

MINUTES OF THE 218th STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

6 October 1977

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman
Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman
Mrs. James C. Cramlish, Jr.
The Hon. John B. Kelly, Jr., Councilman-at-Large
Edward Pinkowski
Commissioner Robert Silver, Department of Public Property
Val Mogensen, Executive Assistant Director of Finance
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Sieniontkowski, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

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

THE MINUTES of the Stated Meeting, 1 September 1977, were approved and directed to be filed.

REPORTS

The Report of the Architectural Committee for 21 September 1977, Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman. The Report was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

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

As a preface to the presentation to the Commission of several requests for historical certification, the Historian drew the attention of the members to the current practices of both State and Federal preservation agencies in making National Register eligibility determinations. Particularly for projects funded through the Community Development Act and the Economic Development Act, these agencies will regard local certification as *prima facie* evidence of Register eligibility. Mr. Tyler suggested that great care be taken in the local certification of buildings, for any building designated locally and affected by any federally funded or licensed project will be assumed to be eligible for the National Register and thus be subjected to all 106 procedures. The Historian further suggested that the several municipal planning and development agencies be consulted from time to time and as necessary as a part of the certification process.

At the request of the Historical Commission, the Architectural Committee considered the advisability of certifying the Drake Hotel, 1512 Spruce Street, at its meeting of 21 September 1977. In a vote of two to one, the Committee

REPORTS (Cont'd)

recommended the certification of the Drake Hotel. It was noted that the request for certification came from the owner who is interested in having the building placed on the National Register in order to become eligible for the benefits available under the 1976 Tax Reform Act. A motion was made to certify the hotel as recommended by the Architectural Committee. This motion was seconded and carried. From a historical perspective, Mr. Mogensen found little merit in the building and, therefore, opposed its certification; Mr. Levy abstained from voting.

Mrs. Klein, at this point, recommended that financial implications not be taken into consideration when judging the merits of a building for certification. Although the economic feasibility of a structure often determines its preservation, as pointed out by Mr. Tyler, it was agreed not to discuss economics in reviewing a building's historical and/or architectural significance.

The advisability of certifying the Eden Hall complex of buildings on 1 September 1977 was referred to the Architectural Committee for a recommendation. The Committee at its meeting of 21 September 1977 voted two to one in favor of certification of the entire complex as requested by a local neighborhood group.

At the request of the Office of the Deputy Mayor, Mr. Tyler was asked to view the buildings and to make a report of his findings to Commissioner Crawford. This was done and Mr. Tyler's letter to Commissioner Crawford recommending the possible preservation of the chapel building only was read to the Commission.

Commissioner Silver proposed that the entire complex be certified locally as requested by the local group. Mr. Tyler noted that this could present a problem if the Fairmount Park Commission plans on using federal money in the clearance and/or development of the site since local certification will be construed as evidence of National Register eligibility and subject any project to state and federal review protection procedures. It was suggested by the Historian that certification be tabled until the Fairmount Park Commission decides the future of the site. A motion was made to this effect which was seconded and carried. Mr. Tyler was asked to advise Mr. McConnell of the Commission's action.

At the request of the owner, the Commission considered the certification of the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts, formerly the Shubert Theatre, situated at 250 South Broad Street. Mr. Tyler noted that the exterior, not particularly significant, had undergone extensive renovations on the ground floor and the original cornice had been removed. The interior space, recently restored, is in its original condition. After some discussion on the merits of this building, a motion was made to refuse certification. This was seconded and carried.

REPORTS (Cont'd)

Next the Commission considered the possibility of certifying the building situate at 1924 Arch Street at the request of the owner. Although the structure is a good nineteenth century brownstone building, Mr. Tyler pointed out that it stands out of context with its surroundings. After a brief discussion, a motion was made to deny the certification request. This was seconded and carried with Mr. Levy abstaining.

