

**THE MINUTES OF THE 736TH STATED MEETING OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**FRIDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2023, 9:00 A.M.
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM
ROBERT THOMAS, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:00:00

Mr. Thomas, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. and announced the presence of a quorum. The following Commissioners joined him:

Commissioner	Present	Absent	Comment
Robert Thomas, AIA, Chair (Architectural Historian)	X		
Kimberly Washington, Esq., Vice Chair (Community Development Corporation)	X		
Donna Carney (Philadelphia City Planning Commission)	X		
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., Committee on Historic Designation Chair (Historian)		X	Arrived 9:53am
Erin Kindt (Department of Public Property)	X		
Sara Lepori (Commerce Department)	X		
John P. Lech (Department of Licenses & Inspections)	X		
John Mattioni, Esq.	X		
Dan McCoubrey, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, Architectural Committee Chair (Architect)	X		
Stephanie Michel (Community Organization)		X	
Jessica Sánchez, Esq. (City Council President)	X		
Matthew Treat (Department of Planning and Development)	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

Jonathan Farnham, Executive Director
Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
Mary Costello, Esq., Law Department
Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner III
Heather Hendrickson, Historic Preservation Planner II
Ted Maust, Historic Preservation Planner II
Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner II
Leonard Reuter, Esq., Law Department
Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Historic Preservation Planner II
Alex Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

Abigail Hastings
A. Levine
Alex Balloon
Alexander Fidrych

Allison Weiss, SoLo Germantown
Amy Lambert
Amy Levine
Barbara Hauck-Mah, BVNA
Bernard Groeneveld
Brian Thrippleton
Carl Primavera, Esq., Klehr Harrison
Constance Winters
CR Mini
Deneene Brockington
Dennis Carlisle
Don Maedche
Donna Ellis, ASL Interpreter
Doug Mooney
Ellie Clark
Elliott batTzedek
Eric Leighton
Evan Litvin, LO DESIGN
Garth Herrick
George Poulin
Georgette Bartell
Glenn Blumenfeld, Tactix
Greg Paulmier
Greg Smolley
Hanna Stark, Preservation Alliance
Harriet Hirsch
Harrison Finberg
Harvey Ostroff
Heather Ascher
Harrison Haas, Esq.
Irwin Trauss, Esq.
Jaci Pollock
Janice Woodcock
Jay Farrell
Jayson Massey
Jill Deuel
Jim Dragoni
Jim Duffin
Joan Finger
Joanna Bisgaier
Jonathan Wallace
Jonny Chang
Joshua Steckel, ASL Interpreter
Julia Feng
Julie Stapleton Carroll
Ken Weinstein
Kimberly Haas, Hidden City
Kittura Dior
Kristin Haskins Simms
Larry Bendesky
Lisa

Liz Szot
Lori Bendesky
Los van Balens
L. Ostroff
Lynn Robinson
Mark Apodaca
Mark Travis
Mary South
Mason Carter
Matthew McClure, Esq., Ballard Spahr
Megan Schmitt
Melissa Draganac-Hawk, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
Meredith Ferleger, Esq.
Meredith Trego, Esq., Ballard Spahr
Michael Ascher
Michael Ramos
Michael Simone
Michael Toledano
Mike Ferleger
Monica Goodhart
Nancy Pontone
Nick Connolly
Neil Sklaroff, Esq., Dilworth Paxson
Nicholas Cousineau
Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society
Patrick Bayer
Paul Steinke, Preservation Alliance
Philip Rakita
Ralph Marano
Ralph Woerheide
Ryan Breen
Scott Shiffert
Sean Morris
Sierra M. Bretz, East Mount Airy Neighbors
Steven Peitzman
Sue Patterson
Susan Blumenfeld
Suzanna Barucco
Suzanne Ponsen, WCGN
Terese's iPhone
Tim Shaaban, Astoban
Timothy Kerner
Tom Beck
Walter King
Wayne Pollock
Yvonne Haskins, Esq.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES, 735TH STATED MEETING, 10 NOVEMBER 2023

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:06:25

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Thomas asked the Commissioners, staff, and members of the public if they had any suggested additions or corrections to the minutes of the preceding meeting of the Historical Commission, the 735th Stated Meeting, held 10 November 2023. No comments were offered.

ACTION: Mr. Thomas moved to adopt the minutes of the 735th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, held 10 November 2023. Ms. Washington seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: Adoption of the Minutes of the 735th Stated Meeting of the PHC					
MOTION: Adopt minutes					
MOVED BY: Thomas					
SECONDED BY: Washington					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman					X
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	10				2

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES

ADDRESS: 1520-22 CHESTNUT ST

Name of Resource: S.S. Kresge Store

Proposed Action: Designate

Property Owner: PR Chestnut Associates LP

Nominator: Center City Residents Association

Staff Contact: Ted Maust, theodore.maust@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 1520-22 Chestnut Street and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. A two-story masonry commercial building, known as the S.S. Kresge Store, stands on the property. The nomination contends that the S.S. Kresge Store, built in 1934, satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E. The nomination argues that the property reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style and embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, specifically the Art Deco style, satisfying Criteria C and D. The nomination also argues that Silverman & Levy, the architects of the structure, was a firm that significantly influenced the development of the City of Philadelphia, satisfying Criterion E.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the property at 1520-22 Chestnut Street satisfies Criteria for Designation C, D, and E.

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:06:55

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Maust presented the continuance request to the Historical Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

ACTION: Mr. Thomas moved to continue the review of 1520-22 Chestnut Street to the January 2024 meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation. Ms. Washington seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: 1520-22 Chestnut St continuance request MOTION: Approve continuance MOVED BY: Thomas SECONDED BY: Washington					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman					X
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	10				2

OLD BUSINESS

ADDRESS: 156 W SCHOOL HOUSE LN

Proposal: Demolish building

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

Applicant: Matthew N. McClure, Ballard Spahr LLP

History: 1897; Boxwood; Mantle Fielding Jr., architect

Individual Designation: 3/12/2021

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Jon Farnham, jon.farnham@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes demolishing the house at 156 W. School House Lane, owing to financial hardship and necessity in the public interest. The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf owns the property, which is located at the northwest corner of the campus in central Germantown. The application claims that the building cannot be feasibly adapted for use by the school and that demolishing the building and redeveloping the land for the school's use is necessary in the public interest. It also claims that the demolition is necessary to meet the reasonable accommodation standard under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The Penn Knox Neighborhood Association nominated the property in January 2019, when a different non-profit owner planned to sell the property to a for-profit developer for redevelopment as an apartment complex. After the nomination was submitted, the apartment plan was abandoned and the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf purchased the property in July 2019. The school's campus bordered the property. In March 2021, the Historical Commission reviewed the nomination and designated the property. During the review, school representatives objected to the designation and explained that the school needed to redevelop the property to redesign the traffic flow on the campus and improve safety for the students. The school's consultants also explained that the house was in very poor condition and could not be feasibly adaptively reused.

for the students. At the time of designation, the Commission suggested that the school submit a financial hardship application formalizing and demonstrating its claims about the infeasibility of reuse and necessity in the public interest. This application is the result of that advice.

Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the City of Philadelphia's historic preservation ordinance expressly prohibits the Historical Commission from approving demolitions of historic buildings in all but two instances. It may approve a demolition only after determining that:

- the demolition is necessary in the public interest; and/or,
- the building cannot be used for any purpose for which it is or may be reasonably adapted.

In the first instance, the ordinance authorizes the Historical Commission to approve demolitions for public policy reasons, when the public interest advanced by the demolition greatly outweighs the public interest in the preservation of the building. In the second instance, the ordinance authorizes the Commission to approve demolitions when the Commission's regulation of the property denies the owner of all economically viable use of it and thereby inflicts a financial hardship on the owner.

The application consists of an affidavit and supporting documents. The application claims that the configuration and condition of the building prohibit a financially feasible reuse of the property. The application also claims that the demolition is necessary in the public interest because redeveloping the property is the only means of meeting certain needs of the school and its students.

The Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations indicate that both the Architectural Committee and Committee on Financial Hardship must review financial hardship applications and offer recommendations to the Historical Commission. The Committee on Financial Hardship's role is clear; it must evaluate the claims of financial hardship and necessity in the public interest and determine whether they have merit. The Architectural Committee's role is less clear, but it typically offers a recommendation regarding the claims made in the application related to architecture, planning, and design. The Architectural Committee reviewed the application on 23 August 2022. The Committee on Financial Hardship reviewed the application on 18 October 2023 and recommended that the Historical Commission continue the review to allow the applicant to submit supplemental materials. At its 10 November 2023 meeting, the Historical Commission continued the review and remanded the application to the Committee on Financial Hardship. Following the remand, the applicants submitted additional information including a memorandum in support of the application and details regarding the campus plan and parking. On November 20, staff members Jon Farnham and Alex Till visited the campus at the invitation of the school. They inspected all aspects of the interior and exterior of the building in question and toured the entire campus. During the visit, they observed nothing to cause them to reconsider the staff recommendation of approval of the application with conditions. The Committee on Financial Hardship reviewed the application and supplements on 28 November 2023 and offered a recommendation of approval.

