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Cyane B. Crump

April 6, 2021

Daniel Rifenburg
Engineering Manager
Richmond Gas Works
400 Richmond Highway
Richmond, Virginia 23224
Daniel.rifenburg@richmondgov.com

RE: Comments to Fulton Gas Works Demolition Work, 3301 Williamsburg Avenue

Dear Mr. Rifenburg,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the demolition plan for the Fulton Gas Works site as part of the Voluntary Remediation Program as outlined in a public notice published in the Richmond Times Dispatch. We have previously sent comment letters regarding the Fulton Gas Works parcel (see attachment).

Historic Richmond is a non-profit dedicated to preserving Richmond's distinctive historic character, sparking revitalization, and championing our past and future architectural legacy. Historic Richmond's efforts began in Church Hill and we purchased and stabilized many dozens of properties in the Church Hill neighborhoods, including the Woodward House, the last surviving structure from the once bustling port of Rocketts Landing located on the parcel adjacent to Fulton Gas Works.

Fulton Gas Works operated for nearly 120 years, between 1856 and 1972, providing gas to illuminate and heat Richmond. Neglected for decades, many of its structures have been demolished, but an extremely rare late 19th century gasometer and a 1937 Art Deco boiler house emblazoned with the "Fulton Gas Works" name survive. The steel skeleton of the Gasometer and the decorative brick work of the boiler house represent important elements of Richmond's industrial and manufacturing heritage. These structures facilitated the expansion and development of Richmond by providing critical jobs and infrastructure. They also serve as prominent visual landmarks and create a unique and authentic sense of place for the neighborhood and the City. The City's plans for Fulton Gas Works will shape the future of Richmond's riverfront for decades to come and it is imperative that the City does this the right way.

Building on history

We understand that the Fulton Gas Works site is a part of a remediation program under the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program) and that a number of environmental assessments have been completed and have been provided via the website [Natural Gas Utility | Richmond \(rva.gov\)](http://Natural Gas Utility | Richmond (rva.gov)). We also understand that, according to the Site Characterization Plan prepared by Timmons Group on May 30, 2017, provided on that website “the proposed demolition of the remaining structures of the former facility will offer great advances toward site remediation by providing mechanisms for source removal.” However, we also note that none of the reports provided on the website state that demolition is required in order to effectively remediate the site.

We respectfully request that the City make every effort possible not to dismantle the Gasometer and the boiler building and to work around them. If demolition of the Gasometer is absolutely necessary for adequate site remediation, the Gasometer should be carefully dismantled, safely stored, and rebuilt on the Fulton Gas Works site. In addition, the Demolition and Disposal Plan prepared by Demolition Services, Inc. for the Gasometer should be revised to include and address the following:

1. Prior to the start of any physical dismantling, the Gasometer should be photographically documented using both still and drone images and videos.
2. Great care will be taken in the removal and disassembly of the Gasometer and that, if performed as outlined in the plan, will allow for proper reassembly of the Gasometer in the future. The process will cause minimal permanent damage to the steel members and leave little evidence of reassembly, once completed.
3. If hand tools are not able to remove bolts and fasteners, and a torch is deemed necessary for removal, great care should be taken to ensure minimal damage to the components.
4. When cross members, vertical beams, and tension rods are lifted and placed on the ground, great care should be taken to ensure minimal damage to the components. If possible, the dismantled pieces should be lowered to the ground onto pallets with protective padding in preparation for its transport to a storage area.
5. The plan does not currently provide for how the dismantled pieces will be securely bundled for transport. The plan should be revised to state that dismantled pieces will be properly loaded, packed, and secured into containers with protective padding for transport. The containers will be covered with tarps for transport and possible long-term storage and will then be loaded onto vehicles for transport. During transport of the dismantled pieces, great care should be taken to ensure minimal damage to the components. All containers should be identified and labelled with the selected inventory system.
6. The plan does not specify how and where the dismantled pieces will be stored. The plan should be revised to specify where the pieces will be stored and to provide that the pieces will be stored with great care and that the manner of storage will cause minimal permanent damage and will allow for proper reassembly of the Gasometer in the future.
7. The plan does not reference the demolition of the boiler building. If the boiler building is to be demolished, the key architectural elements (such as the terra cotta sign) should be removed and stored in the same manner as the components of the Gasometer.

The Fulton Gas Works is one of the last remaining vestiges of Richmond’s early riverfront development and the Gasometer is a unique and iconic structure that should be preserved. We believe that City should make every effort to save the Gasometer and the boiler building.

