

THE MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

Fairmount Waterworks

23 April 1990

Present: David Hollenberg, Architect, Chairman of the Committee
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect for
Independence National Historical Park
Herbert W. Levy, American Institute of Architects
Donald Stevenson, Architect

David Brownlee, Historical Commission
Caroline Golab, Historical Commission

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historic Research Technician
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also: Patrick Goddard, Chart House Enterprises, Inc.
Joseph Lancor, Joseph Lancor Architects, Inc.
Peter N. Odell, Fairmount Park Commission
John McIlhenny, Fairmount Park Commission
William J. Burke, Philadelphia Art Commission
David Baldinger, Philadelphia Planning Commission
Ernest Leonardo, Philadelphia Planning Commission
Edward Grusheski, Philadelphia Water Department
Howard Neukrug, Philadelphia Water Department
Matthew G. Smith, Philadelphia Water Department
William Bolger, National Park Service,
National Historic Landmarks Program
Charlotte de Seris, Junior League of Philadelphia
Judy Michaelis, Junior League of Philadelphia
Susan Myers, Junior League of Philadelphia
Virginia Maloney, Junior League of Philadelphia
Alice Smith, Junior League of Philadelphia
Judy Wickwire, Philadelphia Ranger Corps
Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition
Lenore Milholland, Preservation Coalition
Sandra Garz, Foundation for Architecture
Martin McNamara, Foundation for Architecture
Jane Mork Gipson, Society for Industrial Archaeology
Margaret Welsh,
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Chris LeVine, Historic Boathouse Row
Chris Ruffing, John Milner Associates
George Myers

A Summary of Architectural Committee Recommendations: 23 April 1990

Fairmount Waterworks

At its meeting of 29 March 1990, the Architectural Committee voted an approval in concept for the general plan for the adaptive conversion of the Fairmount Waterworks as a restaurant, for a proposed masonry link between its Engine House and Caretaker's House, and for a proposed enclosure of the Engine House porch. At its meeting of 18 April 1990, the Historical Commission adopted these recommendations.

The Architectural Committee maintained reservations regarding other aspects of the proposal and requested a special meeting at the Waterworks on 23 April 1990. After listening to the concerns of the many interested parties attending, the Committee made four recommendations:

- It recommended conceptual approval of a glass enclosure within the columns of the Greek Temple Pavilion. The design of this glazed structure, however, must be pulled back one bay and have notched corners at the penultimate columns on the river-side to allow public access to the railing at the waterfront.
- The Committee recommended disapproval of any penetration of the pavilion roof or decorative plaster ceiling.
- The Committee recommended that the glass be held back a minimum of four inches from the inside face of the columns to allow for their maintenance.
- The Committee recommended disapproval of the proposed installation of a canopy from the entrance bridge to the Engine House.

Fairmount Waterworks, Joseph Lancor, Joseph Lancor Architects and Patrick Goddard, Chart House Enterprises, Inc.

Mr. Hollenberg provided background information on the project. The City of Philadelphia has restored the Fairmount Waterworks over the past six years in preparation for its lease to a private tenant. Chart House Enterprises, Inc. submitted plans for the adaptive reuse of the Waterworks as a restaurant in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the City of Philadelphia, which required the use and occupancy of the Engine House and the old mill house. Chart House Enterprises, Inc. would operate a restaurant at the Waterworks under the terms of a twenty-year lease with the City. Although the Chart House plans suggest the excavation of the forebay, that project exceeds the scope of the RFP; any work undertaken in that area will be the responsibility of the City of Philadelphia and will be reviewed at another time.

Chart House presented plans to the Architectural Committee on 29 March 1990, which included the following: the restoration and adaptive reuse of the Engine House and old mill house; glazing of the portico on the river side of the Engine House; construction of a masonry link between the Engine House and the Gatekeeper's House, glazing of the Greek Temple pavilion, installation of stairs in the existing floors of the gatekeeper's house and the pavilion; restoration of two lanterns; and the introduction of parking in the forebay area. The Fairmount Park Commission granted approval in concept to these plans on 14 March 1990. On 29 March 1990, the Architectural Committee recommended an approval in concept for the general plan for the adaptive conversion of the Fairmount Waterworks as a restaurant, for a proposed masonry link between its Engine House and Caretaker's House, and for a proposed enclosure of the Engine House porch. At its meeting of 14 April 1990, the Philadelphia Historical Commission adopted these recommendations.

The Architectural Committee scheduled a special on-site meeting at the Fairmount Waterworks on 23 April 1990 to review several unresolved conceptual elements. Mr. Hollenberg reminded the Committee of his role in drafting the RFP and in phases of the restoration of the Waterworks. Because of this considerable involvement, he announced that he would abstain from voting.

Patrick Goddard, of Chart House Enterprises, Inc., presented slides of adaptive conversions of other historic buildings undertaken by his company across the country. Joseph Lancor, architect for these projects, then discussed his plans for the Waterworks. Before discussing details of the plans, he shared his view of a restaurant which would enhance the public appreciation of this historic landmark, and offer a link to the proposed interpretive center. He expressed his hope that the interpretive center would be spread through the site.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the relation between the restaurant and the proposed interpretive center. Mrs. Batcheler suggested that the architects incorporate elements of the Waterworks' history into the restaurant. Mr. Lancor indicated that this suggestion was possible. He suggested that an area on the deck outside of the Engine House entrance could serve as an exhibit site. Edward Grusheski, of the Philadelphia Water Department, indicated that the whole site had been perceived as an interpretive center. Although the present plan for a restaurant diminished the space, the interpretive center could operate in relation with the restaurant as long as certain minimum space requirements were retained to serve large school groups. Mr. Grusheski indicated that the excavation of the forebay and bridge would strengthen the interpretation of the site, and that the interpretive center could work together with the restaurant. He did note, however, that this meeting marked the first time that he had heard some of the proposals made.