In 2001, the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf sought and received the Historical Commission's approval to demolish the designated house at 143 W. Coulter Street, which was southeast of the property at 156 W. School House Lane and adjacent to the school's campus. The Historical Commission approved the demolition as necessary in the public interest, to clear the site for the construction of a facility for the school.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the Historical Commission find that issuance of the demolition permit is necessary in the public interest and approve the application for the following reasons and with the following conditions:

- The application demonstrates that adaptively reusing the building in a way that would accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing persons would be prohibitively expensive.
- The application demonstrates that, even if adapted at great expense, the building would not meet any need of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.
- The application demonstrates that incorporating the property into the campus would provide needed space for campus improvements that would increase safety and enhance educational experiences for students.
- While designated as historic, the building is of relatively minor historical and architectural significance. Relative significance can and should be factored into financial hardship and necessary in the public interest decisions.
- The staff advises that the Historical Commission grant final approval of this application but condition it on the review and approval of a campus reorganization plan that includes the relocations of drives, parking lots, and walkways, the location and massing of any new buildings, and the protection of archaeological resources.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: The Architectural Committee voted to recommend that:

- The Architectural Committee acknowledges that the primary program spaces that the school currently lacks and needs to provide such as dining and assembly spaces cannot be accommodated in the building at 156 W. School House Lane.
- The application has not proven that the demolition of the building and repurposing of the property will achieve the school's parking and circulation goals. More information is needed to show that reuse of the property for parking and circulation will increase the safety and efficiency of the campus.
- The application has not proven that the demolition of the building is necessary in the public interest, but that deficit could be remedied with additional information.
- Additional information should be provided to the Committee on Financial Hardship and the Historical Commission.

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL HARDSHIP RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Financial Hardship recommended that the Historical Commission find that the building at 156 W. School House Lane cannot be used for any purpose for which it is or may be reasonably adapted by the non-profit Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, pursuant to Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code and Section 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:08:49

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Farnham presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Attorneys Matt McClure and Meredith Trego, Melissa Draganac-Hawk and Mark D. Apodaca of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD), and architect Greg Smolley represented the application.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Thomas, the chair of the Committee on Financial Hardship, presented an overview of his committee's consideration of the application at two lengthy, in-person meetings. Mr. Thomas stated that the Committee considered the application at great length and heard thorough presentations from the applicant, the community, and

other interested parties. He stated that the Committee considered the campus as a whole and not simply the building in isolation. He stated that the building could be rehabilitated because any building can be rehabilitated if you spend enough money, but this building cannot be reasonably or feasibly rehabilitated. He observed that the Committee concluded that it is very important for the safety and well-being of the students to remove all traffic from the center of the campus, improve the green space, and allow all elements of the campus to function as a unit. Allowing for the demolition of the house will permit the school to reorganize its campus and provide improved services. He emphasized that the school works in the public interest; the school's services are a significant public good. Mr. Thomas also explained that promoting the school's financial health and ensuring that it has the capability to care for its four very significant historic buildings also factored into the Committee's decision to recommend approval of the application. He stated that the demolition is unfortunate, but necessary in the public interest. He noted that the Committee considered the community's offsite parking suggestion and deemed it infeasible. He concluded that it ultimately came down to questions about safety and providing the best educational environment for the students and their families.

- Mr. McClure provided a brief introduction to the application and to the members of his team who would be presenting on behalf of the application. He explained that American Sign Language interpreters are interpreting for his deaf presenters. He noted that the technical and organizational difficulties that the Historical Commission faced this morning to get the meeting started are indicative of the communication difficulties that deaf people face every day. He noted that, while remote meetings may be easier for most people, they are not easy for deaf people. The school has been located at this campus since the 1980s but has existed for about 200 years. It is a national leader in deaf education. The school accepts children without regard to need, to their financial circumstances. The deaf children on the campus range from birth up to age 22. The school has an early childhood education center and a kindergarten through 12th grade program. It also has a transition program to help students from high school to jobs or to college. When the school moved to School House Lane in the early 1980s, it did not have a high school. It now has a high school, so it has grown since it moved to this location. Mr. McClure described demographics of the students who attend the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. He reported that 80% of the students live below the poverty level. About 80% of the students are persons of color, and about 40% of them have a second disability beyond deafness, which is known as deaf plus. There is a significant educational gap between hearing and deaf students. Over 40% of deaf adults are out of the labor market. They do not have jobs. About 90% of young deaf children have parents who hear. Parents of deaf children generally do not know sign language when their children are born. It is critical to be able to get those parents on campus so that they can learn how to communicate with their deaf children, and that means parking and drive aisles. Providing convenient access to campus leads to better educational outcomes. The parents must be able to get to the campus to learn sign language and communicate with their children. Mr. McClure stated that the School for the Deaf is a non-profit institution whose mission and purpose is permanently embedded in the public interest. The particular physical plant needs of an educational institution for the hearing impaired are directly tied to pedagogical needs, and they are directly tied to creating a safe environment for deaf children and their parents. A campus that works for a hearing population may not work for deaf education. Mr. McClure asserted that the subject building stands in the way of enabling the physical connection between the upper and lower school buildings and that physical

connection is tied directly to the pedagogical needs of the school for deaf students. The campus has significant internal traffic circulation problems that must be corrected to make the campus safe. Internal traffic drive aisles, parking areas, and truck loading zones currently separate the academic buildings and spread throughout the campus. It is impossible for the students to traverse the campus as currently set up without crossing these drive aisles. Correcting these circulation problems is especially critical for the safety of deaf children. Mr. McClure added that, given that the school campus includes several important historic buildings, the campus has very little flexibility. He noted that the house at 156 W. School House Lane was last used as a group home for teenagers with addiction and was not properly maintained for decades. He noted that anyone claiming the house has been used continuously until very recently as a typical dwelling is being disingenuous. No one at this meeting would want their child living in this building in its condition for the last couple of decades. It was in deplorable condition when the school purchased it. Mr. McClure elaborated that the building is in very poor condition. It has suffered from extensive interior and exterior water damage and has possible structural damage. It is not going to collapse anytime soon, Mr. McClure claimed, but it would take an incredible amount of money to repair it, as the Historical Commission's staff corroborated. He suggested that the Historical Commission review the staff's very reasoned recommendation, which notes that this building is relatively insignificant historically and architecturally. It certainly is insignificant when compared to the other historic buildings on the campus. Mr. McClure informed the Commissioners that the grounds for the demolition are based in the preservation ordinance. He noted that financial hardship applications from non-profits are governed by Rule 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. He added that the demolition is necessary in the public interest and required for reasonable accommodation under ADA. Regarding Rule 10, the Historical Commission has recognized that there is a different hardship standard that applies to non-profit organizations. Specifically, a non-profit need not be forced to attempt to sell or lease a building on its campus to a third property. The non-profit need not explore uses beyond the uses of that institution, for example residential uses for something that has nothing to do with the School for the Deaf. He stated that his assertion has been confirmed by the Commonwealth Court in the Woodland Terrace case cited in the application. Mr. McClure pointed out that Rule 10.2 makes clear that the question is not whether the building can be reasonably reused for any purpose by any person, but whether the non-profit institution itself can make reasonable reuse of the building for its purposes. Mr. McClure explained that the Historical Commission has recognized this standard in the demolition of two buildings on Temple Episcopal Hospital's campus. He added that there was no new development plan in that case. They were two buildings that were in poor condition and for which the hospital had no use. He added that the application was not opposed by the Preservation Alliance. He then discussed the demolition of the former Samuel Sloan building at 40th and Pine Streets, the Woodland Terrace case. That property was not part of the actual college campus of the University of Pennsylvania, but was owned by the University of Pennsylvania, and in that case the University was not forced to either sell it or to commit it to a use other than a university-related use. Mr. McClure then stated that this Historical Commission previously found that the demolition of a residential structure at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf was necessary in the public interest to build the Early Childhood Education Center. Regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) claim, the ADA requires a reasonable accommodation to prevent discrimination, in this case against deaf people. The failure to make reasonable

changes to laws and regulations to overcome discrimination is against the law. This is a reasonable request, given the relative insignificance of this building compared to the overarching needs of the school. Our request is not at odds with the preservation ordinance, Mr. McClure concluded.

