

THE MINUTES OF THE 325th STATED MEETING
OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

12 October 1988

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
Christine Washington, Vice Chairman
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
John Street, Esq., Councilman, Fifth District
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and Community Development
David Wismer, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Licenses and
Inspections

Maria Petrillo, Esq., Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sally Elk, Historical Research Technician

Also: S. Neil Schlosser, Architect and Carl Roberts, Esq., regarding
3428-30 Sansom Street
Mary Lou McFarland, Executive Director, Preservation Coalition
of Greater Philadelphia
Edna Irving, City Council
Randy Cotton, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation
Robert Leiter, Jewish Exponent
Irving and Edith Kosmin
And others.

THE MINUTES of the 324th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 14 September 1988, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. The minutes of this meeting of the Commission were reviewed and approved.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission for 29 September 1988, David Hollenberg, Chairman.

The Architectural Committee recommended a final approval for two projects reviewed on the 29th of September. These include the Swann Memorial Fountain restoration and revitalization, and the preliminary unbonded and final bonded improvements proposed for City Hall Annex.

The Commission voted to accept the recommendation of the Architectural Committee and grant a final approval for the Swann Memorial Fountain and City Hall Annex improvements. Mr. Hollenberg abstained from voting on City Hall Annex.

Next, Mr. Hollenberg reported that the Committee recommended an approval, in concept, of the applicant's proposed modifications to the Bourse Building, 21 South 5th Street.

The Commission voted to accept the Committee's recommendation for an approval, in concept, of the proposed Bourse Building modifications.

A conditional approval, as outlined in the committee report, was recommended for the Arch Street Meeting House at 320 Arch Street.

The Commission accepted this recommendation, as well, and granted a conditional approval for this project.

Mr. Hollenberg reported that the Committee had requested revisions for two projects - 1916 Delancey Street and 420 S. Van Pelt Street. Revised drawings were received and were determined to be substantially correct. In each case, a minor correction still remains to be made. However, in order not to delay these projects, Mr. Hollenberg recommended an approval. The staff will undertake the final review of the corrected drawings.

Mr. Street commended the Architectural Committee for its willingness to expedite its review of projects which are substantially in conformity with the Committee and Commission requirements. Mr. Street urged the committee to continue to function in this reasonable manner.

Mr. Hollenberg extracted from the Committee's Report the recommendation concerning 3428-30 Sansom Street. This matter will be discussed under Old Business.

The Committee voted to recommend a rejection of the work proposed for 406-408 South 16th Street.

The Commission accepted the Committee recommendation on this application and voted to reject the applicant's proposal. Ms. Siemiontkowski reported that subsequent to the meeting of the 29th, the applicant contacted the Commission office and agreed to conform with the Committee's recommendation and to rebuild his damaged entrance stairs in cast stone to resemble brownstone and to retain and repair the existing brownstone watertable. The applicant will submit a revised drawing for another review.

Finally, the Committee recommended an approval, in concept, of the construction of a railing to enclose the roof deck at 345 S. Camac Street. However, since the railing, as proposed, will sit upon an illegal overhanging cornice, this application cannot be given final approval until the inappropriate cornice is removed and the proposed railing pulled back to its proper place on the roof. Detailed drawings and additional photographs are required.

The Commission accepted the Committee recommendation to require both the removal of the illegal and inappropriate cornice and the submission of additional drawings and photographs before a final approval can be granted.

Ms. Siemiontkowski reported that a copy of the Architectural Committee's Report and a letter advising the applicant of the Commission's hearing on that report is now being sent to each applicant prior to the Commission meeting. This will further inform applicants of their opportunity to appear before the Commission and to disagree with the Committee recommendation if they wish to do so.

THE REPORT of the Meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 14 March 1986, Grace Gary, Chairman. David Brownlee, current Chairman.

Dr. Brownlee reviewed for the Commission members the history of the Jewish Foster Home and Orphanage - a complex of buildings located at 700 East Church Lane. At the September meeting of the Historical Commission, members of the Congregation Tikvoh Chadoshoh, owners of a single building located in the complex, raised some concern over the proposed designation of their building. Subsequent to the September meeting, Dr. Brownlee visited the site and Mr. Tyler met with the Synagogue's Board to discuss the ramifications of certification. Following this meeting, the Board voted to decline designation of the building.

Mr. Brownlee pointed out that the building under consideration is now oriented toward Chew Avenue and not toward the remaining buildings in the complex. In fact, the rear of the building has become its entrance. Moreover, a brick and cinder block addition constructed on the original front facade of the building in the 1950s has compromised the structure's architectural integrity.

Dr. Brownlee suggested to the Commission members that given the building's separate ownership, its location in relationship to the rest of the complex and the 1950s alteration, this piece was clearly severable from the rest.

A motion to exclude the synagogue building from the Jewish Foster Home and Orphanage complex and to designate only those buildings owned by the Manna Bible Institute was made, seconded and carried. The present day property line will serve as the dividing line between the two.

THE REPORT on the Activities of the Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff for September, 1988, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer. Mr. Tyler, in response to a question, reported that the Board of Licenses and Inspections Review affirmed the City of Philadelphia in an appeal filed by the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Center City Residents Association and approved the reinstatement of the demolition permit for Laning Hall.