We appreciate the opportunity to consult on this project and hope you will take our comments into consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this letter.

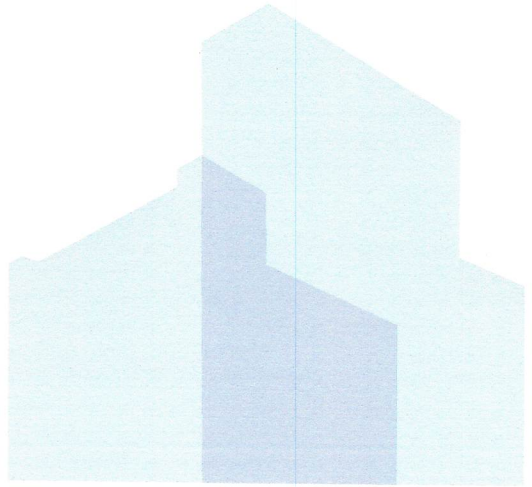
Sincerely,



Cyane B. Crump
Executive Director

cc: Gregory H. Ray, President, Historic Richmond Board of Trustees

Attachments



Cyane Crump

From: Cyane Crump
Sent: Tuesday, April 6, 2021 3:07 PM
To: RVAMAYOR@RICHMONDGOV.COM; LENORA.REID@RICHMONDGOV.COM; andreas.addison@richmondgov.com; kristen.larson@richmondgov.com; stephanie.lynch@richmondgov.com; Ellen.Robertson@Richmondgov.com; Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com; Reva.Trammell@Richmondgov.com; michael.jones@richmondgov.com; Vonck, Kevin J. - PDR; SHARON.EBERT@RICHMONDGOV.COM; katherine.jordan@richmondgov.com; ann-frances.lambert@Richmondgov.com; Lincoln.Saunders@richmondgov.com
Cc: Elisabeth Price; Greg Ray; Patterson, Samuel - City Council Office
Subject: RE: Please Save The Gasometer!

Dear Mayor Stoney and Members of City Council –

Thank you for all you do in service to the City. We have previously sent you several emails with comments regarding the Fulton Gas Works parcel (see below) and are following up today as we submit formal comments to Daniel Rifenburgh on the demolition plan for the Fulton Gas Works site as part of the Voluntary Remediation Program as outlined in a public notice published in the Richmond Times Dispatch.

We understand that the Fulton Gas Works site is a part of a remediation program under the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program) and that a number of environmental assessments have been completed and have been provided via the website [Natural Gas Utility | Richmond \(rva.gov\)](http://Natural Gas Utility | Richmond (rva.gov)). We also understand that, according to the Site Characterization Plan prepared by Timmons Group on May 30, 2017, provided on that website “the proposed demolition of the remaining structures of the former facility will offer great advances toward site remediation by providing mechanisms for source removal.” However, we also note that none of the reports provided on the website state that demolition is required in order to effectively remediate the site.

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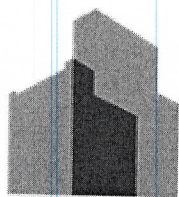
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The Fulton Gas Works is one of the last remaining vestiges of Richmond's early riverfront development and the Gasometer is a unique and iconic structure that should be preserved. We believe that City should make every effort to save the Gasometer and the boiler building.

We appreciate the opportunity to consult on this project and hope you will take our comments into consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this letter.

Thank you for all you do to make Richmond a better place for all.

Cyane



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Cyane Crump
Executive Director

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From: Cyane Crump

Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2021 10:01 AM

To: 'RVAMAYOR@RICHMONDGOV.COM' <RVAMAYOR@RICHMONDGOV.COM>; 'LENORA.REID@RICHMONDGOV.COM' <LENORA.REID@RICHMONDGOV.COM>; 'andreas.addison@richmondgov.com' <andreas.addison@richmondgov.com>; 'kristen.larson@richmondgov.com' <kristen.larson@richmondgov.com>; 'stephanie.lynch@richmondgov.com' <stephanie.lynch@richmondgov.com>; 'Ellen.Robertson@Richmondgov.com' <Ellen.Robertson@Richmondgov.com>; 'Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com' <Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com>; 'Reva.Trammell@Richmondgov.com' <Reva.Trammell@Richmondgov.com>; 'michael.jones@richmondgov.com' <michael.jones@richmondgov.com>; 'Vonck, Kevin J. - PDR' <Kevin.Vonck@richmondgov.com>; 'SHARON.EBERT@RICHMONDGOV.COM' <SHARON.EBERT@RICHMONDGOV.COM>; 'katherine.jordan@richmondgov.com'