- Mr. Smolley, PSD's architect, stated that he has been practicing architecture since 1983 in and around New England and across the country, primarily focusing on educational master planning and design. He reported that he has worked with many historic buildings, and on many campuses, including several for the deaf and one for the deaf and blind. He showed plans and photographs of the campus and discussed the current campus configuration. He pointed out the historic Germantown Academy buildings. He used images to show how the traffic, circulation, and parking bifurcates the campus, separating the main campus and the Early Childhood Center from each other and the fields and playgrounds. He stated that there is no way for a student or staff member to move from any one of the main buildings to any other part of the campus, including the field or Early Childhood Center, without crossing an active roadway. He noted that the school does a great job with its historic buildings, but they do put a strain on the school. Mr. Smolley showed interior plans for buildings on the campus and explained how the school uses them. He noted that they would like to continue the green space along School House Lane by removing the parking in front of the gymnasium. He explained that they polled the school community to determine what users considered to be missing from the campus. They responded that they wanted an auditorium, a maker space, and a community garden. He noted that they also responded that they wanted deaf-friendly spaces. When asked for one word to describe what the campus needed most, users indicated that they wanted a gathering space and a cafeteria. Mr. Smolley described how deaf people use spaces and how they generally need larger spaces inside and outside because they primarily use sight to communicate. They need clear lines of sight. He showed several slides to elaborate on designing for deaf people. He discussed acoustics, texture transitions, and other factors in deaf design. He discussed movable furniture and night lighting. He discussed safety and interactions of deaf people with traffic. He stated that three principles emerged from their campus master planning. First, they concluded that they need to reconfigure the traffic lanes and parking for safety. Second, they need to relocate the security office so that security officers can monitor traffic arriving onto and leaving from the campus. Third, they sought to improve the sports facilities. He stated that sports are great tools for growth. They provide ways for students to learn how to be part of a community, to learn social, personal, and self-control skills, and teamwork. He discussed eight-on-eight soccer, the playgrounds, and the running track. He explained that a better connection between the main campus and Early Childhood Center is critical. Mr. Smolley stated that the current cafeteria is insufficient. He explained that dining for the entire student body is a way for the youngest kids to learn how to interact by watching older peers. Students pick up language and interaction skills in informal environments. The school also lacks a theater arts and assembly space. He explained how existing spaces on campus provide adequate classroom facilities, but insufficient dining and assembly spaces. Mr. Smolley displayed interior plans for the building at 156 W. School House Lane and explained why the needed spaces could not be located in that building. Mr. Smolley then detailed the flaws in the building at 156 W. School House Lane, pointed out water infiltration, structural problems, and general deterioration. He reported that they commissioned the McBrick Building Group to develop an estimate for rehabilitating the building at 156 W. School House Lane for institutional use with prevailing-wage labor. He stated that it would cost \$3.2 million

to make the fully accessible with an elevator, emergency alert system, sprinkler systems, and exterior and interior renovations. He stated that the renovation project would make the building safe and accessible, but it would not provide any spaces needed by the school. He concluded that the extensive cost of rehabilitating it and preserving it would create a financial hardship. He stated that the school cannot invest that much money into this building and continue with its mission of serving deaf students. He returned to the three principles shaping the master plan: making the campus safe, increasing sports opportunities, and increase learning and mentoring opportunities. Mr. Smolley discussed the proposed new community life building for the campus that would provide assembly, dining, and theater spaces. He described the configurable spaces in the building and noted that it would provide a 4,600 square foot space, large enough for graduations. Mr. Smolley described the current traffic circulation on campus and pointed out where students and traffic conflict. He stated that there are currently 156 parking spaces across the entire campus. He showed the current and proposed campus plans and explained how removing the traffic from the center of campus improves safety, security, and educational outcomes. He noted that rearranging the campus could lead to the loss of 48 parking spaces. Mr. Smolley discussed the various parking lots and their usage. He explained how many buses access the campus daily, including how many the school owns and stores on campus. He noted that they surveyed people regarding the ways they get to and from campus and how and where those who drive park on and around campus. He discussed how people coming to campus use public transportation. Mr. Smolley presented information on the widths of existing and proposed driveways, turning radii, and fire lanes. He noted that the distance between the gymnasium and house at 156 W. School House Lane with its porte-cochere projecting toward the gymnasium restricted the possibilities for adequate ingress, egress, and fire lanes. He discussed the need for adequate emergency egress sidewalks and for a fire lane next to the gymnasium where an ambulance or other emergency response vehicle could park without interfering with bus traffic going in and out. He explained that, if they retained the house as they reorganized the campus, they would lose 19 parking spaces from the current number of spaces, which is untenable. With the removal of the house at 156 W. School House Lane, they would gain 17 parking spaces, rather than lose 19. Mr. Smolley concluded that removing the house “gets us all of the objectives of the master plan, and it completes the green space along W. School House Lane, and really does start to knit the campus together, make it feel and act as a campus for a learning community from infant all the way up to age 22.”

- Mr. McClure emphasized that the Historical Commission has approved similar applications like the one for 100 E. Lehigh Avenue, the Episcopal Hospital. In that case, the buildings were in poor condition, could not be used by the non-profit hospital, no new construction was proposed, and the Preservation Alliance did not oppose the application. He also pointed to the 40th and Pine Street application, which was submitted by the University of Pennsylvania, a non-profit. In that case, the University showed that it could not reuse the building. He pointed to the Bair Funeral Home case on the 1900-block of Sansom Street and noted that, although it was a for-profit venture, the applicant was not required to market the building for sale. He highlighted that the Preservation Alliance did not oppose that application. He also noted the Penn Fruit hardship case, an application from a for-profit owner in which the building was not marketed for sale and which the Preservation Alliance did not oppose. Mr. McClure then discussed the 143 W. Coulter Street application, in which the Historical Commission approved the demolition of a house adjacent to the

- Pennsylvania School for the Deaf campus, the campus in question, as necessary in the public interest to allow PSD to construct an Early Childhood Center. He discussed the Curtis Institute and Episcopal Cathedral cases. He also discussed the demolition of the historic fire station on Race Street for the expansion of the convention center. He concluded that there is significant precedent for demolition as necessary in the public interest. He asserted that the public interest in the education of deaf students far exceeds the public interest in the relatively insignificant house.
- Ms. Draganac-Hawk, the head of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, addressed the Historical Commission. She thanked the Committee on Financial Hardship for holding two in-person meetings and explained how beneficial it was for her, as a deaf person, to meet in person. She stated that she wanted to put the school's needs into greater perspective and show that this is not simply about the building's demolition. First, she discussed the students at PSD. She stated that 71% of the students are from Philadelphia. She explained that 45% of the students are African American or black; 28% are Hispanic or Latino; and 20% are Asian. In other words, about 80% of the students are BIPOC. She noted that 40% of the students are deaf plus, meaning that they are deaf and have at least one other disability. Some students are autistic. Some students are deaf and blind, and some students have learning disabilities. Some students have additional physical challenges. Ms. Draganac-Hawk reported that 80% of the students are eligible for a free lunch, which indicates that their families face socio-economic issues. She added that 93% of the students are learning American Sign Language, mostly at school. She explained that, typically, when a child is born, the parents do not know sign language and must learn it as their child learns it. She stated that the staff of the school uses sign language. Of the entire staff, there are only three or four maintenance people who do not use sign language. She observed that communication access is very important to the students from the moment they arrive on campus until they leave the campus at the end of the school day. Ms. Draganac-Hawk then spoke about the campus and the safety problems created by the traffic circulation on campus. She noted that the dangers are the greatest for the younger children, who must cross traffic to move from the early Childhood Center to the main buildings on campus. Owing to the dangers of moving across campus, the younger children miss out on opportunities like visiting the library and interacting with older students, which is essential for growth. She reported that many students take school buses to campus and some live as far as an hour away. The many buses create congestion and often must wait to get on and off the campus. Widening the drive lanes onto campus is essential. Drivers are often unfamiliar with the campus and are confused by the current circulation routes. The circulation must be improved for safety and efficiency reasons. Ms. Draganac-Hawk recounted a recent incident when an intruder came onto campus, forcing a lockdown. She stated that there was confusion about how and where to meet the first responders. The traffic circulation and security office location must be improved. Ms. Draganac-Hawk explained that it is critical to think of the campus plan as not simply a plan for one new building, but as a plan the entire campus as a whole. She stated that everyone needs to look at the campus plan from the perspective of the students' needs. The new building will provide an opportunity for the younger students to see older students and to see adults using their language. It will provide opportunities to see their language modeled, to have more rich language opportunities during mealtimes, during social opportunities, where they can relax and engage, seeing one another and using American Sign Language with older students and older peers. The new building will provide more opportunities for language development and learning. This new building will also provide opportunities for our students' families. The

students' families face many challenges while learning sign language. Parents are already nervous about learning a new language to engage with their children, and now they must struggle to find parking on the street, or face other obstacles, which often result in them giving up on the opportunities. In the end, fewer parents learn sign language on campus than should. Ms. Draganac-Hawk stated that the school cannot afford to rehabilitate the house at 156 W. School House Lane and, even if it could, would have no use for it when it was rehabilitated. Ms. Draganac-Hawk objected to the neighbors' use of a song to oppose the reorganization of the campus. She noted that they had quipped that the school wanted to "pave paradise and put up a parking lot." She asserted that the lyrics from a song that she could not hear were used intentionally to prevent her, as a deaf person, from "engaging in that conversation." She stated that she was not familiar with that musical phrase. Ms. Draganac-Hawk reported that Irwin Trauss, Paul Steinke, and Janice Woodcock trespassed on campus on 15 September 2023. She recounted that when they were outside the gymnasium, they were taking photographs through the windows and "causing students to feel fearful." She asked security to direct them to leave the campus. She stated that she was "very taken aback by that behavior." In conclusion, she stated that the campus must be reorganized for the safety, security, and education of the students and their families.

