

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY HEARINGS BOARD**  
**MINUTES**  
**March 11, 2015**

The Athens-Clarke County Hearings Board met and considered the following items at a public meeting at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, at 120 W. Dougherty Street, Athens, Georgia:

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ricky Boggs, David Ellison (Chair), Beverly King, Pat Shearer, Ed Simpson (Vice-Chair), and Laura Wiese

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Rick Cowick, Jane Erwin, and Melanie Graham (ACCUG Planning); Jim Davis (ACCUG Attorney)

**CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. **Introduction of Staff reports and all other documents submitted to the Hearings Board at the meeting into the official record.** Mr. Ellison made a motion to introduce all reports and documents into the official record. Ms. King seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.
2. **Adoption of Minutes from the December 10, 2014 Hearings Board meeting.** Mr. Ellison made a motion to approve. Mr. Simpson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **394 PRINCE AVENUE                      VAR-2015-02-327**  
Petitioner:     Koons Environmental Design, Inc. for Beezer Molten & Half Moon Outfitters  
Zoning:         C-N (Commercial-Neighborhood)  
Tax ID:         171A1 B003  
Request:        A.     Variance to allow reduce required parking from 33 to 25 spaces

**Ms. Graham gave the staff report with the recommendation of approval.**

**In Favor:** Lori Bork Newcomer, project architect, stated that the project is an adaptive reuse of an existing building. Half Moon Outfitters, the owner, has already invested in the brownfill cleanup of the property, which has sat vacant for many years. Bringing the site up to Code, such as bringing the parking up to Code and replacing the sidewalks with granite curbs, will be more costly than anticipated. The owner has also inherited a situation that is tight on parking by Code for the intended retail use. A rear annex of the building will be removed. The proposal provides the maximum amount of parking possible. The owner can testify to the adequacy of the proposed 25 parking spaces for the intended use. The only way to fit the required number of parking spaces would be to demolish part of the main structure, which is not desirable due to its historic character. The building was constructed in the 1940's and should be preserved. Demolition or a variance is the only option for retail occupancy. A denial of the request would restrict the property to an office or residential use. Retail or a restaurant would lend itself much better to this district, promotes the pedestrian intent of the design standards applied to this designated Level II corridor, and promotes growth, economy, land use, and urban design principles of the Comprehensive Plan. The building has sat vacant since 2009 and degradation has been getting worse over time. The parking situation is horrible with cars from neighboring uses being parked all over the site, including the grassed areas. Half Moon is ready to step in and make this site a great contributor to the Prince Avenue corridor. They need this variance to move forward with the project.

Beezer Molten, owner of Half Moon Outfitters, is quite serious and has put a lot of time into the brownfield process to get it to this point. The building makes sense for his company. The renovation is consistent with what they have done in the past. The intent is to make it a landmark building. The company's distribution center in Charleston, SC received LEED platinum status for green and sustainable construction. They

intend to make this building a testament to green construction where it can be done. Demolishing the structure does not make sense and making it a service-only business would be a pity given its incredible character. The barrel vaulting is phenomenal, steel trusses exist, and there is opportunity for skylights. The proposal honors what the community intends for Prince Avenue.

Amy Kissane, Director of the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, said that the building is historic, having been built in the 1940's. It does not have a local historic designation or protective easements, so it could be torn down at any time. The alternative is to rehab the building as was done with Cine and Creature Comforts. There has been concern for years that no one would occupy this building because of the environmental issues. This can be part of one of Athens' incredible transformed areas with Bottleworks, the Grit, Go Bar, Taqueria Del Sol, and Big City Bread. Saving this building will be good for Athens, will be an adaptive reuse, and incredible for the local economy for the investment and increased property value. Numerous people have looked at the building and we are running out of time and potential buyers. Without this parking variance we could lose the building. We cannot lose a building like this over eight parking spaces. The company knows what their parking requirements are. This is an excellent pedestrian area. The nearby residents are thrilled about this project. They do not see a threat from having a few less parking spaces. She said that she has already included the building into a program that she is doing for LEED Athens next week.

**In Opposition:** None

**Board Discussion:** Mr. Ellison said that he finds that the variance meets finding #1 for the building character and its vacancy since 2009. Variance finding #2 is met since it would be an undue and unnecessary hardship to knock down a portion of this building. Variance #3 is met since the special conditions are not the result of the applicant. Variance #4 is met since the benefits of granting this variance are greater than negative impacts and it furthers the purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan, particularly for its adaptive reuse. Variance #5 is met in light of the applicant's efforts to find another parking situation.

**Motion:** Mr. Ellison made a motion for approval. Mr. Boggs seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

*Directors Report:* Mr. Cowick announced that two applications have been scheduled for the next meeting on April 8, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.



David Ellison, Chair



Brad Griffin, Director/Secretary