Several Commission members expressed concern over the lack of maintenance of the Naval Home buildings and expressed a strong interest in seeing that the Strickland buildings are stabilized immediately. Representatives of the Historical Commission and the Department of Licenses and Inspections are seeking to schedule a walk-through on the 14th of October to identify problems and, if necessary, to arrange for an enforcement of the Commission's maintenance clause.

The Commission noted that Toll Brothers had assured the Commission over a year ago that stabilization would be undertaken immediately following acquisition of the property from the General Services Administration. To date, no maintenance or stabilization has occurred.

Mr. Nathan suggested that Toll Brothers be directed to retain a consultant to evaluate the condition of the buildings and to develop a stabilization plan which respects the historical and architectural integrity of the property.

OLD BUSINESS

3428-30 Sansom Street. Mr. Hollenberg reviewed the recommendation of the Architectural Committee regarding the applicant's proposed introduction of a basement areaway at the front facade of this property. Mr. Schlosser discussed with the Committee at its meeting of 29 September 1988 an alternative areaway treatment which would result in a less drastic impact on the facade and streetscape. However, the Committee reiterated its position that a basement areaway on the facade of 3428-30 Sansom Street is an inappropriate alteration. The areaway has no basis in history and calls for changing the size and configuration of original masonry openings on a primary elevation of the building. The Committee's original recommendation against the approval of an areaway at 3428-30 Sansom Street remains unchanged.

Ms. Petrillo advised the Commission that the issuance of a 1984 permit for another property on the block is not binding on the Commission nor is the consent decree between the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and the Sansom Street Committee.

Ms. Petrillo submitted for the record a letter received from the Sansom Street Committee in support of the applicant's proposal to introduce a basement areaway on the front facade of 3428-30 Sansom Street.

Mr. Schlosser presented to the Commission drawings showing a revised design for an areaway on the Sansom Street front. This design retains three of the four basement window openings and calls for the lengthening of the one remaining opening to allow for a basement entrance door. This scheme also reduces the number of steps on the outside of the building.

Mr. Schlosser also reviewed for the Commission the history of the block. A consent decree which required preservation of the buildings also allowed their owners to develop them in accordance with certain guidelines. Although Historical Commission staff comment was solicited by the Redevelopment Authority on these guidelines, that comment was never communicated to the Sansom Street Committee nor incorporated into the consent decree.

In addition, Mr. Schlosser pointed out that an areaway had been approved by the Commission in 1984 for another property and that his client had relied on that approval for his property.

Councilman Street, at this time, moved that the October 7th, 1988 plans, as described by Mr. Schlosser at today's hearing, be approved. This motion was seconded by Mrs. Washington.

Dr. Brownlee stressed the importance of this row as an intact residential streetscape of quasi-suburban housing with small front yards. Owing to the narrowness of the street, the visibility of large openings in the basement level will have a significant impact on the original architectural character of the street. Dr. Brownlee also pointed out that the rears of these properties which face Moravian Street have become commercial in character and face the University of Pennsylvania Food Court directly across Moravian Street. In fact, many of the already existing restaurants on Sansom Row have access from Moravian Street. Dr. Brownlee suggested that limiting access to the basement from Moravian would not constitute an undue hardship on the applicant and would serve to preserve the historic residential character of Sansom Row. Dr. Brownlee explained that he did not object to commercial uses in the buildings but only to altering the original residential appearance of the street to accommodate those uses when a reasonable alternative existed. Mr. Hollenberg pointed out that all other commercial properties on the street have retained and restored their historic facades.

Mr. Roberts asked that the Commission consider the equity issues in this matter and the significant investment made by his client in this property.

The Chairman reminded the Commission members of the motion on the floor and called for a vote. By a vote of six to three, the Commission voted to approve the revised drawings presented by Mr. Schlosser for the introduction of an areaway at 3428-30 Sansom Street. Messrs. Brownlee, Hollenberg and Wilds voted against approval. The Commission noted specifically that approval for this project would not constitute a precedent for the approval of historic areaways in general. The Commission's action was taken in response to the equitable considerations raised by the applicant. These included the applicant's conformity with the Consent Decree between the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority and the Sansom Street Committee, reliance upon the specific Design Criteria contained in that Decree and the Historical Commission's approval in 1984 of a similar areaway for another property on the row.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilman Street reported to the Commission members on City Council's current consideration of a proposed lease for development of the Convention Center in the vicinity of 12th and Market Streets.

Mr. Street expressed his concern for the preservation of the Reading Terminal Market and suggested that the Commission and its staff consider the development of specific guidelines to assure that preservation.

Since the Reading Terminal Headhouse, trainshed and market are designated currently as historic structures, all building permit applications for alterations are referred by the Department of Licenses and Inspections to the Commission office for review and approval before any work is begun. This designation gives the Commission jurisdiction over both interior and exterior alterations but does not allow the Commission any control over use.

Mr. Street asked that the Commission and its staff develop a policy and formulate guidelines designed to preserve the integrity of the market as an historic resource. It was agreed that members of the staff would meet within the next week or two with David Hollenberg and David Wismer to prepare a memorandum for Councilman Street.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer

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