- Mr. Apodaca introduced himself and stated that he is the chief financial officer for the New Mexico School for the Deaf and the chair of the board of directors at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. He stated that he has been in the field of finance for more than 45 years. He explained that PSD is operating at a deficit. He stated that the safety of the students is a priority for him. He stated that his school in New Mexico is one of the safest campuses for the deaf in America. He lamented that PSD is not as safe. He stated that he is working on finding the resources to ensure that the PSD students are safe and successful. He noted that he was deprived of basic services as a child, and he never wants PSD students to be deprived like he was. He stated that PSD does not have the resources to rehabilitate 156 W. School House Lane. The little funding the school has must go to support the students.
- Mr. McClure stated that the school does not have a use for the house but does have a use for the land. He stated that rehabilitating the house will cost a lot of money and will not result in a building that the school can use. He asserted that the neighbors have asked the school to cede control of the property to a third party. He stated that, even if they did let someone else develop the property, the port-cochere would need to be removed to create the ingress, egress, and fire lanes. If the port-cochere was removed for the driveway, a new entrance would need to be created for the house. He stated that historic preservation would be turned on its head. Mr. McClure commented on the designation of the property. When the school objected to the designation at that time, neighbors and preservation advocates told the school that it could seek a remedy through the financial hardship process and the necessary in the public interest process. Now those same neighbors and preservation advocates are claiming that the financial hardship process and the necessary in the public interest process are not available to the school because the property was just designated, and the school knew it was being considered for designation when it bought it. He noted that the Historical Commission's attorney has corrected that false claim. Mr. McClure also contended that personal interest is being conflated with public interest. He stated that the school has had to endure inappropriate and derogatory comments like the assertion that deafness is going to go away one day because of medical advances, which is deeply offensive to people who are deaf. Those statements were made in emails and in testimony, but also in person at a Committee on Financial

Hardship meeting. He stated that neighbors have sent complaints to the Department of Licenses and Inspections to harass the school. He stated that the school has been discriminated against and that discrimination needs not to be blatant to be discrimination. The law requires reasonable accommodations to prevent discrimination. It means that the government needs to take steps to allow an equal playing field and that a failure to take that step is discrimination. Mr. McClure concluded that it is an absolute blessing to have PSD in Philadelphia. It is the embodiment of public interest and has provided 200 years of educational excellence, learning with the latest pedagogical innovations to help these students in an incredibly challenged environment. The campus is constrained by historic buildings and streets. There is not much space to grow. It did not have a high school when it moved to the site, but now it does. Regarding the objectors, he stated that people sometimes conflate their personal interests with the public interest. The view from a private house is not the public view.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Neil Sklaroff stated that he represents the Penn Knox Neighborhood Association and the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. He applauded the great work of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD) and acknowledged the importance that the school has to the region. Mr. Sklaroff provided some background. He noted that PSD acquired the campus in 1983. It had been the home of Germantown Academy. The campus did not include 156 W. School House Lane. In January 2019, in response to a private attempt to redevelop 156 W. School House Lane, the Penn Knox Neighborhood Association nominated the property for historic designation. On 12 July 2019, PSD purchased the property with the understanding that it had been nominated. On 12 March 2021, the Historical Commission designated the property. At the heart of the school's application to demolish the house is an assertion that the demolition is necessary to ensure student safety by moving vehicular traffic away from the pedestrian student traffic and eliminating pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. Mr. Sklaroff stated that his clients applaud the great work of the school and agree that such conflicts should be avoided. However, they do not agree that the house needs to be demolished to accomplish the goals. He noted that the Committee on Financial Hardship recommended in favor of the application but seemed to justify its recommendation on public interest grounds, not financial hardship grounds. When the Committee voted, it specifically voted on the financial hardship question and not the necessary in the public interest question. He observed that the Committee appears to have accepted the applicant's interpretation of a financial hardship test for a non-profit entity, Section 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. He stated that that rule relates to the economics of a building in the middle of a campus, but this site is on the edge of the campus and not part of the original campus. Mr. Sklaroff noted that the Historical Commission protects historic resources from demolition unless the owner can show that the sale of the property is impractical, that commercial rental cannot provide a reasonable rate of return, and that other potential uses of the property are foreclosed. There are a couple of ways that an applicant can accomplish that test. The non-profit is not compelled to sell the property. The applicant can engage an expert to review the facts and determine whether there is any use for the property that has a reasonable economic return and show whether it would be fruitless to put it on the market. Several years ago, the Historical Commission had a practice of engaging a consultant to review financial hardship applications and provide a recommendation, but that has not happened in this case. Mr. Sklaroff continued, explaining that an owner can expose the property

to the real estate market to determine whether the market can find a use for the property, but that was not done in this case. He asserted that an owner could do what the University of Pennsylvania did in the Woodlands Terrace case, which is cited by the applicant as precedent. In that case, the University argued, and the courts agreed, that the owner made extensive efforts over a 10-year period to redevelop the property through a long-term lease with no restriction on the use of the property. The University did so without success, and the court decided that that was sufficient. Mr. Sklaroff contended that PSD must do something more than just to say it does not have \$3.5 million to rehabilitate the building. Mr. Sklaroff claimed that the house seems to be a perfect place to move the school's security office. He noted that the rear part of the lot has great value for the school. He asserted that the school did not expose the property to the market and therefore there can be no showing of financial hardship. He contended that the Committee on Financial Hardship did not offer a recommendation on the necessary in the public interest portion of the application. He stated that City Council has adopted as a policy in the city that preservation is a public interest. Preservation and protection of public resources are public necessities important to traditions and economic values. The City encourages the restoration of buildings that contribute to the character of the community. Mr. Sklaroff claimed that the school can remove the parking from the central part of the campus and build the new building without demolishing the house. He questioned the school's numbers regarding parking spaces and buses. He suggested making the parking spaces slightly smaller. He concluded that the house is more important than parking. Mr. Sklaroff discussed the reasonable accommodation claim. He noted that the City has a form that must be completed and submitted to obtain a reasonable accommodation. He asked if the applicant has completed the form. He observed that the burden is on the applicant to show that the requested accommodation is reasonable and necessary to afford handicapped persons an equal opportunity to use and enjoy education. He contended that the applicant had not done that. Mr. Sklaroff completed his presentation and called Irwin Trauss as his first witness.

