

THE REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Arlene Matzkin, Chairperson
Commission Conference Room
Suite 1301, 1401 Arch Street

26 August 1993

Present

Arlene Matzkin, AIA, Chairperson
William Cornell, P.E., Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia
David DeLong, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania
Don Stevenson, Sherwood, Henderson, architects

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Ira Kauderer, Executive Secretary

Also

William Donovan, Filene's Basement, Inc.
Scott Duenow, Vitetta Group
William Burke, Art Commission
Warren Huff, Planning Commission
Nick Irwin, The Window Associates, Inc.
William Wilkinson, University of Pennsylvania
Charles M. Roberts, Jr.
Gary Chilutti, Hunting Park Community Development Corporation
Carl Dahlgren, Friends of Hunting Park
Dennis Feldsher, Fairmount Park Commission

Proposals

1610 Chestnut Street: The applicants, Filene's Basement, proposed installing banners on two pilasters at 1610 Chestnut Street. These banners are to be black canvas and be attached to new polls at both top and bottom.

Mr. Baron began the discussion by noting that this proposal had already come before the Center City Residents Association, who did not object to the banners as presented.

Mr. Burke informed the Committee that this proposal has been turned down by the staff of the Art Commission, because they forbid projecting signs on Chestnut Street. That decision will be considered on appeal in two weeks.

Mr. Cornell suggested that the banners should be attached to the limestone facade of the building with expansion bolts and heavy washers, rather than "pasting" the banners on with epoxy as proposed.

Since the limestone is a veneer, it would be best for the signs to be attached to something behind the limestone even though this will put holes in the stone. Wind holes in the banner will be useful to mitigate the effects of the high winds that exist in that area of Center City.

Mr. Donovan said that given that the banners will be taut and narrow, the wind should not be a factor.

The Committee reached a consensus that they could approve the banners as presented if they were securely anchored to the building and if they were engineered to bear the wind loads that they will be exposed to at this Chestnut Street location. The Committee requested to see a detail of how the banners would be attached to the building before they grant final approval.

City Hall, Sputnik Lights: This proposal calls for the removal of Sputnik lights from the portals of City Hall as they are renovated. Under consideration is the possibility of moving them to light the lobby of the Municipal Services Building.

Mr. Tyler told the Committee that the parties involved, including the Department of Public Property, Vitetta Group and the Historical Commission staff, have not reached a consensus about the best solution to this design problem. Therefore, Dr. Tyler requested that this issue be removed from the agenda and reconsidered at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Duenow, of Vitetta Group, architects for the City Hall restoration, presented the Committee with copies of the original drawings for the Sputnik light fixtures. These drawings were produced in 1959 by architects Martin, Stewart and Noble. That firm produced many notable buildings for the City in the 1950s and 1960s including the Mercantile Library at 1021 Chestnut Street of 1954, which the Commission designated as historic two years ago.

The architects also presented the Committee with drawings and photographs of the sputnik lights.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this issue.

White Field House, University of Pennsylvania: This proposal calls for exterior restoration to this brick building with terra-cotta trim, designed by Horace Trumbauer. Besides cleaning and pointing, the project involves replacement of all of the wooden casement windows with aluminum and rebuilding the terra-cotta bays with new terra-cotta to match. The windows as proposed have an exterior grid but they lack some of the trim found on the original windows. Some brick areas are being rebuilt.

The Committee discussed whether to require the simple moldings that currently exist on the windows as well as the idea of adding spacers inside the double glazing to better replicate true muntins. Dr. DeLong asserted that these are minor details considering the total scope of the work. The Committee voted not to require these details. Bill Cornell advocated asking the University to hide the large kitchen exhaust fan inside the window, but again, this was not required by the rest of the Committee.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the plans as presented.

