

**THE REPORT OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

Herbert W. Levy, FAIA, Presiding Chairman

**Office of the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
Suite 2820, 1101 Market Street**

8 June 1992

Present

Herbert W. Levy, Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Presiding Chairman
William Cornell
Don Stevenson

Wayne Spilove, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner

Also

Thomas W. Ventulett and Kenneth J. Bryson; Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates
Bert Jackson, Morse-Diesel Temple / Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
Nan Gutterman and Dr. George Skarmeas, Vitetta Group
Sandra Gross Bressler, Executive Director, Philadelphia Art Commission
Herb Vederman, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development
Tom Hine, The Philadelphia Inquirer

APPROVAL

Reading Railroad Terminal Trainshed, 1115-1141 Market Street, Rear:

The Architectural Committee held a special meeting on 8 June 1992 to consider revised plans for the ballroom of the Pennsylvania Convention Center at the Reading Terminal Trainshed. Herbert W. Levy, FAIA, Presiding Chairman called the meeting to order at 3:45 p.m.

Mr. Tyler summarized previous submissions of the treatment of the ballroom. The first scheme entailed a ceiling that afforded a view of the Shed's truss system and a glass wall separating the ballroom from the Grand Court. This necessitated the continuation of that glass wall from the upper edge of the ballroom to the truss in order to control sound and environment. Following review of this by the Commission, the architects revised a number of details.

A budget shortfall of approximately \$13,000,000 required a redesign of the shed component. This led to a proposal to install a solid ceiling over the ballroom and a solid wall at its south elevation, i.e. the elevation overlooking the Grand Court. The Commission recommended a glass wall rather than a solid wall to reduce the sense of the mass of the ballroom within the Shed. It also suggested the elimination of the glass wall above, for the enclosure of the ballroom obviated the upper screen to control sound, heat and cooling. Despite the many other reductions in finishes and treatments dictated by budget constraints, the Commission regarded this positively, for it excised the bifurcation of the Shed and avoided any contact with the roof.

The Authority and its architects restudied the design of the ballroom and other elements in an effort to retrieve some of the special features within the context of the budget constraints. This produced the most recent submission.

The present proposal includes:

1. A revised and simplified lighting and sound grid in the ballroom that will enlarge the sense of the volume of the ballroom and shed.
2. The ballroom will again have an open view to the Shed's trusses and roof. This necessitates the introduction of the sound and environment control wall at the south end of the ballroom. The extremely high costs of glazing the truss itself prohibits that approach. To solve the problem, the architects propose to carry a glass wall to the roof of the Shed in front of the truss. An earlier staff review suggested restudy of this solution so as not to obscure the truss and the sense of a continuous space behind the reflective glass wall.

On 8 June, the architects presented their approach and, as an alternative, carrying the glass wall up to a point below the truss, installing a soffit below the truss and completing the glass enclosure behind it.

3. The removal of the SEPTA ductwork within the Shed and the accompanying louvers from the Twelfth Street elevation, and the restoration of the Twelfth Street elevation in that zone.
4. Glaze the vertical clerestory of the upper monitor, a.k.a. the dog house, above the Grand Hall.

The Committee agreed to recommend approval of:

1. The revised lighting and audio grid.
2. The glazing of the south wall of the ballroom and the space above it. The Committee expressed a preference for the alternative solution, i.e. the soffit under the truss with glazing behind if feasible and within the budget.
3. The removal of the SEPTA ducts and the restoration of the Twelfth Street facade of the Shed.
4. The glazing of the vertical clerestory of the monitor.

At the close of the meeting, Mr. Tyler thanked the Authority and its consultants for their responsiveness over the years to suggestions of the Commission to various design issues. Mr. Ventulett responded with an expression of appreciation to the Commission for its cooperation and observed that the Commission's involvement had resulted in a better design.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Tyler,
Historic Preservation Officer