- o Mr. Thomas stopped Mr. Sklaroff and stated that he, as chair, is running the meeting and will call upon the speakers. He noted that it is a public meeting, not a trial, and stated that the public may comment on applications. He observed that he granted Mr. Sklaroff extra time to comment because he represents numerous people but indicated that he will be imposing time limits on public comment going forward.
- Irwin Trauss stated that he agrees with the principal objectives of the school and applauds the master plan. He stated that he is not disputing the benefits of the master plan or the need for additional parking. He claimed that creating additional parking is not one of the three principal objectives articulated in the master plan but reconfiguring the parking and vehicular travel lanes is. The house can be saved with the reduction of 19 parking spaces. He claimed that other parking spaces can be retained and also added elsewhere. He rejected any claims that the neighborhood is dangerous. He concluded that the way Mr. McClure has presented this case has exacerbated tensions between the school and the neighbors.
 - o Mr. Thomas asked Mr. Trauss to address his comments to the application and not add to the rancor between the applicants and opponents.
- Paul Steinke of the Preservation Alliance reminded the Historical Commission that it designated the property at 156 W. School House Lane in 2021 by a vote of 10 to 2. He claimed that it is time for the Historical Commission to stand by that vote and send a message to non-profits that they cannot demolish historic buildings. He stated

- that the school will continue operating and it can find a new use for the house if the Historical Commission denies the application. He suggested that the school could use the house for its security office or find a buyer or a tenant to fix it up and return it to residential use. Mr. Steinke concluded that this is the Historical Commission's opportunity to show Philadelphia what being the principal steward of Philadelphia's historic resources really means. He asked the Historical Commission to vote to uphold the designation by declining to approve this application. Approving the application would risk erasing this beautiful and historic structure forever.
- Allison Weiss of SoLo Germantown Civic Association tried to speak but had technical difficulties.
 - Lynn Robinson, a neighbor, stated that she is a retired schoolteacher. She suggested relocating the bus parking elsewhere. Ms. Robinson then suggested that the school construct underground parking. She also suggested that the house could be successfully renovated by removing interior partitions.
 - o Mr. Thomas explained that he is an architect with 45 years of experience. He opined that underground parking as well as other solutions like parking stackers would be financially infeasible at this site. He noted that underground parking is incredibly expensive to build.
 - Doug Mooney of the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum stated that both the school's main campus and the property in question potentially contain significant archaeological resources associated with the American Revolution, particularly the Battle of Germantown. He asked how the Historical Commission plans on addressing potential impacts to these resources. He stated that a demolition would have the potential to impact archaeological resources.
 - o Mr. Thomas responded that the Historical Commission would ensure that archaeological resources are protected. If this application is approved, the Historical Commission and staff will undertake additional reviews regarding the demolition, campus reorganization, and new construction. There will be ample opportunities before any permits are issued to protect archaeological resources. Today's review is intended to determine whether there is a basis for the demolition under the financial hardship and public interest provisions or the reasonable accommodation claim.
 - Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society stated that he opposed the demolition and suggested that the various parties seek a compromise, like removing the port-cochere to create a wider driveway but retaining the remainder of the house. He objected to the assertion that Germantown is a dangerous neighborhood. He observed that the house could be used as a security office or as a residence. He noted that there are many non-profits in the neighborhood and, if they all demolished buildings, it would have a great impact on the area.
 - Mary South, a neighbor, stated that the public interest in the preservation of the house is more important than the public interest in the improvement of the campus.
 - Steven Peitzman stated that School House Lane is an old and significant street that was lined with estates owned by rich and important people. He noted that he has nominated properties on School House Lane. He stated that he is opposed to the proposed demolition.
 - Amy Lambert stated that she is a neighbor and enjoys the sense of community in the area. She stated that Germantown Friends School is not integrated into the neighborhood but is fenced off. She opposed the demolition.

- Greg Paulmier stated that he has lived in the neighborhood for 65 years. He opposed the demolition and asked if the school would consider moving all vehicles, especially the buses, off the campus.
 - o Mr. Thomas thanked him for his comments.
 - o Mr. Paulmier demanded an answer to his question about moving the vehicles off the campus.
 - o Mr. Thomas stated that the Historical Commission accepts public comment on applications but does not answer questions posed by members of the public.
- Jim Duffin introduced himself and stated that he agreed with earlier speakers. He contended that the Historical Commission should not take the significance of the building in question into account when reviewing a financial hardship application. Either something is listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, or it is not. If the Historical Commission considered significance, it would end up “going down the rabbit hole” and “having lots and lots of experts speak on stuff.”
- Allison Weiss of SoLo Germantown Civic Association stated that she sent a letter of opposition to this application to the Historical Commission. She objected to the demolitions of the buildings at 5139 Wayne Avenue and 113-29 Berkley Street. She stated that the property at 156 W. School House Lane is zoned RSA-1, and the campus reorganization will require zoning variances. She asked the Historical Commission to wait to make its decision.
- Jay Farrell stated that he agreed with Mr. Duffin. He asserted that, if there is any financial hardship in this case, it was self-inflicted by PSD because the property was nominated at the time PSD purchased it. He contended that the Historical Commission should lean more heavily toward protection of the historic resource when reviewing demolition applications that claim necessary in the public interest. PSD's ideation of the perfect should not be the enemy of the public good. He stated that he has no doubt that PSD will survive and thrive without demolishing the house, and that it will manage to make improvements to its campus without the demolition. He concluded that the school is not in a fight for its survival, even if it likes to pretend that it is. He asked the Historical Commission to deny the application.
- Deneene Brockington, chair of the Penn Knox Neighborhood Association, stated that her organization opposes the application. She stated that she hopes that the school gets what it needs to become the best school possible. She stated that the school can reorganize its campus and retain the house. The greatest breakthroughs in thinking and innovation happen out of our comfort zone. It bubbles up when opposing ideas merge. Innovation grows in environments where opposites commingle. She asked the Historical Commission to hold off deciding about the demolition of this building until ideas have commingled and we have exhausted the possibilities to see whether or not that this house can stand, and the school can get what it needs.
- Sierra M. Bretz, the executive director of East Mount Airy Neighbors, was recognized to speak but experienced technical difficulties and was unable to address the Historical Commission.
- Yvonne Haskins stated that this case raises a moral issue. She asked if the applicant had presented the appropriate information to the Historical Commission. She stated that the claim that it would cost \$500 per square foot to renovate the building is not accurate. She stated that it should be very hard for someone to get the right to demolish a building like this house. She stated that the Historical Commission has a moral responsibility.

- Mr. Thomas stated that two additional speakers have their hands raised, Suzanne Ponsen and Constance Winters. He stated that the public comment would after they had spoken.
- Suzanne Ponsen of West Central Germantown Neighbors stated that she would like to express her support for the local RCO, the Penn Knox Neighborhood Association, and encourage the Historical Commission to reconsider the demolition.
- Constance Winters stated that she would like to speak about the potential financial loss to the City if this house becomes part of the 40% of properties in Germantown that do not pay real estate taxes. She claimed that the middle class and homeowners pay the real estate taxes. She asserted that this building could be developed as apartments or condominiums that would add \$12,000 annually in real estate tax to the City coffers. She claimed that the tax burden is growing for all the property owners in Germantown. The Historical Commission should make the financially responsible decision and deny this application so that the property can generate real estate taxes.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Thomas asked his fellow Commissioners to offer their opinions on the application.
- Mr. McCoubrey noted that he is a member of the Committee on Financial Hardship, which held two very lengthy reviews of this application. He stated that the evidence clearly shows that the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf has no use for this building no matter how much money it spent on its rehabilitation. He stated that the building will not help the school achieve its mission. He noted that the school already maintains several very important historic buildings that place a heavy burden on the school. He acknowledged that removing vehicular traffic from the center of the campus would be a great benefit to the school. Regarding the potential renovation of the house, Mr. McCoubrey observed that it would be very expensive for the school to bring it up to the standards for institutional use and, if it did, it would be left with marginally useful space at best. Mr. McCoubrey stated that any reuse of the building would require a transfer of ownership that would cause the school to suffer financially. He stated that there are other major obstacles to reusing the property as a residence. The port-cochere would need to be removed, the entrance would need to be relocated, and there would be no vehicular access to the house. He stated that it would be unacceptable to allow a resident of the house to use the school driveway, mixing the school and private traffic. He also noted that the school traffic would be entering and exiting the campus within feet of the house. He stated that the Committee unanimously concluded that the school would suffer a financial hardship if it were forced to retain the house. He stated that the Committee did not reach a conclusion on the public interest aspect of the case because it decided that that topic was best addressed by the full Historical Commission. He reported that the Committee on Financial Hardship narrowed its vision and looked solely at the financial aspects of the application but noted that he personally believes that financial hardship and public interest cases are interwoven. He reported that the Committee did consider the school's financial situation. He observed that, like many institutions like this, PSD does struggle to maintain financial health. He stated that PSD does do an excellent job in maintaining its other historic buildings. Mr. McCoubrey stated that, when comparing the campus reorganization plans with and without the retention of the house in question, one cannot simply compare the number of parking spaces with and without the house. If the building is retained, the

school must do something with the house. It is clear that the school has no use for it and that it would be very expensive to rehabilitate. To make it even marginally, partially useful would be extreme or extensive. Mr. McCoubrey then discussed the parking on the main campus, which would be able to be increased by 36% if the building were demolished. He asserted that that is significant increase in the number of cars that can be accommodated on the campus. He stated that remote parking is not feasible, given the special needs of the population. He concluded that the demolition of the house is necessary to avert a financial hardship and is necessary in the public interest.

- Mr. Thomas stated that it is critical to the school to provide safe and convenient access to its facilities. He stated that he is not casting aspersions on Germantown by asserting that remote parking is not feasible. He would make the same claim about any such school regardless of its location. He stated that he did not join the Historical Commission to approve the demolition of historic buildings, but there are some rare instances when demolition is justified to support a school that works in the public interest and already maintains much more significant historic buildings. He stated that the Historical Commission is looking at the entire campus, not just one building.
- Mr. Mattioni suggested that the Historical Commission require the school to fully document the building and develop a plan to protect archaeological resources before the building is demolished.
- Mr. Thomas stated that the Historical Commission should review the campus reorganization plans before any demolition occurs.
- Ms. Cooperman agreed with Messrs. Thomas and Mattioni and stated that there should be archaeological monitoring before any substantial subsurface disturbance.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is a non-profit organization working in the public interest and financial hardship applications from such organizations may be reviewed pursuant to Section or Rule 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations.
- The application demonstrates that adaptively reusing the building in a way that would accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing persons would be prohibitively expensive.
- The application demonstrates that, even if adapted at great expense, the building would not meet any need of the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf.
- The application demonstrates that incorporating the property without the house into the campus would provide needed space for campus improvements that would increase safety and enhance educational experiences for students.
- While designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, the house at 156 W. School House Lane is much less historically significant than the former Germantown Academy buildings that the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is already preserving.
- Any final approval of this application should be conditioned on the HABS-level documentation of the structure, the Historical Commission's review and approval of a campus reorganization plan that protects archaeological resources, and the issuance of a zoning permit for the campus reorganization plan.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- The application demonstrates that the issuance of the building permit for the demolition of the building at 156 W. School House Lane is necessary in the public

interest, pursuant to Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code and Section 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. The public interest in the increased safety and enhanced educational experiences of the students at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf achieved with the demolition of the house and implementation of campus improvements greatly exceeds the public interest in the preservation of relatively insignificant house.

- The application demonstrates that the building at 156 W. School House Lane cannot be used for any purpose for which it is or may be reasonably adapted, pursuant to Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code and Section 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. The cost of rehabilitating the building for use by the school is unreasonably high and the school has no use for the rehabilitated building. The configuration of the site and building and the overwhelming public interest in the implementation of campus improvements preclude the reasonable adaptation of the building by a third party.
- Prior to demolition, the building should be documented to HABS standards to create a permanent record of the structure.
- To ensure that the building is not demolished prematurely, the Historical Commission should not confirm its approval of the demolition permit application to the Department of Licenses and Inspections until a campus reorganization plan with protection of archaeological resources is approved by the Historical Commission and the zoning permit for the campus reorganization plan is obtained.

ACTION: Mr. Lech moved to approve the application, provided the demolition permit for the house is not issued until HABS-level documentation of the structure is provided to the Historical Commission; a campus reorganization plan with protection of archaeological resources is approved by the Historical Commission, and the zoning permit for the campus reorganization plan is obtained; with the staff to review details; pursuant to Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code and Section 10 of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. Mr. Mattioni seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 11 to 0.

ITEM: 156 W SCHOOL HOUSE LN					
MOTION: Approve application with conditions					
MOVED BY: Lech					
SECONDED BY: Mattioni					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	11				1

REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE, 21 NOVEMBER 2023

AGENDA

ADDRESS: 502 WOOD ST

Proposal: Construct six-story multi-unit building

Review Requested: Review and Comment

Owner: TierView Development

Applicant: Scott Shiffert, Canno Design

History: Vacant lot

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Old City Historic District, Non-contributing, 12/12/2003

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This Review-and-Comment application proposes to construct a six-story multi-family apartment building on several vacant, undeveloped parcels within the Old City Historic District. The lots at 313, 315 and 317 N. Randolph Street; 504-08 Wood Street; and 312, 314, 316 and 318 N. 5th Street will be consolidated as 502 Wood Street.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Construct six-story building.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new works shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - o The overall design of the building relates to the Old City Historic District through its materials, massing, and proportions.
 - o Although the use of brick on the street facing sides of the building is compatible with the historic district, the extent of cement board siding south elevation and fencing should be revisited.
 - o The north elevation with the tan brick appears flat and lacks articulation. Adding detail to the cornice, windows, and doorways would increase compatibility with the Old City Historic District.
- *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a manner such that, if removed in the future, the essential for and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - o As the lots are currently vacant, there would be no adverse impact on the surrounding buildings or on the historic district if this property were to be removed in the future.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, provided the cement board siding on the south elevation and detailing of the north elevation are reconsidered, pursuant to Standards 9 and 10.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE COMMENT:

The Architectural Committee commented that:

- The brick material proposed for the facades is compatible with the historic district.

- The design of the north elevation should be further explored as the wall plane currently appears flat and monotonous with minimal detailing. The applicant should consider additional masonry detailing, color variation, and window patterning to add more distinction to the north façade.
- The use of clapboard style cementitious siding on the south elevation should be reconsidered as this type of material is not appropriate for a building of this scale. Other materials should be explored such as a cementitious panelized system that is more compatible with larger scale buildings. The siding color should also be revisited as the dark color currently shown draws attention to this area of the building. Using a mix of materials on this elevation would break up the visual scale of the large south elevation wall.
- Elevator and stair overruns should be reduced to code-required height.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 03:31:53

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Mehley presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Architect Scott Shiffert represented the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- The revised application includes updates made in response to the Architectural Committee's feedback. Revisions include brick and windows detailing, the addition of vertical reveals and lighter colored cladding on the south elevation, and reduced heights of the elevator overruns.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- The overall design of the building relates to the Old City Historic District through its materials, massing, and proportions, satisfying Standard 9.
- As the lots are currently vacant, there would be no adverse impact on the surrounding buildings or on the historic district if this building were to be removed in the future, satisfying Standard 10.

ADDRESS: 252 QUINCE ST

Proposal: Construct dormer additions

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Danielle Harvey

Applicant: Jonathan Wallace, AVLV Architecture & Development

History: 1806, William Smith

Individual Designation: 2/28/1961

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Laura DiPasquale, laura.dipasquale@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to alter the gable roof of this circa 1810 rowhouse to create a livable fourth floor. The application originally proposed to install a wide dormer in the front roof slope and remove the rear roof slope to build an addition flush with the rear façade.

The Architectural Committee recommended denial of that application. Following the Architectural Committee meeting, the application was revised to address some of the Committee concerns, by pulling back the front dormer and creating a rear dormer, rather than addition, that leaves one foot of roof on either side and pulls the dormer two feet in from the rear façade. The revised application maintains the roof ridge.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Remove rear slope of roof
- Construct fourth-floor rear addition
- Construct front dormer

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - o The application proposes to remove the majority of the existing gable roof, a character-defining feature of the property, failing to satisfy Standard 9.
- *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - o The application proposes to remove the rear slope of the roof for the installation of a new addition. If removed in the future, the essential form of the property would be altered, failing to satisfy this standard. Some portions of the rear gable should be preserved.
- *Roofs Guideline | Recommended: Designing rooftop additions, elevator or stair towers, decks or terraces, dormers, or skylights when required by a new or continuing use so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining historic features.*
 - o If the front dormer is set back from the front façade and the rear addition is reconceived as a dormer, the dormers could be inconspicuous from the public right-of-way.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, provided the front dormer is set back from the plane of the front façade and the rear addition is redesigned as a dormer that is set in from all sides to allow the original roof rafters and slope to remain visible, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Standards 9, 10 and the Roofs Guideline.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, and the Roofs Guideline.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 03:42:15

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. DiPasquale presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Architect Jonathan Wallace represented the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- The revised application addresses the Architectural Committee's concerns that the rear addition be reconceived as a dormer like the proposed front dormer, that the dormers be pulled in a minimum of 24 inches from the front and rear facades, that they tie into the existing roof ridge and retain roof rafters to either side of the dormers, that the boxiness of the dormers is reduced and flat trim boards used instead of siding on the front, and that the existing chimneys are retained.
- The application is similar to other dormers that the Historical Commission has approved on the block previously.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- The proposed dormers retain the existing roof ridge and slope of the gabled roof and are pulled in from the front and rear facades, limiting removal of historic fabric, satisfying Standard 9.
- If the dormers were removed in the future, the essential form of the gable roof would remain, satisfying Standard 10.
- The dormers are set in from the front and rear facades and the views of the property are narrow, making the dormers inconspicuous from the public right-of-way, satisfying the Roofs Guideline.

