number of colors and eliminated the use of bright orange.

Mr. Reed said that staff finds the proposed installation of three new signs and three replacement signs to be in general compliance with the Design Guidelines and the character of the district and recommends approval subject to the conditions as noted in the Staff Report.

Mr. Reed noted that Alex Dye and Myra Hamlett, representatives from Cultural Affairs, were in attendance and could answer questions. Bernice Pope arrived during the staff overview.

Mr. Dye passed around a sample of the sign material. Ms. Hamlett demonstrated on her phone how the Augmented Reality App works for the Francis Land house.

Mr. Poole asked if they planned to use the AR for other houses and locations. Ms. Hamlett said they hope to but are starting with 2 sites (Francis Land and PACTS/UKHS) so far.

Ms. Pope asked if the signs would be mounted to black poles. Mr. Dye said yes. Mr. Pierce said that black often disappears in the surrounding environment versus other colors. Ms. Pope asked about using the color bronze. Mr. McNaughton asked if the existing signs were dark bronze or black. Mr. Reed stated they appeared to be a dark bronze. Mr. McNaughton said he thought dark bronze would be better.

Mr. Pierce asked if the first sign closest to the house could be at an angle instead of straight up and down. Mr. McNaughton asked if it was possible to tilt the sign to match the existing signs in the park. Mr. Pierce asked if the signs were vertical if a frame could be added. Mr. Dye said they could tilt it and would check with the sign company. Mr. Reed asked if the Board would be okay with excluding a frame if the sign was to be tilted. The Board said yes. There was additional discussion on making the new signs match the existing signs.

Mr. Poole made a motion to approve the COA subject to the following conditions and conditions listed in the Staff Report. The conditions were:

1. The three new signs will match the attached exhibits and consist of the following:
 - a. One 35-inch by 23-inch sign placed near the west visitor entrance. This sign is to be mounted at an angle similar to the existing signs in Francis Land Park and the stand shall be aluminum and similar in color to that of the existing sign mounts – dark bronze/brown.
 - b. One 8-inch by 12-inch sign placed near the turkey fig tree on the east side of the building. This sign is to be mounted in a manner and at an angle as depicted in the attached exhibit and the stand shall be aluminum, dark bronze/brown in color.
 - c. One 8-inch by 12-inch sign placed near the demonstration garden plots on the grounds on the east side of the building. This sign is to be mounted in a manner and at an angle as depicted in the attached exhibit and the stand shall be aluminum, dark bronze/brown in color.
2. The three replacement signs will be installed in the existing mounting stands in the existing locations in the Francis Land Park.

Ms. Pope seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. The motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

HRB FY25 Annual Report

Mr. Reed gave an overview of the annual report. He asked the Board if they had any recommendations for City Council to include and discussed the recommendations included in the previous year's report. Mr. McNaughton mentioned the vacancy on the Board and that he would be reaching out to City staff about filling the position.

The Board had a few minor revisions including indicating Mr. McNaughton as Chair on the roster list and verifying term dates. Mr. Vachon made a motion to provisionally approve the HRB Annual Report. Mr. Poole seconded. The motion was carried by a vote of 5 to 0.

Old Business

Mr. Reed gave an overview of the Royal Farms Store COA violations. He stated that they had resolved some of the previous violations but there were a few new violations that staff was checking on. There was discussion on the visibility from Nimmo Church, the car wash sign, glass on the car wash building, and vegetation at the site. Mr. Reed discussed staff's role in checking COAs after completion to ensure they follow approvals.

New Business

Mr. Reed discussed the renovations for Navy Federal Credit Union in the Courthouse District. He asked the Board if these renovations could be done under staff exception or if the Board wanted to discuss it. The Board agreed that it could be approved under a staff exception.

Mr. Reed discussed the High Court COA from 2005. He mentioned that the original COA was approved with 18 items in 2004 and a revised COA from 2005 with two additional items was found but did not indicate approval. He said that it was on an agenda for discussion but there was no mention in the minutes and the following meeting's minutes were not found. He asked the Board to approve the revised COA from 2005 to keep consistent with work that has been done in the subdivision. Ms. Pope made a motion. Mr. Poole seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

Staff Update

Mr. Reed provided a quick update on projects. He discussed the 1927 C&P Telephone building's history, use over time, the site, and its context. He mentioned the Historic Preservation Commission's involvement in attempting to preserve the structure and designate it as a district. There was discussion about the history of the building, the potential future use, moving the building, and the site. Ms. Pope asked if the Board could write a letter supporting the HPC. The Board was willing to do so. Ms. Pope made a motion to write a letter to support the Historic Preservation Commission's position regarding the C&P Telephone building. Mr. Poole seconded. The motion carried 5-0.

Adjournment

Mr. McNaughton noted that the next meeting would be August 20, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Poole made a motion for the meeting to adjourn. Mr. Pierce seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.