<katherine.jordan@richmondgov.com>; 'ann-frances.lambert@Richmondgov.com' <ann-frances.lambert@Richmondgov.com>

Cc: Elisabeth Price <eprice@HistoricRichmond.com>; Greg Ray <gregory.h.ray@altria.com>; 'Patterson, Samuel - City Council Office' <Samuel.Patterson@richmondgov.com>

Subject: RE: Please Save The Gasometer!

Dear Members of City Council and the Planning Department –

I am writing to follow up on my letters below relating to Fulton Gas Works to request a response. In order to approach the remediation and development of this area and its potential impact on significant historic, architectural and cultural resources in the most transparent and open way, we request and recommend that:

1. The City provide as soon as possible the presentations from the October 14, 2020 meeting, the meeting last night January 27, 2021, any and all environmental assessments and reports, and the timetable for public engagement and comment. Additional and more meaningful opportunities for real community engagement should occur before the Gasometer and the boiler building are dismantled and demolished and before any RFP is issued. This planning and engagement process should be robust, open and transparent.
2. The City make every effort to save the Gasometer and the boiler building and work the remediation around the metal superstructure without dismantling or demolition. If this is not possible, the Gasometer must be reassembled on the site immediately after completion of the remediation.
3. The City include in any RFP for this site requirements for: (1) the preservation of the Gasometer on the site; (2) educational signage about the site, the Gasometer, and their role in the industrial and economic development of Richmond and the people whose lives were shaped by the site and its activities; (3) architectural design review for future development (Commission of Architectural Review or Urban Design Committee); and (4) public access and a measure of open space.
4. The View be protected in the Richmond 300, in any RFP covering the Main Street Parcels and through a viewshed zoning overlay.

Fulton Gas Works is an important site in an important part of the City. The City's plans for Fulton Gas Works will shape the future of Richmond's Riverfront for decades to come and it is imperative that the City does this the right way.

While I very much appreciate Council President Newbille including an update on Fulton Gas Works in her 7th District meeting last evening, I urge you to provide additional and more meaningful opportunities for community engagement before any demolitions occur this spring. A district meeting conducted by webinar at which the other community participants are not identified, at which questions may only be posed via a chat feature visible only to the panelists, at which the panelists may choose to answer only select questions, and at which there is no opportunity for public comment is not meaningful community engagement. We know that the City can provide better virtual public engagement in these trying times from the Richmond 300 meetings conducted last summer and urge you to follow this model.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Thank you for all you do to make this city a better place for all.

Cyane



Cyane Crump

Executive Director

Historic Richmond

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From: Cyane Crump

Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 9:56 AM

To: RVAMAYOR@RICHMONDGOV.COM; LENORA.REID@RICHMONDGOV.COM; andreas.addison@richmondgov.com; kimberly.gray@richmondgov.com; chris.hilbert@richmondgov.com; kristen.larson@richmondgov.com; stephanie.lynch@richmondgov.com; Ellen.Robertson@Richmondgov.com; Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com; Reva.Trammell@Richmondgov.com; michael.jones@richmondgov.com; Olinger, Mark A. - PDR <Mark.Olinger@Richmondgov.com>; Vonck, Kevin J. - PDR <Kevin.Vonck@richmondgov.com>; SHARON.EBERT@RICHMONDGOV.COM

Cc: Elisabeth Price <eprice@HistoricRichmond.com>; Harold Williams <hwilliams@dickinsonwilliams.com>; Patterson, Samuel - City Council Office <Samuel.Patterson@richmondgov.com>

Subject: RE: Please Save The Gasometer!

Dear Members of City Council and the Planning Department,

We are writing to follow up on our last letter about Fulton Gas Works dated August 10, 2020. We would like to thank those of you who have spoken with us about this significant site and particularly Council President Newbille for holding a public Zoom session on October 14, 2020 at which the City Public Works and Planning Departments provided more information about the Fulton Gas Works site.