Mr. Lancor resumed his presentation by pointing out that several of the unique features of this historic landmark presented problems for the proposed conversion. He explained the problems of illumination in the old mill house. While two existing structures on the deck which serve as lanterns will provide some light, the planned opening and glazing of the Greek Temple pavilion is essential to the ambience of the restaurant space below in the old mill house. Mr. Lancor noted that none of these alterations would damage historic fabric.

Mr. Lancor next presented the original scheme for glazing the Greek Temple pavilion as well as several alternatives which, to varying degrees, reduced the size of the opening in the deck and pulled the glass away from the riverfront railing to allow pedestrian access along the river side. Mr. Levy stressed the importance of retaining public access along the waterfront, and registered his support for the alternatives which retained this amenity.

Mr. Goddard explained the reasons for glazing the pavilion and stressed his preference for the original configuration. First, it would offer a constant visible presence of activity on the site; its illumination at night would ensure its visibility at all hours. Second, it allowed the most light to penetrate the old mill house. Although this concrete interior is not actually underground and will receive light from the lanterns and a row of windows, most of the restaurant business would be at night when these openings will not offer much light. Third, the original pavilion plan, which closed off access along the riverfront railing, only allows for a direct approach to the railings. With regard to the lateral access along the railing, Mr. Lancor pointed out that such movement already was impeded by the Engine House and the Watering Committee building. Further, as a matter of public safety, the architects wanted to encourage the public to approach the waterfront directly rather than walking laterally along the relatively low railing along the river's edge. They noted that the introduction of a restaurant to the site would multiply the

potential risk of this low railing. The Committee acknowledged that the railing height may not comply with safety provisions in the building code, but stressed that it was an historic feature which should not be compromised.

Mr. Hollenberg asked if anyone wished to address the Commission. Judy Wickwire, of the Philadelphia Ranger Corps and a guide at the Waterworks, informed the Committee that a favorite spot of visitors was beneath the Greek Temple at the railing. Howard Kittell of the Preservation Coalition also expressed his support for leaving the Greek Temple as an open public area. Mr. Goddard stressed that diminishing this space would detract significantly from the plans for the restaurant. The pavilion seating included approximately one-third of the restaurant's total of sixty tables.

Although not directly included in the Chart House application, the excavation of the forebay was mentioned throughout the discussion. Mr. Lancor's plans indicate that a bridge, presently buried beneath Aquarium Drive, will serve as the main entrance to the structure on which the Waterworks is situated. Mr. Lancor expressed his appreciation for the value of excavating the forebay as a critical means of promoting an understanding of the site.

While the Committee generally commended the applicant for incorporating the proposed excavation of the forebay, it noted that the forebay plans were a separate project which would be undertaken by the City. The Committee objected to a proposal to install a long purple canopy extending from the bridge to the Engine House. Mr. Lancor indicated that the canopy was intended to draw people from the bridge to the restaurant entrance at the Engine House. The Committee strongly recommended the deletion of this item from the plans.

Mr. Lancor explained the proposed means of service delivery and trash removal. He would like to construct a small out-building under the bluff below the Art Museum to house trash dumpsters. He mentioned the possible use of service elevators on the northwest end of the site for deliveries. Mr. Lancor indicated that Chart House Enterprises would service these areas in off-peak, early morning hours. The Committee commended the architect for this alternative to the original proposal to retain all trash in a service alley in an excavated section of the forebay.

Mr. Tyler inquired into the location of the kitchen and accessory systems. Mr. Lancor indicated that these facilities would be located beneath the Greek Temple Pavilion on the forebay side. He also indicated that an exhaust duct would pierce the roof of the pavilion. The Committee unanimously recommended that nothing could pierce the pavilion roof or its decorative plaster ceiling.

David Baldinger, Deputy Director of the City Planning Commission, inquired into plans for parking around the facility. Peter Odell

indicated that the Park Commission reserved approximately one hundred spaces along Fairmount Avenue after 5 p.m. for the Chart House.

After listening to the concerns of the many interested parties attending this special on-site meeting, the Committee made four recommendations:

- It recommended conceptual approval of a glass enclosure inside the columns of the Greek Temple Pavilion. This design, however, must allow access to the railing at the waterfront by confining the glazing within the penultimate column on the river side, and notching the corners on that end.
- The Committee recommended disapproval of any penetration of the pavilion roof or decorative plaster ceiling.
- The Committee recommended that the glass be held back a minimum of four inches from the inside face of the columns to allow for their maintenance.
- The Committee recommended disapproval of the proposed installation of a canopy from the entrance bridge to the Engine House.

Mr. Goddard inquired into the appeal procedure, which Mr. Hollenberg explained.

Mr. Hollenberg also reminded everyone that a considerable eight-year investment had been made in order to prepare the facility for private development. Susan Myers, of the Junior League, indicated that the League had been promoting the restoration of this site since 24 October 1974. She stressed that the Chart House was the only corporation which remained committed since the issuance of the RFP four years ago. She expressed concern that if the City had to bid the site again, that there may be a two to three year hiatus, and with it, the danger of vandalism.

There being no further comments or business, the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary