

THE MINUTES OF THE 293rd STATED MEETING
OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

28 August 1985

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman
Joan Ferreira
Grace Gary
Caroline Golab
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, City Planning Commission
David Wismer, Chief, Building Division, Department of Licenses and
Inspections
Mark MacQueen, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian
Randal Baron, Executive Secretary
Terry Koob, Clerk Steno II
Shoureen Jabar, Clerk Typist I

Also: Mary Ellen Balchunis, Deputy Mayor's Office
Mary Lou McFarland, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Marge Scherneck, Jennifer Smith and others from the Queen Village
Neighbors Association
and others

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

The Chairman directed that Old Business be discussed first.

OLD BUSINESS

19 Christian Street. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that the affidavit of Joseph J. Flynn concerning 19 Christian Street was submitted to consultant Reaves Lukens for evaluation of the data provided pursuant to Section 14-2007 (7)(f)(.1-.7) of the Philadelphia Code. The consultant informed Mr. Tyler by telephone that he could not offer a professional judgment on the economic feasibility of the preservation and reuse of the house at 19 Christian Street or on the hardship of the preservation to its owner without additional information. Mr. Lukens specifically requested a feasibility analysis of the rehabilitation of the property for commercial and/or residential use. This should include the number of units, cost estimates of rehabilitation by a qualified contractor or construction manager and rent projections. In addition, data are needed on operating and maintenance costs, annual debt service, depreciation taken and other federal income tax deductions produced. Mr. Tyler stated that he would write to Mr. Cook, attorney representing the owner of 19 Christian Street, and request this information. In addition, Mr. Cook will be asked to provide the Commission

with information concerning the market value of the property as well as the owner's willingness to sell it. Owing to the inconclusive evaluation, Mr. Tyler requested that the Commission postpone its decision and defer action on the permit application for a period not to exceed six months as specified in the ordinance. This postponement should provide ample time to finish the study.

Marge Scherneck of the Queen Village Neighbor's Association asked that she be notified of the day and time when the case will appear again before the Commission. Mr. Nathan suggested that the Association gather its own data concerning market value of the property, comparable rents, rehabilitation costs and the like. This independent information will prove useful in the Commission's evaluation of the figures provided by the owner.

Following some further discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to defer its decision on the request for permission to demolish 19 Christian Street until after the evaluation of all pertinent data is completed. This period shall not exceed six months.

THE MINUTES of the 292nd Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 31 July 1985, F. Otto Haas, Chairman, were reviewed and unanimously approved.

THE REPORT of the Meeting of the Architectural Committee of 8 August 1985, David Hollenberg, Chairman, was reviewed and approved for filing.

THE REPORT of the Nominating Committee for Vice-Chairman, Grace Gary. Ms. Gary reported that the Nominating Committee recommended Christine Washington to serve as the Vice-Chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The Commission unanimously approved this report and elected Christine Washington to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

THE REPORT on the Activities of the Philadelphia Historical Commission staff for 15 July - 15 August 1985, Richard Tyler, Historian, was reviewed and approved for filing.

NEW BUSINESS

Certification Process

Mr. Tyler described the development of the certification process followed by the Historical Commission. The early Commission established a Committee on Historic Values which consisted of a staff member and members of the Commission which included professionals. A change in the composition of the Historical Commission membership over the years led to the designation of buildings on the basis of staff recommendations, photographic review and oral descriptions. There were no written reports. In 1979 a Committee on Certification was created which consisted of Commission members and outside professionals. This Committee reviewed nominations for designation and recommended action to the Commission. The certification process under this Committee adopted and adapted the forms used by the National Register of Historic Places. A record of the Committee meetings and an abstract of the nomination forms were submitted to the Commission for review and appropriate action.

The Commission's current Committee on Designation has held one very successful meeting to date. The Commission will be presented shortly with the report of this meeting and will be asked to assess the nominations using the criteria established by the ordinance. Mark MacQueen, Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department, stated that the criteria for designation established in the ordinance must be followed with no exceptions. The Historian informed the Commission that economic hardship is not a valid criterion to be considered at the time of designation. Such considerations, however, may arise in the review of permit applications and should be addressed at that time.

Letter of Notification

Mr. Tyler asked the Commission members to review the drafts of two letters designed to notify owners of the proposed designation of their properties, individually or as parts of a district. These notification letters will serve to inform the owners of the time and place of a public hearing at which time the designation of their properties will be considered. Mr. Tyler informed Mr. Wismer that upon the designation of a district an alphabethized listing of all addresses of properties in such districts will be forwarded to the Department of Licenses and Inspections. The Commission will utilize current tax records in order to obtain the names and addresses of owners. Every effort will be made to notify owners of proposed designations. Newspaper advertisements and neighborhood postings will also alert communities of proposed district designation. Ms. Ferreira suggested using neighborhood association newsletters as a means to inform community residents of a potential designation.

As an interim policy, Mr. Tyler recommended that the Commission adopt the following guidelines:

- 1) Continued use of the adapted National Register form;
- 2) district or multiple resource form to have included or appended an evaluative inventory of each property, citing each as significant, contributing or intrusive;
- 3) for districts, a Commission member or members to tour the nominated area; and,
- 4) acceptance of the proposed letters of notification of hearing.