Fulton Gas Works operated for nearly 120 years, between 1856 and 1972, providing gas to illuminate and heat Richmond. Neglected for decades, many of its structures have been demolished, but an extremely rare late 19th century Gasometer and a 1937 Art Deco boiler house emblazoned with the "Fulton Gas Works" name survive. The steel skeleton of the gasometer and the decorative brick work of the boiler house represent important elements of Richmond's industrial and manufacturing heritage. These structures facilitated the expansion and development of Richmond by providing critical jobs and infrastructure. They also serve as prominent visual landmarks and create a unique and authentic sense of place for the neighborhood and the City.

Based on information provided at the October 14, 2020 meeting, we understand that the Fulton Gas Works site is part of a remediation program under the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (Virginia Voluntary Remediation Program) and that a number of environmental assessments have been completed. At that meeting, the City committed to providing (1) a copy of the presentation materials; (2) copies of any and all environmental assessments and reports; and (3) more specific information about the timing and methodology for providing comments. **We have not yet received this information and ask that it be provided as soon as possible.**

We understand that a public participation process is contemplated as part of the remediation program. **Public participation should occur before the gasometer and buildings are dismantled and demolished.**

We also understand that, based on the 2020 Biennial Real Estate Strategies Plan given to City Council on September 28, 2020, that the Fulton Gas Works site has been combined with the parcels located at 3100, 3110 and 3200 East Main Street (the “Main Street Parcels”). The 2020 Biennial Real Estate Strategies Plan categorizes the Fulton Gas Works site and these Main Street Parcels as “Parcels + Assemblages of parcels with potential future large scale mixed-use and mixed-income development” and the most likely disposition method as a Request for Proposals. We have questions about the City’s plans for this site and what parameters will be established for any RFP process, and what community benefits will be sought as part of that RFP process. **We urge the City to include in any RFP for this site requirements for: (1) the preservation of the Gasometer on the site; (2) educational signage about the site and the gasometer, its role in the industrial and economic development of Richmond and the people whose lives were shaped by the site and its activities; (3) architectural design review for future development (Commission of Architectural Review or Urban Design Committee); and (4) public access and a measure of open space.**

In addition, we note that the Main Street Parcels are within the historic “View That Named Richmond” (the “View”). This historic viewshed – which multiple planning processes have determined should be preserved as a public amenity – must be considered during any planning process for the Fulton Gas Works site. At least one of the Main Street Parcels (3110 E Main St.) is owned by the Department of Parks & Recreation and therefore should be a public park. Previous plans, including the 2012 Riverfront Plan and the 2017 Downriver Update to the Riverfront Plan, highlighted the importance of the View as a public amenity and the preservation of the Gasometer. Neither plan showed the Main Street Parcels as development parcels – both reflected the Main Street Parcels as open space. **The View must be protected in the Richmond 300, in any RFP covering the Main Street Parcels, and through a viewshed zoning overlay.**

We also note that dramatic changes were made to the Future Land Use map for this area between June and September 2020. What is shown in the September 2020 draft Richmond 300 plan is very different from what was shown in the June 2020 draft, in the Pulse Corridor Plan and in the 2017 Downriver Update to the Riverfront Plan. These changes were made without transparency and despite the ongoing work by members of the Shockoe Alliance to produce a Small Area Plan for the neighborhood and without the input of the riverfront advocates who were so involved in developing the Riverfront Plan and the 2017 Downriver Update to the Riverfront Plan.

With so many changes being made to the proposed Future Land Use for this area, to the proposed disposition of the Main Street Parcels and Fulton Gas Works, and to the proposed demolition of significant and rare historic resources, we believe that all historically significant sites should be considered during the planning process and that the community needs to be engaged in a meaningful way. We understand that the regulatory scheme being used here requires public input. The City should both present information to, and seek information from, the community. We note that the October 14 event was conducted by a Zoom webinar in which the number and identity of participants was hidden and in which the only method of asking questions was a chat feature. This approach does not afford the community a meaningful opportunity to participate nor to work together to make their voices heard in this process.

In contrast, the engagement platforms used recently by the Richmond 300 have greater functionality and facilitated better, if not ideal, public engagement. The Coliseum Area Framework Plan and the planning for the Greater Scott's Addition area have gone through the same Richmond 300 public participation process. That process included multiple public meetings and the collection of survey responses from meeting attendees and stakeholders to provide online comments on the priorities and key elements to incorporate in the framework plan and potential framework plan options. The plans for the Fulton Gas Works and Main Street Parcels, and other changes to the Riverfront, should go through the same public engagement procedures as the Coliseum Framework Plan. It is imperative that these planning processes are transparent to the public and that community engagement is thorough and inclusive.