ACTION: Mr. McCoubrey moved to approve the revised application, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, and the Roofs Guideline. Ms. Washington seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: 252 QUINCE ST					
MOTION: Approval as revised					
MOVED BY: McCoubrey					
SECONDED BY: Washington					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	11				1

ADDRESS: 625 S DELHI ST

Proposal: Install mural on stucco wall

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: John Del Rossi

Applicant: Phil Asbury, Mural Arts Philadelphia

History: 1847; William & Letitia Still House

Individual Designation: 3/9/2018

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Heather Hendrickson, heather.hendrickson@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to install a mural on the south-facing stucco façade of 625 S. Delhi Street, the historic home of William and Letitia Still and an important surviving station of the Chesapeake-Pennsylvania-New York-Canada network of the eastern Underground Railroad. The proposed mural would be intended to honor William and Letitia Still, famed African American abolitionists and civil rights activists. The application states that the mural could be painted directly onto the stucco south wall of the property, or it could be professionally printed onto 3M banner vinyl that would then be installed using a flexible PVC frame. Currently the stucco façade faces a surface parking lot of an adjacent property and can be seen from Bainbridge Street and much of Palumbo Park. The building at 625 S. Delhi Street was historically designated under Criteria A and J and not for any architectural merit. At some point before designation, the front façade was rebuilt and is not the historic front façade.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Install a mural on the southern stucco façade of 625 S. Delhi Street, either by directly painting it onto the stucco or installing a banner.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
 - o The alteration of the stucco wall with a mural would not destroy the historic character of the property, which is designated under Criteria A and J.
- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - o 625 S. Delhi Street is historically designated for being associated with William and Letitia Still and not necessarily for its architectural merit. The addition of a mural which elevates the story of the Stills would add to the property's significance.
- *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - o If the proposed mural were removed in the future, the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.
- *Section 6.15.a. of PHC Rules & Regulations:*
 - o Murals shall not be placed directly upon historic fabric.
 - o Murals shall not be placed in a manner that obscures historic fabric.

- o *The Philadelphia Historical Commission, its committees, and staff shall not consider a mural's content as part of its review of any application for a building permit, but may consider size, scale, and relationship to the historic context.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, with the suggestion that the mural is painted directly onto the wall with permeable paint, pursuant to Standards 2, 9, 10, and Section 6.15.a. of the Commission's Rules & Regulations.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Denial of the application owing to incompleteness and pursuant to Section 6.15.a. of the Commission's Rules and Regulations regarding murals, but approval of the concept of a mural at this location.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 03:44:40

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Hendrickson presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Mural Arts intern Abigail Hastings represented the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Oscar Beisert, representing the Keeping Society, spoke in support of the mural and urged the applicant to consult with the National Park Service to ensure the mural would not jeopardize the property's ability to obtain National Historic Landmark status.
- Jim Duffin spoke in support of the mural.
- Ralph Morano spoke in support of the mural.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- The effect of the mural could be stronger if the entire wall were used, which would not be possible with the Alumalite approach.
- The Alumalite approach would require many fasteners, resulting in many holes in the party wall, which could encourage water penetration that would compromise the structural integrity of the wall.
- Owing to the jagged nature of the stucco wall, it would be difficult to adhere a parachute cloth to it. A substantial amount of gel would be needed, which would impact permeability.
- The Historical Commission has approved other murals that were painted directly onto surfaces.
- The applicant should consult with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to ensure that a mural would not disqualify the property for National Historic Landmark designation.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- A mural painted directly on the party wall of the building satisfies Standard 9 and Section 6.15.a. of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations regarding murals.

ACTION: Mr. McCoubrey moved to approve the application, provided the mural is applied directly to the wall, pursuant to Standard 9 and Section 6.15.a. of the Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations. Mr. Mattioni seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: 625 S DELHI ST MOTION: Approval, provided the mural is applied directly to the wall MOVED BY: McCoubrey SECONDED BY: Mattioni					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	11				1

ADDRESS: 3627 SPRING GARDEN ST

Proposal: Legalize alterations

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Catherine Gao

Applicant: Catherine Gao

History: 1894; H. E. Flower

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Gardiner Poth Historic District, Contributing, 8/13/2021

Staff Contact: Ted Maust, theodore.maust@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to legalize façade alterations made to the building at 3627 Spring Garden Street between April 2020 and December 2021 without permits or the Historical Commission's approval. These alterations include significant changes to the mansard roof and front shed dormer, replacement of windows and the front door, and removal of decorative details. The Department of Licenses and Inspections issued a violation for the unpermitted and unapproved alterations at the Historical Commission's request in September 2023.

Photographs from April 2020 show the property with its distinctive front roof elements intact, as well as the windows and doors that were present at time of the notice of proposed designation. Photographs from November of that year, however, show the front roof elements rebuilt in a different shape and the top floor windows along with molding running beneath them removed. Later images, from December 2021, show the windows and front door replaced. Although other work on the property was properly permitted and reviewed by the Historical Commission's staff in February and March of 2020, none of these alterations to the front façade was permitted.

The property owner has indicated the willingness to correct the work to the roof but requests leniency to use more inexpensive materials. Ms. Gao has also agreed to replace the front door with something more like the previously existing door and has submitted a photo of the neighboring door at 3625 Spring Garden Street as a model.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Legalize exterior façade alterations completed without (or exceeding) permits including the rebuilding and resurfacing of front roof segments and replacement of doors and windows.
- Rebuild roof to emulate previous shape as possible while using more affordable materials such as shingles rather than tiles.
- Replace the front door with a more appropriate door.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
 - o The rebuilding of the front roof with a different shape and different materials neither preserves the material nor the style of the historic structure.
 - o The removal of molding below the replaced windows removes a distinctive feature of the façade.
- *Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
 - o The new windows and door do not match the old in appearance or materials.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 6.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 6.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 04:05:10

PRESENTERS:

- Mr. Maust presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Property owner Catherine Gao had to leave the Zoom meeting before the matter came up for discussion. At her request, Mr. Maust read a statement from Ms. Gao to the Historical Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- While material substitutions, including asphalt roof shingles in place of tile roofing, are approvable, details such as those on the cornice should be reconstructed to replicate the historic appearance.
- The restoration work could occur over a period of time to allow the property owner to rent out the property and generate income to support the cost of the required work.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- The proposed simplification of the cornice does not meet Standards 2 or 6.

ACTION: Mr. McCoubrey moved to deny the application, pursuant to Standards 2 and 6, with the understanding that the Historical Commission's staff would work with the property owner to establish a schedule for restoration, and that the Historical Commission would request that the Department of Licenses and Inspections assist the owner in obtaining a rental license. Ms. Washington seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: 3627 SPRING GARDEN ST					
MOTION: Denial					
MOVED BY: McCoubrey					
SECONDED BY: Washington					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	11				

ADDRESS: 415-17 AND 419 S 15TH ST

Proposal: Construct rooftop and rear additions

Review Requested: In Concept

Owner: Turning Points for Children/Pennsylvania Society to Protect Children from Cruelty

Applicant: Evan Litvin, Lo Design

History: 1860 to 1870

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, Contributing, 2/8/1995

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This in-concept review proposes constructing multiple rooftop additions and a four-story rear connector building at 415-17 and 419 S. 15th Street. Both properties are contributing historic resources in the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District. The building at 415-17 S. 15th Street was constructed circa 1860 as a three-story building with two-story wings on each side and stables at the rear. The mansard roof was added between 1880 and 1900. The building at 419 S. 15th Street was constructed circa 1870 as a four-story rowhouse.

By 1922, the building at 415-17 S. 15th Street was converted from a private home to a group home by the Pennsylvania Society to Protect Children from Cruelty. In recent years, the properties were connected on the interior, and until recently provided support services for

children. During the twentieth century, multiple changes and additions have occurred at the rears of the buildings and properties.

The rears of both properties are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way. There are two small non-accessible alleyways and rear yards along Lombard Street, but these areas offer limited visibility to the back of both properties.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Construct rooftop additions and four-story rear connector building

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new works shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - o The proposed size and massing of the four-story connector at the rear of the properties meets Standard 9. The majority of the connector building will not be visible from the public right-of-way.
 - o The proposed size and massing of the fourth-floor addition at the rear of 419 S. 15th Street meets Standard 9. This addition will not be visible from the public right-of-way.
 - o The proposed size and massing of the fourth-floor addition on 415-17 S. 15th Street at the corner of S. 15th Street and Waverly Street does not meet Standard 9. The addition will be visible from the public right-of-way and remove a portion of the mansard roof. A fourth-story addition could be added to this level and meet Standard 9. To do so, it would need to be set back from the mansard and edge of the building along Waverly Street.
 - o The proposed two-story connector between the two properties along S. 15th Street does not meet Standard 9. This wing of the building at 415-417 S. 15th Street maintains its original form that dates to the circa 1860 construction. The proposed two-story connector would alter the historic integrity of this wing and remove a section of the mansard on the main block of the building.
- *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a manner such that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - o The four-story connector at the rear of the properties meets Standard 10.
 - o If the fourth story additions do not connect with the front and side elevations of the mansard, they could meet Standard 10.
 - o If the fourth-story additions are set back from the corner of S. 15th Street and Waverly Street, they could meet Standard 10.
 - o The proposed two-story connector along S. 15th Street does not meet Standard 10.
- *Roofs Guideline | Recommended: Designing rooftop additions, elevator or stair towers, decks or terraces, dormers, or skylights when required by a new or continuing use so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining historic features.*
 - o The proposed fourth-floor addition on 415-17 S. 15th Street at the corner of S. 15th Street and Waverly Street could meet the Roofs Guidelines with proper setbacks.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval in concept, provided the rooftop additions are set back from the front of the building and alterations to the mansard are limited, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, and the Roofs Guideline.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Denial, owing to the incompleteness, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, and Roofs Guidelines.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 04:17:30