The Chairman suggested that the approval of the proposed letters be deferred until the next stated meeting to give the Commission members an opportunity to review them thoroughly. The Commission unanimously concurred.

Mr. Tyler informed the members that a computer with word processing capability would be very helpful in the notification process. Estimates received amount to a total cost of \$17,000 which could be available from other than City sources. Under a federal grant program administered by the State, money may be available to employ a person to enter the data. Mr. Tyler reported that the Bureau for Historic Preservation in Harrisburg expects to receive approval of its guidelines for the Certified Local Government Program from the National Park Service next week. The Bureau anticipates that Philadelphia will be one of the first to be certified upon application by the City making it eligible for federal funds.

Financial Disclosure

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission members that the Law Department is in the process of having letters prepared and sent to them requesting that they complete the financial disclosure form.

Design Review

David Wismer asked that the Commission clarify its position on permit applications for alterations to the exteriors of designated buildings such as roofing, cleaning and repointing. Mr. Tyler stated that all permit applications for designated buildings should be referred to the Historical Commission. According to Mr. Tyler, simple water clean-up may receive approval at staff level but other requests, especially, repointing may require a mortar analysis and should be reviewed by the Architectural Committee.

The Commission agreed with the recommendation made by Mr. Tyler.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Koob
Clerk Steno II

THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION
OF THE
293rd STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

28 August 1985

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman
Joan Ferreira
Grace Gary
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
David Wismer, Chief, Building Division, Department of Licenses
and Inspections
Mark MacQueen, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia A. Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian
Randal Baron, Executive Secretary
Terry Koob, Clerk Steno II
Shoureen Jabar, Clerk Typist I

The Historian opened the Executive Session with a discussion of two submissions listed in the Report of the Architectural Committee Meeting of 8 August 1985. These two properties are located in Chinatown. The unique circumstances contributing to the recommendations of the Architectural Committee warrant special discussion. In summarizing the history of the designation process in Chinatown, Ms. Siemiontkowski stated that several years ago a student from West Chester State University prepared a report on the social and cultural development of Chinatown. A number of specific buildings were mentioned in that report which were subsequently designated by the Philadelphia Historical Commission solely on the basis of mention in that report. Architectural merit was not given particular consideration.

1019 Cherry Street. This proposal calls for the replacement of the existing front facade with the application of an authentic Chinese style storefront. Ms. Siemiontkowski presented photographs of ~~an~~ traditional Chinese storefronts submitted by the architect which will be used as models for this rehabilitation. The Committee had reviewed two preliminary designs at its 8 August meeting and selected the one which depicted a flat roof with a cornice. The other design showed a flared roof covered with tiles. Since properties in Chinatown were designated for their relationship to Chinese culture and not for their architectural value, the Architectural Committee recommended allowing this major facade alteration which will reinforce the cultural symbolism of the Chinese community and add to the architectural quality of Chinatown.

127 N. 10th Street. Ms. Siemiontkowski informed the Commission that

this submission involves a request for permission to apply a new brick veneer over an existing brick facade. Mr. Hollenberg and Ms. Siemiontkowski conducted an on-site inspection of this property and its surrounding buildings. They found that approximately ninety percent of the buildings in the 100 block had suffered serious alterations over the years. Owing to the building's loss of historic context and the many diverse building alterations, the Chairman of the Architectural Committee recommended that 127 N. 10th Street be decertified.

A discussion followed regarding the benefits and/or disadvantages of Chinatown being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Tyler stated that the tax benefits available to developers for the rehabilitation of historic buildings could conceivably accelerate the market and destroy the cultural fabric of Chinatown. As a result, a plan to nominate Chinatown as an historic district has been rejected.

Mr. Tyler announced that a committee recommendation for Vice-Chairman would be made at today's meeting.

The Historian reviewed the latest events surrounding 19 Christian Street. The affidavit was turned over to an independent appraiser, Reaves Lukens, who has contacted Mr. Tyler by telephone and informed him that additional data are needed to complete the study. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that he will write to Mr. Cook, attorney for the owners of 19 Christian Street, and request the specific information required to complete the evaluation pursuant to Section 14-2007 (7)(f)(.1-.7) of the Philadelphia Code. Owing to the inconclusive evaluation, Mr. Tyler recommended that the Commission defer its decision on this demolition request for a period not to exceed six months as set forth in the ordinance.

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that the certification process would be discussed at today's meeting including the history of the Philadelphia Historical Commission's designation procedures. Mr. Tyler requested further that each member read the drafts of the notification letters prepared by the staff in consultation with counsel. The Commission members were provided with a draft of a sample letter supporting the retention of the preservation tax credits. A list of local representatives to whom to mail these letters was also provided. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission members that their letters could be typed on Commission letterhead if they wished.

Mr. Tyler introduced the Historical Commission's newest staff member, Shoureen Jabar, Clerk Typist I.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Koob
Clerk Steno II