

THE MINUTES OF THE 292nd STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

31 July 1985

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
John Street, Esq., Councilman, Fifth District
Dudley Sykes, Commissioner, Department of Public Property
David Wismer, Chief, Construction Unit, Department of Licenses and Inspections
Kenneth Cooper, Esq., Deputy City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia A. Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian
Randal Baron, Executive Secretary
Terry Koob, Clerk Steno II

Also: Mary Ellen Balchunis, Deputy Mayor's Office
Frederick C. Bader, City Solicitor's Office
Sandra Garz, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Alan Kauffman, Esq., Attorney representing 19 Christian Street
Marge Scherneck, Jeff Rush and Jennifer Smith of the Queen Village Neighbors Association, in support of the preservation of 19 Christian Street
Rosemary Wrenschel, Reporter, Chestnut Hill Local
Mary Lou McFarland, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
and others

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

THE MINUTES of the 291st Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 26 June 1985, F. Otto Haas, Chairman, were reviewed and unanimously approved.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee held 11 July 1985, David Hollenberg, Chairman. A motion was made to accept the report of the Architectural Committee with the exception of 104-106 Fitzwater Street, 540 Spruce Street, 7125-7127 Germantown Avenue and 19 Christian Street. The remainder of the report was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the minutes of this meeting.

104-106 Fitzwater Street, Jerry Roller, Architect. The Architectural Committee recommended their conditional approval of the plans to rehabilitate these two small eighteenth century houses contingent upon the submission of revised window designs. These revised designs have not been received; therefore, the project is still pending.

The Commission voted to table this project until appropriate design revisions are submitted and approved.

540 Spruce Street, Sandy Ward and Larry Paoletta, Owners. This project was brought before the Architectural Committee owing to the non-compliance of the previously approved plans. One major deviation was the installation of a steep roof above the garage doors in the garden wall. The original plans which were approved by the Historical Commission called for a flat top garden wall. The owners stated that this change was made in order to create a protective enclosure for the electronic mechanism which operates the garage doors. Subsequent to the meeting of 11 July 1985, Mr. Bartley inspected this project and recommended that a flat roof design would provide adequate protection for the electronic mechanism. Therefore, the Architectural Committee recommends that the unapproved alteration be removed and replaced with a flat, wooden, painted top on the garden wall.

The Commission agreed to approve the Committee's recommendation.

7125-7127 Germantown Avenue, Charles Duncan, Architect. This proposal involves alterations to the side and rear of this two-story building with Mansard. The Architectural Committee recommended that the Commission approve this plan subject to the submission of revised window details. These revised designs were received by the staff of the Historical Commission and a final approval is now recommended.

The Commission voted to approve the plans for this rehabilitation at 7125-7127 Germantown Avenue.

19 Christian Street, Leonard Cook, Attorney, and Joseph J. Flynn, Phillyship. Mr. Hollenberg reported to the Historical Commission the recommendation of the Architectural Committee to table action on this matter. The affidavit presented at the meeting of 11 July 1985 has been turned over to an independent consultant to assess the data contained in it. Additional information will be required to complete this study and Mr. Kauffman, an attorney from Mr. Cook's firm, assured the Commission that his office would cooperate fully in supplying any additional material that would be required.

Marge Scherneck, Jeff Rush and Jennifer Smith, representatives of the Queen Village Neighbors Association, appeared at the meeting to present the neighborhood's position regarding the proposed demolition request. These representatives presented strong neighborhood support for the preservation of 19 Christian Street citing the trend toward residential development both current and projected. A petition signed by sixty-one area residents was presented supporting a request for rezoning in the area. Although a residential approach to the preservation of this building could be accomplished, Mr. Tyler emphasized that a commercial or industrial solution should not be overlooked because of mixed use in the area.

Mary Lou McFarland of the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia addressed the Commission urging a denial of the owner's request to demolish 19 Christian Street.

Mr. Tyler recommended that the Commission table action on this application pending receipt of the consultant's evaluation of the information contained in the affidavit presented to the Architectural Committee on 11 July.

The Commission unanimously agreed to hold this case until its next Stated Meeting.

THE HISTORIAN'S Report on Staff Activities for 15 June - 15 July 1985 was reviewed and approved for filing.

OLD BUSINESS

Resolution in recognition of James S. White.

The Chairman read a resolution prepared in recognition of James S. White. The Commission thanked Mr. White for his work as a member of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and congratulated him on his appointment as the Managing Director of the City of Philadelphia.

The Commission unanimously approved the resolution which will be presented to Managing Director James S. White.

Concurrent jurisdiction of the Art, Planning and Historical Commissions

Ms. Siemiontkowski explained the proposed plan to handle cases where there is concurrent jurisdiction by the Art, Planning and Historical Commissions. According to this plan, an applicant for a building permit who is sent to the Art Commission will be automatically referred to the Historical Commission and the City Planning Commission offices to ascertain if those commissions have jurisdiction as well. Where applicable, the plans will be presented first to the Historical Commission for review. Mr. Wismer recommended that a notation be made on all applications where the Historical Commission has no jurisdiction.

The Commission unanimously agreed to approve this proposed plan incorporating Mr. Wismer's suggestion.

NEW BUSINESS

Preliminary Regulations

Building Permit Approvals

Mr. Tyler explained that it has been the practice of the Commission staff to approve immediately demolition permit applications for buildings designated by the Department of Licenses and Inspections as "Dangerous" or "Imminently Dangerous." Also building permit applications for interior alterations to non-public areas and some for minor exterior alterations on rear elevations have also been approved at staff level. Mr. Wismer explained that the Department of Licenses and Inspections agent cites a building as "Imminently Dangerous" when the possibility exists that a potential hazard could happen immediately. When an inspector designates a building to be "Dangerous" the condition is such that it is not immediately a danger to the public welfare but may become so if further deterioration continues. Mr. Wismer stated that if a property is borderline, the evaluation will normally be "Imminently Dangerous."

