

STATE OF TEXAS §
COUNTIES OF POTTER §
AND RANDALL §
CITY OF AMARILLO §

On the 6th day of May 2021, the Board of Review for Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Downtown Design met in a Special Meeting session at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom, with the following members present:

VOTING MEMBERS	PRESENT	NO. MEETINGS HELD	NO. MEETINGS ATTENDED
Anne Jones	N	9	1
Jason Boyett	Y	9	8
Vice Chairman Cindi Bulla	Y	9	8
Gary Jennings	Y	9	9
Jonathan Morris	N	9	3
Chairman Wesley Knapp	Y	9	7
Alan Cox	Y	9	9
Gregg Bliss (Alternate)	Y	6	5

Staff in Attendance:

Cris Valverde, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services
 Brady Kendrick, Planner II
 Jason Taylor, Planner I
 Courtney White, Assistant City Attorney
 Amanda Medellin, Recording Secretary

ITEM 1: Public Comment:

Citizens who desire to address the Board of Review for Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Downtown Design with regard to matters on the agenda or having to do with policies, programs, or services will be received at this time. The total time allotted for comments is three (3) minutes per speaker. The board may not discuss items not on this agenda, but may respond with factual, established policy information, or refer to staff. (*Texas Attorney General Opinion. JC-0169*) If you wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda, please hold your comments until that item is introduced.

Jason Herrick, 817 S Polk, expressed being in favor of the variance. He expressed this would help downtown be more vibrant.

Jason Harrison with the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, 1000 S. Polk, expressed being in favor for the Sharpened Iron Studios variance. He explained how this project will revitalize downtown and is a key project.

Kevin Carter, CEO of the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation, 7705 New England Parkway, gave a brief description of the Sharpen Iron Studio incentive and how it will create more jobs and is an important project for the City.

Steven Parr, 7811 Legacy Pkwy, expressed being in favor of the Sharpen Iron Studio project. He expressed how it will impact and enhance downtown.

Mark White, Executive VP at Amarillo College, 2201 S Washington, explains how Sharpened Iron Studios is very high-tech and innovative and can become a catalyst of activity for Amarillo College and Amarillo both.

Tess Bloom, Director of Marketing for the Amarillo Sod Poodles 9207 Rockwood Dr, spoke in support of the Sharpened Iron Studios project.

Tol Ware, Amarillo National Bank, 7618 Curtis Dr, spoke in favor for granting the variance to Sharpened Iron Studios. Mr. Ware explained how Sharpened Iron Studios could bring in bigger companies to Amarillo once the studio is established.

Steve Austin, 2815 S Georgia, spoke in favor of the variance.

Perry Graham, 2803 Parker St, spoke in favor of Sharpened Iron Studios. He explained how this project would help small local businesses.

ITEM 2: Approval of the January 28, 2021 Board of Review for Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Downtown Design meeting minutes.

A motion to approve the January 28, 2021 minutes was made by Board Member Gary Jennings, seconded by Board Member Alan Cox. The motioned passed unanimously 5-0.

ITEM 3: COA-21-01 Consideration of variances to the Downtown Amarillo Urban Design Standards pertaining to architectural relief, articulation and compatibility, façade transparency, and building edge, all related to the Sharpened Iron Studios project located on all of Blocks 182 and 197, Plemons's Addition, in Section 170, Block 2, AB&M Survey, Potter County, Texas.

Vicinity: Polk St. & SW 15th Ave.

Applicant/s: Melissa Walker for Amarillo Junior College

Brady Kendrick, Planner II, gave the above presentation. Mr. Kenrick explained that the project consists of the construction of two new 18,000 square foot sound stage buildings, the renovation and restoration of the existing Nixon gym, and approximately 3,100 square foot addition to the existing building noted as "Building 2" on the site plan.

The applicant is requesting a variance from the maximum setback of five feet. As proposed, the applicant is proposing a setback of nine feet for the new buildings. The applicant is requesting the variance in order to accommodate a security fence. Staff is supportive of the variance as it would not be out of character with other sites in the immediate area that enjoy an increased setback. Additionally, the security fence would serve a similar function to the five foot setback in that it helps create a defined pedestrian pathway. The Board has approved 10 similar requests previously.