We note that this process is occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic and at a time when the community is both distracted by pressing personal, economic and social issues and is unable to provide in person feedback as they would be able to do in normal circumstances. We are concerned that pursuing significant economic development initiatives for large assemblages of land in such an important area at a time when public participation is severely limited will erode public confidence in the planning process in general. Accordingly, **we recommend providing additional and more meaningful opportunities for real community engagement before any demolitions occur and before any RFP is issued.**

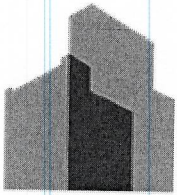
Richmonders care about this site! In order to approach development of this area and its potential impact on significant historic, architectural and cultural resources in the most transparent and open way, we request and recommend that:

1. The City provide as soon as possible the presentations from the October 14, 2020 meeting, any and all environmental assessments and reports, and the timetable for public engagement and comment. Additional and more meaningful opportunities for real community engagement should occur before the Gasometer and the boiler building are dismantled and demolished and before any RFP is issued. This planning and engagement process should be robust, open and transparent.
2. The City make every effort to save the Gasometer and the boiler building and work the remediation around the metal superstructure without dismantling or demolition.
3. The City include in any RFP for this site requirements for: (1) the preservation of the Gasometer on the site; (2) educational signage about the site, the Gasometer, and their role in the industrial and economic development of Richmond and the people whose lives were shaped by the site and its activities; (3) architectural design review for future development (Commission of Architectural Review or Urban Design Committee); and (4) public access and a measure of open space.
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Fulton Gas Works is an important site in an important part of the City. The City's plans for Fulton Gas Works will shape the future of Richmond's Riverfront for decades to come and it is imperative that the City does this the right way.

Thank you for all you do to make the City a better place for all, particularly in these trying times.

Cyane



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Executive Director

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From: Cyane Crump

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 7:44 AM

To: RVAMAYOR@RICHMONDGOV.COM; LENORA.REID@RICHMONDGOV.COM; andreas.addison@richmondgov.com; kimberly.gray@richmondgov.com; chris.hilbert@richmondgov.com; kristen.larson@richmondgov.com; stephanie.lynch@richmondgov.com; Ellen.Robertson@Richmondgov.com; Cynthia.Newbille@Richmondgov.com; Reva.Trammell@Richmondgov.com; michael.jones@richmondgov.com

Subject: Please Save The Gasometer!

Mayor Stoney and Members of City Council –

The City of Richmond is about to demolish a rare and irreplaceable historic resource.

Fulton Gas Works operated for nearly 120 years (1856 – 1972), providing gas to illuminate and heat Richmond from a forgotten site near Rockett’s Landing. Neglected for decades, many of its structures have been demolished. The City plans to demolish the few that remain, including an extremely rare late 19th century gasometer and a 1937 Art Deco boiler house emblazoned with the “Fulton Gas Works” name.

The steel skeleton of the gasometer and the decorative brick work of the boiler house represent important elements of Richmond’s industrial and manufacturing heritage. These structures facilitated the expansion and development of Richmond by providing critical jobs and infrastructure. They serve as prominent visual landmarks and create a unique and authentic sense of place for the neighborhood and the City.

The City of Richmond did not solicit public comment about their plans and now demolition permits are in process. Preservation of the gasometer and adaptive reuse of the buildings is called for in the Richmond Riverfront Plan. These structures are essential elements of our community’s historic built environment that should be saved. If the structures must be dismantled for site remediation, then the structures – particularly the gasometer - should be rebuilt in the same place. We hope you will save these irreplaceable structures.

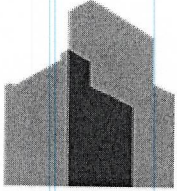
The proposed demolition highlights the fact that the City does not have a preservation plan identifying its important historic, architectural and cultural resources. It is time for Richmond to prepare a preservation plan. We stand ready to work with the City and our neighbors throughout the community to develop this plan - a plan which can help identify,

preserve, protect, and promote sites throughout the entire City - from African American cemeteries, to infrastructure like the gasometer, the Pump House and the canals, to historic neighborhoods. We need a preservation plan.

We hope you will take action to save the Gasometer at Fulton Gas Works and support a preservation plan.

Thank you for all you do to make the City a better place for all, particularly in these trying times.

Cyane



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Cyane Crump
Executive Director

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