



402 LEE STREET
DECATUR, ALABAMA 35601
April 10, 2025
MINUTES

Council Chambers

Architectural Review Board

4:00 PM

I CALL MEETING TO ORDER 4:00 PM

Roll Call:

Present: Ellis Chenault, Barbara Kelly, Patrick Rasco, Jacob Woods

II APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 20, 2025

Vote: Motion made by Barbara Kelly to approve the Minutes as submitted, seconded by Jacob Woods. Unanimous approval, motion carried.

III EXPEDITED CoAs SINCE THE MARCH MEETING:

615 Oak Street NE (Coggin) replace rotting trim on front, replace rotting deck boards at the rear in kind (#9 for the CoA)

1051 Jackson Street SE (Crow) replace approximately 20 linear feet of rotting siding in kind (#9 for the CoA)

504 Line Street NE (Riehl) repair historic windows, and replace rotting trim in kind (#9 for the CoA)

409 Oak Street NE (Bridges) new rear yard wood fence (#26 for the CoA)

IV NEW CoA REVIEWS:

CoA #1: 702 Oak Street NE (Leavitt)

Background: This American Four-Square house is a contributing resource in the Old Decatur historic district. It sits on the corner of Oak and Vine.

Action Requested: Install a 96' long brick wall along Vine Street NE, in 16' sections. Wall will be 5'6" high and matching walls panels, shorter in length, will connect the Vine Street elevation to the house. Brick piers will support the columns and be 6'4" in height, 16" square with a detailed rick cap. Brick will be Covington by Cherokee Brick. Proposed wall will have two wood gates, a single gate (width and height not provided) facing Oak Street, and a 12' wide double gate at the Vine Street elevation near the end of the property boundary. There was no submittal of a gate design for either gate. The proposed wall is set back 18" from the sidewalk for a groundcover.

Decatur's Design Review Guidelines: 16.9: Contemporary or utilitarian fence materials are not appropriate for fences in the public view. Vinyl, chain-link, wire, wood plank, solid brick, or open weave brick are not appropriate materials for fences in public view but may be installed for rear and side yards not readily visible.

Staff Assessment: The proposed wall will run for almost 100' along Vine Street, which is in full public view. The guidelines state that solid brick walls are not appropriate for public view. The HPC/ARB have not approved a new brick wall (only repairs or replacements of small sections of pre-existing walls) for the last five years of records that staff has reviewed.

Discussion: Jacob Woods stated that he felt the application, which had a brick wall running along a street elevation did not meet the city Design Review Guidelines, a wood fence would be appropriate in this scenario. Jeffrey and Julie Leavitt stated that they purchased house in 2001 and acquired lot next door in 2012 and tore down a house on it, which is when the current wood fence was constructed. They stated that brick walls have been in the district forever, the city Design Review Guidelines show them, Old State Bank had a brick wall, and they want an exception to the Design Review Guidelines which would allow them to have a brick wall at this location. Jacob Woods reiterates that a brick wall is not appropriate based on the guidelines. Ellis Chenault adds that it would be permissible if hidden from public view as a back wall or wall between neighbors, but not along the street elevation. Councilmember Pike who was in attendance asked staff to explain existing brick walls in the district. Staff said that many were built in the late 20th century before the district was created and that the brick wall at Old State Bank were removed because they were not historically appropriate for the district.

Vote: Motion made by Ellis Chenault to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted. Seconded by Jacob Woods. Zero votes in favor of the motion. Motion fails to pass.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 4:31 by Ellis Chenault, seconded by Barbara Kelly. Unanimous approval, motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Updates for 301 Oak, 316 Lafayette, 812 Johnston, and 606 Moulton.