Councilman Street objected to any building on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places being demolished without an on-site inspection by the Historical Commission. He recommended that a qualified person representing

the Commission inspect these buildings prior to demolition. Councilman Street suggested that someone should be on call to make immediate inspections if the need arises.

The Commission voted to allow staff approval on applications for interior alterations in non-public spaces and minor exterior alterations or those on the rear of a property which are not visible from the street. The Commission further voted that no demolitions are to be approved for any building listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places without the inspection of a qualified representative of the Historical Commission.

Quorum

The Historian recommended that the Commission adopt a quorum of eight.

The Commission voted to accept this recommendation.

Treasury II

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that Mayor Goode presented testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee in Washington attesting to the success of the historic preservation tax incentives in Philadelphia. Mr. Tyler asked the Commission for permission to write a letter of support to our representatives in the government urging the retention of these tax credits. Mr. Tyler also suggested that each Commission member write personally in support of the rehabilitation tax credit.

The Commission unanimously voted to endorse this action.

Preservation Community Presentations

The Historian presented a request from Mary Lou McFarland, the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, to allow the different preservation groups working in the Philadelphia area to address the Commission at a later meeting with a brief presentation on the work of their individual organizations.

The Commission voted to allow these groups to speak at a later meeting.

Vice-Chairman

The Chairman raised the issue that the Commission has not selected a Vice-Chairman and suggested that a committee be formed for this purpose. Mr. Haas requested that the committee consist of Grace Gary, Commissioner Dudley Sykes and William Thompson.

The Commission unanimously agreed to the formation of this committee and its members.

REVIEW OF PAST CASES

Steel-Strawbridge House, 3001 School House Lane. Ms. Siemiontkowski informed the Commission that Penn Charter School has developed its plan for the construction of playing fields on the Steel-Strawbridge estate grounds. The first of the two phases of this plan calls for the construction of two playing fields in the rear. The second phase of the plan, which is scheduled for some time next year, includes the demolition of the mansion and cow shed to accomodate another playing field. The overall plan includes the retention of the carriage house/stable.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Koob
Clerk Steno II

THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION

OF THE

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David Hollenberg

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The Historian opened the Executive Session with an informative discussion of items of special note listed in the Report of the Architectural Committee held on 11 July 1985.

225 S. 8th Street. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that this was a resubmission for a post-modern portico entrance on the north side of the Morris House. Owing to the significance of the Morris House and community interest in the property, the Historian reviewed with the Commission members the new owner's plans for this building. It is the recommendation of the Architectural Committee that these plans be approved.

19 Christian Street. Mr. Tyler reviewed for the Commission members events leading to the Architectural Committee's review of a demolition permit application for 19 Christian Street. At the 11 July 1985 meeting, an affidavit was submitted to the Architectural Committee by counsel for the owner. This document contains financial data and other information concerning 19 Christian Street. Mr. Tyler explained that the affidavit has been turned over to an independent consultant for evaluation. The Commission was advised also that today's meeting would be attended by several members of the Queen Village Neighbors Association who are opposed to the 19 Christian Street demolition. Mr. Tyler stated that the staff concurred with the Architectural Committee's recommendation to table action on this demolition request until the independent analysis is completed.

The claim of the owners of 19 Christian Street that they were unaware that their building was historically designated led to a discussion by the Commission concerning a need for specific procedures to ensure that deeds for designated buildings record the fact of designation. Mr. Tyler stated that the Commission currently notifies the Records Department when a property is placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The Records Department then records on the deed the Commission's designation of the property. However, experience has shown that occasionally this procedure fails. Mr. Tyler agreed to contact the Records Department to discuss policy and procedure for the recording of historic designation on property deeds.

A discussion on concurrent jurisdiction among the Historical Commission, the Art Commission and the City Planning Commission followed. The Commission members were asked to review a proposed procedure drafted by Ms. Siemiontkowski. This item will be discussed further in the regular session of the meeting.

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that Kenneth Cooper of the Law Department brought to the staff's attention the fact that the new ordinance does not allow for staff approval on permit requests for designated properties. Mr. Tyler suggested that a resolution could be reached at today's meeting for approval of interim regulations until the adoption of by-laws is accomplished.

The Historian informed the Commission that a quorum determination was needed for the Commission Meetings and suggested a quorum of eight. This, too, will be on the agenda for today's meeting.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Meeting this year is scheduled to be held in Seattle. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that its approval is required for the appropriation of travel funds for a senior staff member to attend.

Mr. Tyler introduced David Wismer, Chief of Construction of the Department of Licenses and Inspections. Mr. Wismer appeared as Commissioner Henry Herling's representative at today's meeting. The Historian also announced the presence of Mary Ellen Balchunis of the Deputy Mayor's Office and informed the Commission that the Philadelphia Historical Commission now reports directly to Deputy Mayor Yvonne Schruggs-Leftwich.

Ms. Kaplan addressed the Commission on the Center City Plan which is aimed at allowing new development where conditions permit. Ms. Kaplan, however, is also concerned with the preservation of historic buildings and districts in Center City. Ms. Kaplan emphasized the need for the designation of significant buildings in order to avoid demolition as the current wave of development in center city brings with it the need for additional parking. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that a list of designated buildings in center city was currently being prepared. This will help in determining what remaining buildings and districts require protection.

Discussion followed regarding the need for additional staff for the Commission. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that owing to the Civil Service Commission's failure to consider the three staff positions proposed for the Historical Commission at their July meeting, these positions may not be filled until early 1986.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Koob
Clerk Steno II