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Mehley presented the application to the Historical Commission.
- Architects Evan Litvin and Lea Litvin represented the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- None.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- Detailed floor plans and elevations should be provided in an application for final approval. The applicant is currently seeking in-concept approval for the general project scope and massing.
- Adding one-story additions to select areas of the top level on both buildings may be acceptable with the appropriate setbacks, materials, and detailing.
- The visibility of the additions from S. 15th Street and Waverly Street will be critical in the consideration in future applications for this project.
- The rear and courtyard areas are not visible from the public right-of-way.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- Most of the alterations and new construction proposed as part of this in-concept application meet Standards 9 and 10. The applicant received feedback on aspects of the project that currently do not meet Standards 9 and 10.
- The proposed fourth-floor addition on 415-17 S. 15th Street at the corner of S. 15th Street and Waverly Street could meet the Roofs Guideline with proper setbacks.

ACTION: Mr. McCoubrey moved to approve the application in concept, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, and the Roofs Guideline. Mr. Mattioni seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: 415-17 and 419 S 15th ST MOTION: Approval in concept MOVED BY: McCoubrey SECONDED BY: Mattioni					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair	X				
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)	X				
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	11				1

OLD BUSINESS

ADDRESS: 2112 WALNUT ST

Proposal: Demolish rear of building; construct 11-story addition

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Bruce and Lisa Ginsberg

Applicant: Eric Leighton, cbp Architects

History: 1871; Thomas L. Jewett House; John McArthur, architect; E.B. Warren, developer

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, Contributing, 2/8/1995

Staff Contact: Laura DiPasquale, laura.dipasquale@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes to demolish portions of the four-story, 53-foot, Second Empire brownstone building at 2112 Walnut Street and to construct a 11-story, 141-foot tall addition. The proposal would remove portions of the roof, the entire rear mansard roof and portions of the rear wall and encapsulate full rear of the the building in an 11-story addition. The fourth-floor front mansard of the existing building would become a screen wall to an open patio behind. The application provides little information on the treatment of the historic front façade, with the only notes being “existing masonry to be restored” and “roof shingles.” The addition would be clad in glass curtain walls and vertical metal siding and decks at each floor. Renderings provided in the submission demonstrate that the addition would be highly visible from Walnut Street, and it would also be highly visible from and extremely out of scale with Chancellor Street, a small street with several historic carriage houses that dead ends at this property.

The Architectural Committee reviewed a previous iteration of the design in September 2023, which called for a 13-story, 165-foot tall addition and demolition of considerable portions of the historic building. The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 9, 10 and the Roofs Guideline, which calls for additions to be inconspicuous from the

public right-of-way, and Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code, the prohibition against demolition. Following the Architectural Committee, the height of the proposed addition was reduced and the demolition plans were also revised to show less interior demolition, but the roof, rear mansard, and rear bay are still proposed for removal and the full rear would be encapsulated by the 11-story addition, which would remain highly conspicuous.

The application resembles a project on the neighboring properties at 2108 and 2110 Walnut Street that was approved by the Historical Commission in 2016. However, there are notable differences between the projects. The adjacent parcel at 2110 Walnut Street was a vacant lot at the time of designation, and the overbuild on the historic building at 2108 Walnut was shown as being limited to four-stories and being set back to the point of being inconspicuous from the public right-of-way. The rear of 2108 Walnut Street was also not visible from any streets owing to the carriage house fronting Chancellor Street which was retained. Per cover letter from 2016 submission: "Note that the alteration to the existing rowhouse at 2108 Walnut features only one or two penetrations of the western wall, per floor. The rear bay of the rowhouse and non-historic one-story connector will be removed. The existing door and window openings in the rear will be extended for a new door and windows."

Renderings in the application materials demonstrate that the proposed addition would be highly visible from multiple rights-of-way.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Demolish portions of existing building.
- Construct 11-story addition.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new works shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - o The project demolishes portions of the historic building, including the character-defining rear mansard and bay, destroying historic materials. The new work will be overly differentiated from the old and incompatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing, failing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment. The application fails to satisfy Standard 9.
- *Roofs Guideline | Recommended: Designing rooftop additions, elevator or stair towers, decks or terraces, dormers, or skylights when required by a new or continuing use so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining historic features.*
 - o The proposed addition would be highly conspicuous and visible on the site and from the public right-of-way. The application fails to satisfy the Roofs Guideline.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 9 and the Roofs Guideline.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 9, 10, the Roofs Guideline, and Section 14-1005(6)(d) of the Philadelphia Code, the prohibition against demolition.

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 04:34:50

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. DiPasquale presented the revised application to the Historical Commission.
- Attorney Meredith Ferleger, architect Eric Leighton, and developer Tim Shabaan represented the application.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Mark Travis, owner of nearby properties, supported the project.
- Neighbor Glenn Blumenfeld, representing 25 neighbors along Chancellor Street and St. James Street, opposed the project.
- Attorney Carl Primavera, representing various neighbors, opposed the project.
- Neighbor Jacqui Pollock opposed the project.
- Neighbor Joan Finger opposed the project.
- Neighbor Joanna Bisgaier opposed the project.
- Neighbor Harvey Ostroff opposed the project.
- Neighbor Julia Feng opposed the project.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

The Historical Commission found that:

- The extent of demolition proposed was reduced and the height of the proposed addition reduced slightly following the Architectural Committee meeting. However, the entire rear of the property would be encapsulated by the proposed construction and the overbuild remains incompatible with the historic building and its site and context and would be highly visible from multiple rights-of-way.
- Historically, taller buildings were located on corners of cross-streets, with shorter buildings in between on main thoroughfares like Walnut Street, and smaller streets with smaller-scale buildings like Chancellor Street behind.
- The scale of the proposed overbuild remains out of keeping with the character of the historic building and its site and context.
- The overbuild would be highly visible from Walnut and Chancellor Streets.
- The articulation, materials, and details of the proposed addition are not consistent with the character of the building or its context.
- If additions such as the one proposed were approved for all comparable buildings on Walnut Street, it would irrevocably change the character of Walnut and Chancellor Streets and the historic district at large.
- The impact of the proposed construction on Chancellor Street matters as much as the impact on Walnut Street.
- The zoning and historic preservation restrictions at this site may not be aligned, but both must be satisfied for a project to be approved.
- A small addition to the historic building that respects the character of the historic building and its relationship to the surrounding streets might be acceptable.

The Historical Commission concluded that:

- The project removes portions of the historic building, including the character-defining rear mansard and bay, destroying historic materials. The new work will be overly differentiated from the old and incompatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing, failing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment. The application fails to satisfy Standard 9.

- The proposed addition would be highly conspicuous and visible on the site and from the public right-of-way. The application fails to satisfy the Roofs Guideline.

ACTION: Ms. Cooperman moved to deny the application, pursuant to Standard 9 and the Roofs Guideline. Ms. Kindt seconded the motion, which was adopted by a vote of 9 to 0.

ITEM: 2112 WALNUT ST MOTION: Denial MOVED BY: Cooperman SECONDED BY: Kindt					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair					X
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)					X
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	9				3

ADJOURNMENT

START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN ZOOM RECORDING: 05:51:10

ACTION: At 3:28 p.m., Mr. Mattioni moved to adjourn. Ms. Cooperman seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

ITEM: ADJOURNMENT MOTION: Adjourn MOVED BY: Mattioni SECONDED BY: Cooperman					
VOTE					
Commissioner	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Thomas, Chair	X				
Washington, Vice Chair					X
Carney (PCPC)	X				
Cooperman	X				
Kindt (DPD)	X				
Lepori (Commerce)	X				
Lech (L&I)	X				
Mattioni	X				
McCoubrey	X				
Michel					X
Sánchez (Council)					X
Treat (DPD)	X				
Total	9				3

PLEASE NOTE:

- Minutes of the Philadelphia Historical Commission and its advisory committees are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the video recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, www.phila.gov/historical.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

§14-1004. Designation.

(1) Criteria for Designation.

A building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district may be designated for preservation if it:

- (a) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation;
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship that represent a significant innovation;
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park, or other distinctive area that should be preserved according to a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;

- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.