Finally, at the request of the staff, the Commission was asked to certify the cast-iron facade from the building situate at 242-44 North Delaware Avenue. Mr. Tyler reported that the building had recently been damaged by two fires and that arrangements had been made for the salvaging of the cast-iron facade, the oldest one known in the country.

At the suggestion of Mr. Levy, a motion was made to table certification of the facade at this time. This motion was seconded and carried. It was noted that this question could be taken up again when the facade has been reerected.

Report on Historical Commission Staff Activities for the month of September, Richard Tyler, Historian. Mr. Tyler's report was approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to be discussed.

NEW BUSINESS

A fund raising proposal from Warner/Lauren, Ltd., Richard Tyler, Historian. The Commission was asked whether it would consider participation in an event designed to raise funds for the Commission and to introduce a new perfume for Warner/Lauren, Ltd. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Historical Commission not become involved in this sort of enterprise.

Philadelphia College of Art grant application, Richard Tyler, Historian. At the request of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Historical Commission was asked to comment on the Philadelphia College of Art's application for a feasibility study grant. The Commission agreed to endorse the college's application and asked the Historian to inform the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission of this action.

NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

A.I.A. lecture series on ignored architects of the twentieth century, Richard Tyler, Historian. Mr. Tyler reported to the Commission the A.I.A.'s sponsorship of a lecture series on ignored architects of the twentieth century and the A.I.A.'s request to have the Philadelphia Historical Commission as a cooperating institution for this series by contributing \$100.00 to help defray the costs. A motion was made to approve the expenditure of \$100.00 from the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund for this purpose. This motion was seconded and carried.

The question of the proper use of the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund was raised by Commissioner Silver. Dr. Haas noted that about a year ago a legal opinion was submitted by the Office of the City Solicitor which determined that the fund could be used to further the work of the Historical Commission with the funds being expended at the discretion of the members. The Commissioner cited several letters, dated 1966 and 1971, which restricted the use of the Fund to research and publication. While he favored the expansion of the account and its uses, he questioned the spending of Batten monies for purposes beyond research and publication. He asked that a report on the use of the Fund be submitted at the next meeting of the Commission.

Tax Reform Act conference, Richard Tyler, Historian. The Historian requested permission to attend the Tax Reform Act Conference to be held in Rochester, New York, on November 7, 8 and 9. The conference is free to invitees and will focus on the new tax law and its implementation. The City would pay only for transportation and lodging. The Commissioner noted that there was not sufficient money within Class 200 to cover these expenses since funds had been charged against the 1977-78 operating budget for Miss Sieniontkowski's tuition expenses.

Brook Stores, 242-44 North Delaware Avenue, Richard Tyler, Historian. Two fires within one week damaged beyond reasonable repair the structure standing at 242-44 North Delaware Avenue. Although the building itself could not be preserved, the staff, with the assistance and support of the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Office of the City Representative and Director of Commerce, proposed a method for the preservation of its cast-iron facade, the oldest such facade known in the country. The Fairmount Park Art Association has offered a donation of \$7500.00 to the Harry A. Batten Fund to have the facade salvaged and delivered to Fairmount Park, where it will remain until an appropriate reuse can be found for it. When and if the Commission is successful in selling the facade, the proceeds will be used to reimburse the Association up to the amount of its contribution.

Mr. Tyler noted that Mr. McConnell agreed to store the front in the Park. The demolition contractor will deliver the cast-iron facade to the Park where it will remain without entailing any responsibility to the City. Mr. Tyler noted also that this arrangement proved satisfactory to both Mr. Davis, Acting Director of Finance, and Mr. Gaudiosi, City Representative and Director of Commerce.

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NEW BUSINESS (Cont'd)

A motion to approve this arrangement and to accept the donation of \$7500.00 to the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund was made. This was seconded and carried.

Mr. Tyler asked that a vote of thanks be given to Mr. Sabatini and Mr. Gaudiosi for their assistance in this endeavor. A letter acknowledging the cooperation of both men will be prepared.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 P. M.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Sieniontkowski
Executive Assistant to the Chairman

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