Logan House/Hunting Park Guard House: The Fairmount Park Commission proposes to demolish the Hunting Park Guard House. This 18th century mansion belonged to the Logan family who settled this section of the City. Situated in Hunting Park, this building had been occupied by the police department until they moved into a new building in that park. Since then the building has been unsecured and has become derelict. It has now become the location of drug activity. Fairmount Park has received a number of letters urging the demolition of the building. We have received a letter from the Hunting Park Community Development Corporation urging that they be allowed to try to save the building.

William Mifflin, director of the Fairmount Park Commission, addressed the Committee. Mr. Mifflin stated that two years ago he asked Dennis Feldsher, staff architect, to determine how much it would cost to restore this building. Mr. Mifflin said the capital dollars required were not available at that time and are still not available.

Councilpersons Tasco and Ortiz had \$750,000. allocated for Hunting Park. This was the amount the Park estimated that it would cost to restore the Logan House. The Park decided to use the money on the recreation center and pool in the Park. Mr. Mifflin said that the money was spent on these facilities because

they form the nucleus of the Park.

Mr. Mifflin stated that the police, who formerly used the Logan House, now maintain a Town Watch facility in the recreation center. Once the police moved out of the Logan House, that building was left without a use. He added that the Park has received threatening telephone calls and fears that the building will be destroyed by arson if not removed, because neighbors believe it is dangerous and the location of drug activity.

Gary Chilutti of the Hunting Park Community Development Corporation addressed the Committee. Mr. Chilutti agreed that the Logan House is currently the target of vandals and drug activity. He argued that these conditions alone do not adequately make a case for demolition because many of the buildings that make up the fabric of the neighborhood share these characteristics. He questioned whether the Park has considered any options for potential reuse for the building and has considered all funding sources. He requested that the Park delay demolition while looking at alternative uses during a defined and limited period of time. During that time a report could be produced outlining potential reuses. If at the end of a reasonable time no reuses could be found, the building might then be demolished. He also stated that the reason some neighbors until now have seemed to favor demolition was because of the way the issue was framed, namely, demolition of the building or more vandalism and criminal activity. When Mr. Chilutti presented neighbors with reuse possibilities he received support for the ideas.

Mr. Chilutti asked whether the Park Commission could reduce some of the dangerous conditions existing at the building while options for reuse were considered. This might include removing the porch from the building.

Mr. Mifflin responded that the Park Commission is unwilling to spend any money to secure the building. He stated that he would support any private initiative the community develops to save the building. The community was made aware of the problems with this building three years ago and has not come up with any plan to save the building until now.

Mr. Dahlgren of the Friends of Hunting Park addressed the Committee. He stated that his group submitted a letter in support of demolition. He stated that this building, being 200 years old, is unique in the Hunting Park neighborhood. He considers the building an asset and prefers not to see it demolished if there is any chance of arriving at an alternative

plan.

Ms. Matzkin stated that if this building had a private owner, the Committee would require proof that alternative uses had been considered and were impossible.

Mr. Tyler said that the Park has less money now than five years ago. Therefore, it cannot be expected to take on the restoration of this building using its own funds. He stated that renovation of the building would make more economic sense than restoration. Mr. Tyler reported that Grace Gary of Preservation Pennsylvania is prepared to quickly fund a study of potential reuse schemes for the building. Based on previous experience, up to \$20,000. dollars might be made available for this purpose.

Mr. Tyler suggested that the Committee recommend deferral of a decision on the request for demolition, pending a study of the building, to be accomplished within six months.

Mr. Stevenson said that while he understood that a scheme for renovation instead of restoration might save enough money to make a reuse project feasible, he would wait to decide on which historic features could be sacrificed until a plan was presented.

Mr. Tyler stated that if the word got out that plans were being sought to reuse the building in the community, perhaps those who are currently threatening to destroy the building will be mollified.

Mr. Cornell opposed delaying demolition because of safety issues.

Mr. DeLong moved that the Committee recommend that consideration of demolition be delayed for about six months until a study is completed to identify possible alternative reuses and tenants for the Logan House. The motion passed 3 to 1 with Mr. Cornell opposed.

Respectfully submitted,



Ira Kauderer