

THE MINUTES OF THE 375th STATED MEETING OF THE  
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

8 September 1993

City Council Caucus Room  
Room 401 City Hall

Present

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Wayne S. Spilove, Chairperson  
David Brownlee, Ph.D., Architectural Historian  
Susan Rabinovitch, Real Estate Developer  
Louis Einhorn, Public Property  
Scott Wilds, Department of Housing  
Stephanie Wolf, Ph.D., Historian  
Barbara Kaplan, Director, City Planning Commission  
Jim Cuorato, Dept. of Commerce

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

Also

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Gary Chillutti, Hunting Park Community Development Corporation  
Carl Dahlgren, Friends of Hunting Park

THE REPORT of the Activities of the Philadelphia Historical  
Commission Staff, August 1993, Richard Tyler, Historic  
Preservation Officer

Mr. Tyler reported that Sally Elk, who went on maternity leave earlier in the year, decided to resign to take care of family matters. Andy Haines, her temporary replacement, has also recently left to begin graduate school. The work that Sally and Andy performed is very important because it allows millions of government dollars to be spent for housing in Philadelphia. Because the Commission staff is to some extent unfamiliar with how this work has been performed, Mr. Tyler plans to ask Ms. Elk to return and spend two or three days training her replacement. The Office of Housing will be asked to pay for this time. Mr. Tyler requested that the Commission allow an expenditure of not more than \$300. from the Batten Fund to pay Ms. Elk in the event the money is not forthcoming from the Office of Housing. The Commission voted unanimously to approve this request.

**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 will be

attached to new polls at both top and bottom.

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 also requested to see a detail of how the banners would be attached to the building before they granted final approval.

Since the Committee meeting, the staff received a letter from the Center City Residents Association (CCRA). The letter states that CCRA opposes the banners in conjunction with the already approved awnings and metal lettering.

Ms. Kaplan stated that the Zoning Board prohibits all projecting signs. They hear appeals for variances in exceptional cases. Ms. Kaplan asserted that in certain instances, applicants who receive Historical Commission approval use this as leverage with the Zoning Board. Therefore, the Historical Commission should not grant its approval to an applicant who seeks to erect a projecting sign until the applicants have received a variance from the Zoning Board. Mr. Baron shared Ms. Kaplan's concern but at the same time recognized that in opening a new business signage is often a priority. Because signage requires the approval of the Historical and Art Commissions as well as the Zoning Board, applicants are able to get a much quicker review for major facade alterations than signage.

The Commission ultimately voted unanimously to defer consideration of the proposed banners until the Zoning Board has made their decision and the Commission has received additional information on the anchoring of the banners.

**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.

Ms. Matzkin recalled that there was discussion at the Committee level about way the University could improve on the design of the replacement windows. In the end, the Committee decided that the University was doing an ambitious and extremely responsible job, and unanimously approved the work as presented.

The Commission approved the recommendation of the Architectural Committee and granted final approval for the University's work as presented. Dr. Brownlee abstained from the vote.

**Logan House, Hunting Park:** 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.

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 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. If at the end of a reasonable time no reuses could be found, the building might then be demolished. Preservation Pennsylvania has come forward and informally agreed to fund a re-use study.

Committee members asked Mr. Mifflin 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 and clearing the overgrown bushes around 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 Committee recommended 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. Mr. Cornell opposed the motion

because of public safety concerns.

Mr. Tyler responded to Dr. Brownlee's question about the condition of the building. The Department of Licenses and Inspection has declared the porch imminently dangerous. The walls appear sound. The roof has serious problems.

Ms. Kaplan noted that the Department of Licenses and Inspection recently stabilized the derelict Royal Theater, a privately owned building. She questioned why the same attention could not be given to the publicly owned Logan House. Dr. Tyler responded that one reason is the strong support the Royal Theater has received from various groups and individuals.

Dr. Brownlee asked how the Commission's requiring owners to seal their buildings works when the City is the owner. Mr. Tyler responded that the legal difference is that penalties are not imposed for non-compliance when the City is involved.

Ms. Kaplan stated that when the City abandons a historic property, they should be required to mothball the property before they leave. Dr. Brownlee stated his concern that capital dollars may have been allocated for this house which were ultimately spent elsewhere.

Dr. Brownlee moved to accept the recommendation of the Architectural Committee that demolition be delayed for six months while reuse schemes are considered. He added that the Commission should also require that the building be sealed.

Mr. Cuorato said that he would only be prepared to vote to delay demolition if the building is sealed.

Mr. Baron recalled that he asked Mr. Mifflin how the Park could afford demolition but at the same time be unable to seal the building. Though Mr. Mifflin answered that Contractual Services would only take care of demolition, Mr. Baron recalled instances where Contractual Services sealed buildings and did other work. Mr. Tyler added that Contractual Services has removed dangerous portions of historic houses in the past at the Diamond Street Historic District.

Ms. Rabinovitch stated that when a private owner is involved the City seals dangerous buildings and charges the owner. She thought that the City should act consistently when buildings are publicly owned.

Mr. Dahlgren of the Friends of Hunting Park stated that though his group is on record favoring demolition of the Logan House they would favor restoration if it was an option. At the time Council allocated \$750,000. for Hunting Park, the Friends group was told if they wanted the recreation center improved they

would have to sacrifice the Logan House. The Friends group believes that they made a trade-off at that time in choosing the recreation center, but wants to be on-record as joining the Hunting Park Community Development Corporation in searching for a plan for re-use of the building. The group supports the Committees recommendation to seal the building now, while looking for reuse opportunities.

Mr. Spilove, paraphrasing the requests from Commission members, asked Mr. Tyler to speak to Mr. Mifflin about sealing the building and removing the porch and the bushes.

The Commission voted unanimously to accept the recommendation of the Committee that consideration of demolition of the Logan House be deferred until a re-use study is completed. This is expected to take about six months. The Commission also unanimously voted to require that the building be sealed, the dangerous porch be removed and the overgrown bushes be removed.

Ms. Kaplan repeated her opinion that a system be developed whereby City departments who plan to leave any building be required to provide ample notice and mothball the buildings if necessary. She noted that when this is not done, buildings often deteriorate and loose much of their value and potential for re-use.

Mr. Baron recalled that during the discussion of the Germantown Town Hall last month the discussion centered on developing a system where the Commission would make City departments aware of historically designated buildings or buildings eligible for designation. Mr. Baron noted that the Logan House illustrates the common problem of an agency's knowing of the historic designation of a property under its jurisdiction and not adequately considering historic preservation in the formulation of policy or plans that may affect such resources.

Mr. Einhorn stated that the City should implement guidelines for preservation of its historic property. In his opinion, many problems arise repeatedly because no policy guides decision making.

Respectfully submitted,

Ira Kauderer