The next variance that the applicant is seeking is from the Downtown Amarillo Urban Design Standards (DAUDS) requirement that all street facing facades shall have significant transparency with windows. The applicant states that due to the nature of how a sound stage operates

architectural penetrations such as windows and door openings would jeopardize productions being made inside the building with light and sound infiltration. Staff understands that the use does present some unique considerations and believes it is appropriate, provided the applicant provides architectural features that break up the facades.

The next variances being sought by the applicant are related to the DAUDS requirements for buildings including architectural relief at least every 30 feet, long facades being broken up with articulation or other architectural treatments, and architectural compatibility with surrounding historic and urban environment. While Staff does recognize that Downtown as a whole features a broad range of building styles, facades, and materials, Staff feels that this part of Downtown has a very unique character and the proposed buildings for the applicant's site are a significant departure from the character of this area and does not meet the intent of the DAUDS as currently proposed. The applicant stated that a traditional brick and mortar building with the same level of acoustic impermeability as the proposed structure is economically unfeasible. Additionally, it is the applicant's opinion that more traditional brick and mortar build sound stage would be a more foreboding structure on the site than the solution being provided (Tedlar Membrane).

Considering all the just mentioned, staff recommends **DENIAL** of the proposed design as currently presented due to architectural elements not meeting core DAUD Standards.

Vice Chairman Cindi Bulla asked if anyone wanted to speak for the request.

Sean Doherty, CEO of Sharpened Iron Studios, gave a brief description of the company's history and mission. He then explained why they chose this specific design.

Bryan Griggs & Melissa Walker, 800 S Polk St, the architects for the project, gave a detailed explanation of why the variances that are being requested are needed for the project and why alternatives would not work, most of which relate to the nature of how a sound stage operates and the unique challenges those pose from the perspective of designing a building. They also stated they felt that architectural compatibility requirements were not specifically addressed in the DAUDS standards and didn't necessarily agree with the need for a variance.

Sean Doherty gave more statistics and positive outcomes on the project if it were to move forward for the City of Amarillo from an economic perspective. He also stated that if the variances were not approved, they may be forced to look at other cities to locate the project in.

Vice Chairman Cindi Bulla explained that the duty of the board is to evaluate the variances only. She then explained that in the information brought to the board by staff only mentions three variances, while the presentation from Sharpened Iron Studios mentioned four. She asked for clarity.

Cris Valverde, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services, confirmed that the board will be considering 3 variances: setbacks, street facing facade, architecture compatibility.

Ishaq Chaudry, Sprung Structures, 4015 Merritt St, explained how the structure is built to with stand 200 MPH wind and gave more details about the structure that is proposed.

Vice Chairwoman Cindi Bulla asked if anyone wanted to speak against the request.

No comments were made.

Vice Chairwoman Cindi Bulla asked if any of the board members had any questions.

Board Member Gary Jennings asked Alternate Board Member Greg Bliss for his opinion on the architecture of this project.

Alternate Board Member Greg Bliss explained that because this project is on the perimeter of downtown, it could be used as an anchor to start tourism and other activity within this area of downtown. He stated that it could serve as a significant catalyst for the area.

No other comments were made.

A motion to approve the variance for a 9ft setback was made by Board Member Alan Cox, seconded by Board Member Gary Jennings. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

A motion to approve the variance for transparency street facing facades was made by Board Member Gary Jennings, seconded by Board Member Alan Cox. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

A motion to approve the variance for architectural treatments, and architectural compatibility with surrounding historic and urban environment was made by Board Member Gary Jennings, seconded by Board Member Jason Boyett. The motion passed unanimously 5-0.

(Note, as an Alternate Board Member, Greg Bliss did not participate in the motions and votes above).

ITEM 4: Consider future agenda items.

No comments were made.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.


Cris Valverde

Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services