

THE MINUTES OF THE 224th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

6 April 1978

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman
Mrs. James C. Crumlish, Jr.
The Hon. John B. Kelly, Jr., Councilman-at-Large
Edward Pinkowski
Commissioner Robert Silver, Department of Public Property
Val Mogensen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
David Rosenblum, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

Also: G. Craig Schelter, Deputy Executive Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Charles E. Peterson, F.A.I.A., and other members of the Save Spruce Street Committee
Gary Aden, a Vice President of Pennsylvania Hospital.

Unless otherwise noted, all actions taken herein are the results of motions correctly made, seconded and carried.

THE MINUTES of the Stated Meeting, 2 March 1978, were approved and directed to be filed

REPORTS

The Report of the Architectural Committee, 15 March 1978, Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission. The report was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

Recommendations by the Staff for the Certification of Buildings, Richard Tyler, Historian.

The Historical Commission members reviewed and approved the certification of the two buildings designed by Frank Furness and located at 130 and 132 South Seventeenth Street.

Report on Historical Commission Staff Activities for the month of March, Richard Tyler, Historian.

The Commission's Vice Chairman asked the Historian to elaborate on the scope and methodology of the field surveys conducted by the Philadelphia Historical Commission staff for the City Planning

REPORTS (Cont'd)

Commission and the Office of Housing and Community Development. In order to comply with federal environmental laws, the staff assisted the City Planning Commission in the preparation of an environmental impact study for Year III of the Community Development Program. Mr. Tyler reported that the Environmental Impact Statement is finished and is on file. A letter from John Gallery, Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development, recognizing the Historical Commission's cooperation in this program was read. A motion was made to accept this letter as part of the official minutes of the meeting. This was seconded and carried. In response to a question posed by Mr. Hogsensen, the Historian noted that only those buildings which appeared to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places were photographed.

Mr. Pinkowski suggested that in the process of reviewing neighborhoods for buildings of National Register quality, the staff might also evaluate the buildings for local significance and possible certification.

Mr. Tyler took this opportunity to report on the status of the John Wanamaker Mansion at 2032 Walnut Street. Members of the staff and Mr. Pinkowski who visited the site agreed that the building, owing to a recent fire, suffered extensive damage and that a demolition order by the Department of Licenses and Inspections should be honored when presented to the Commission for approval. As yet, a request for permission to demolish has not come to the Commission. Before demolition is allowed, arrangements for the photographic recording of the facade will be made.

OLD BUSINESS

700-714 Spruce Street. At the request of the Save Spruce Street Committee the matter of the preservation of 700-714 Spruce Street was brought to the attention of the Commission members. Several members of the Committee attended the meeting as did G. Craig Schelter, Deputy Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and Gary Adam, a Vice President of Pennsylvania Hospital.

Prior to Mr. Schelter's report on the status of these buildings, the Commission's Vice Chairman presented a brief chronology of events since 1972. Mrs. Klein reported that in January of 1972 the Pennsylvania Hospital requested permission to demolish the buildings for new development. Discussions ensued concerning the feasibility of preserving the Spruce Street buildings and placing the new development behind them. Subsequently, the Commission's jurisdiction over the buildings expired and they were released for demolition.

OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Neighborhood opposition to the demolition of the buildings and governmental reviews delayed the project and led to the City Planning Commission's involvement as mediator between the neighborhood and the Hospital in an attempt to reach a compromise solution to the problem.

Mrs. Klein asked Mr. Schelter, Deputy Executive Director of the City Planning Commission, to relate to the Commission members the current status of the project. Mr. Schelter pointed out that the future of the buildings, 700-714 Spruce Street, was uncertain at this stage. The community and the Hospital still remain far apart in the attempt to reach a compromise solution to the preservation problem.

Although all legal impediments to the demolition of the buildings have been eliminated, the City Planning Commission agreed to mediate between the Hospital and the community and to contract for the preparation of a study to determine the feasibility of new development and the retention of the Spruce Street houses. The results of this report are expected to be available by 10 April 1978.

In a meeting with the City's Managing Director, Mr. Schelter was directed to confer with the community and the Hospital and to prepare a final compromise offer to be presented to both sides. The compromise offered will be on a take it or leave it basis. Basically, in return for the retention of the facades of the Spruce Street buildings, the Hospital will receive some zoning bonuses and the establishment of an Institutional Development District.

The Commission's Historian noted that in 1975 when asked by the Redevelopment Authority to consider a proposal for the retention of the Spruce Street buildings through the gable end, the Historical Commission expressed its support of the preservation of the buildings if it were feasible. This was the last position taken by the Commission.

Following Mr. Schelter's presentation, Mrs. Klein asked Charles E. Peterson, spokesman for the community, for his comments.

Mr. Peterson noted that the buildings, 700-714 Spruce Street, were the last bulwark between the Hospital and the residential community. He commended the City Planning Commission in its effort to resolve the problem by engaging a blue ribbon committee to study

OLD BUSINESS (Cont'd)

the feasibility of the retention of the Spruce Street buildings. A sum of \$2500.00 was provided by the State and matched by the City Planning Commission for the undertaking of the feasibility study.

Photographs of the Spruce Street buildings were passed among the Commission members. Mr. Peterson stressed the good condition of the buildings, both interior and exterior, and the possibility of their reuse by the Hospital for offices.

Mr. Schalter responded that the reuse of the building was discussed at the first meeting with the consultants; both Mr. Peterson and Mr. Bartley, the Hospital's architect, attended. Although reuse of the buildings under present code regulations as offices is permitted, the Hospital wishes to retain some flexibility so as to allow the introduction of medical facilities into the structures in the future if they so desire.

Mr. Aden of Pennsylvania Hospital expressed to the Commission members the Hospital's commitment to the preservation of the Pine Building and its desire to avoid having to restore the Spruce Street buildings to that same degree on both the interior and the exterior.

Mr. Schalter stated that it is the City Planning Commission's understanding that the retention of the exterior is of prime concern and that there is no intention to make a specific recommendation regarding the interiors.

Mr. Peterson asked that retention of the interiors be given consideration.

The Vice Chairman thanked both Mr. Schalter and Mr. Peterson for their comments and asked that a copy of the feasibility study be presented to the Historical Commission upon its receipt by the Planning Commission. Mr. Tyler will prepare a one page abstract of the report for distribution to all Commission members for their review. The Commission also agreed to hold a special meeting to consider the study and the City Planning Commission's solution as soon as this information is available.

NEW BUSINESS

Fairmount Park Houses, Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission. At the suggestion of Mr. Levy, a letter will be drafted for the Chairman's signature expressing to the Fairmount Park

NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

Commission the Historical Commission's concern for the continued maintenance of the buildings recently restored for the Bicentennial. As has been the standard procedure with other city departments charged with the maintenance of historic structures, the Fairmount Park Commission will be asked to inform the Historical Commission of all intended repairs to these buildings and to obtain an approval before work is begun.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 P. M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

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