

THE MINUTES OF THE 312th STATED MEETING
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

24 June 1987

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
Christine Washington, Vice-Chairman
David Brownlee
Jason Nathan
William D. Thompson
Christopher Cashman, Deputy Director, Office of
Director of Commerce
David Dambly, Commissioner, Department of Public
Property
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning
Commission
John Street, Esq., Councilman Fifth District
Mark MacQueen, Esq., Chief Assistant City
Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sally Elk, Historic Research Technician
Terri Koob, Executive Secretary
Carmen Weber, Archaeologist
Maureen Heaney, Clerk Stenographer I

Also: Sandra Garz and Warren E. Huff, Philadelphia City
Planning Commission
Jane Quigley and Patricia Smith, Redevelopment
Authority
Herbert Bass of Fox Rothschild, attorney for Old
Original Bookbinders
Albert Eisen, Executive Vice President of Strouse,
Greenberg & Company, and Charles Vallhonrat of
Ewing Cole Cherry Parsky Architects for the
U.G.I. Building, 1401 Arch Street
Murray S. Korn, owner of Dimensions, Drexel
Building
David G. Orr, National Park Service
Patrick J. Broderick, Esq., representing Eunice
Lazin, owner of the West Shipyard
William Kingsley and Roger Prichard, Old City
Civic Association
Colleen Murphy, John D. Sacksteder and Richard
Stange, Rivers Edge Civic Association
William Blades, A. Robert Jaeger and J. Randall
Cotton, Philadelphia Historic Preservation
Corporation

Continued

Patrick Starr, Foundation for Architects
Thomas Noon, resident 333 N. Front Street
Mary Lou McFarland, Preservation Coalition of Greater
Philadelphia
Roger Cohn, reporter from The Philadelphia Inquirer
And others

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

THE MINUTES of the 311th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 27 May 1987, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman, were reviewed and approved.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 11 June 1987, David Hollenberg, Chairman. Richard Tyler reported that the additional information requested for 414 Bainbridge Street and 129 N. 11th Street has been received and an approval is now recommended.

Mr. Tyler stated that the roof material for 2030 Race Street should be asphalt slate or superslate not a standing seam metal roof as proposed. Mr. Tyler continued that the penthouse which is proposed for 2030 Race Street is too large and no materials are specified. Finally, a sight-line study from the northeast angle has not yet been received. Owing to these circumstances, a rejection is recommended.

Mr. Tyler reported that the protection plan requested by the Committee for 1801 Vine Street has not been received. The Commission agreed to authorize staff approval upon receipt of a correct and complete submission.

Mr. Tyler stated that he visited the site at 207-207 1/2 Vine Street with Mr. Hollenberg and stated that the staff and the Architectural Committee concur that demolition be permitted in the rear and that the front of the building be protected from vandals and the elements. The data submitted pursuant to Section 14-2007 (f) should be reviewed by an outside consultant.

Mr. Tyler reported that the owner of Dimensions, based upon a need to identify his business, requested permission to install plaques, window awnings and an entrance canopy on the Drexel Building. The Architectural Committee recommended the approval of the plaques only. David Damby informed the Commission that at the meeting of the Art Commission held on 23 June 1987, it was decided that a final decision on the Drexel Building proposal would be deferred to the Historical Commission.

Mr. Korn, owner of Dimensions, appeared before the Historical Commission to appeal the recommendation of the Architectural Committee and to request permission to install awnings and a canopy outside the Drexel Building.

After considerable discussion, the Commission voted to allow Mr. Korn to install red awnings with bronze lettering on the first floor windows of the Drexel Building. However, the Commission rejected the proposal for a canopy over the entrance. Jason Nathan abstained.

The Commission unanimously voted to approve the Report of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 11 June 1987 including the approval of the addendum presented at today's meeting by Mr. Tyler.

THE REPORTS of the Committee on Historic Designation Meetings held on 15 May 1987 and 8 July 1986 (The U.G.I. Building, 1401-15 Arch Street). David Brownlee, Chairman.

David Brownlee stated that the Rittenhouse designation will not be considered until the residents of this area can be notified.

United Gas Improvement Building
1401-15 Arch Street

Mr. Brownlee presented the nomination for the United Gas Improvement Building, located at 1401-15 Arch Street, which was originally presented in the Report of the meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation held on 8 July 1986. An oral report on the architectural and historical significance of the U.G.I. Building, and a slide were presented by Dr. Brownlee and Mr. Baron.

Mr. Albert Eisen, Executive Vice President of Strouse, Greenberg & Co., Inc. and Mr. Charles Vallhonrat, Director of Architecture of Ewing Cole Cherry Parsky, requested that the Commission consider their request to defer designation of the U.G.I. Building pending a review of a potential development proposal as presented at the 305th Stated Meeting on 24 September 1987. Messrs. Eisen and Vallhonrat explained that it was their understanding that designation would be deferred pending the outcome of a subcommittee review on the proposed removal of the top two stories, the construction of an approximately twenty-story glass tower above the preserved Arch Street facade and the substantially altered Broad Street elevation of the U.G.I. Building. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that this high rise development scheme rested in part on the transfer of development rights from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. This proposed transfer plan is now defunct.

Barbara Kaplan stated that there is a 268' height limit restriction for buildings along the Parkway which would prohibit the erection of a tower atop the U.G.I. Building.

David Brownlee stated that the designation of the U.G.I. Building and the consideration of a development scheme are two different issues and it would be reasonable to keep these two components of the Commission's responsibilities separate. Mr. Brownlee continued that the nomination of the building protects it from any changes and the issue which should be addressed today should only be the designation of the U.G.I. Building.

After considerable discussion, the Commission unanimously voted to designate the United Gas Improvement Building, 1401-15 Arch Street.

Hertz Lot (West Shipyard),
300 N. Delaware Avenue
10-18 Callowhill Street

David Brownlee presented an oral report on the archeological significance of this site.

Barbara Kaplan asked what obligations a developer who did not propose to excavate would have.

In response to Mrs. Kaplan's question, Mr. Tyler stated that entry of this property on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places would not preclude development. For an archeological site our concern should be either the preservation or protection of the resource in situ, or, in the event of ground disturbing development, the implementation of a data retrieval program.

Patrick J. Broderick, representing the owner of the Hertz Lot/West Shipyard, addressed the Commission and requested a 60-day extension on the designation consideration of this site to allow the owner to have someone conduct test borings to verify further the existence of archeological results. Dr. Brownlee noted that borings would not necessarily demonstrate the absence of significant resources.

The Commission voted to grant a 60-day delay on the designation with a vote of eight to one. Mr. Brownlee cast the one opposing vote.

THE REPORT of the Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for 15 May 1987 - 15 June 1987, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer. As an addendum to his report, Mr. Tyler reported that an architect has been hired and will begin work on 6 July 1987.

The Commission unanimously vote to accept the Report for filing.

OLD BUSINESS

149 S. Hancock Street

Richard Tyler reviewed the history of the property since the initial submission of the demoliton permit for 149 S. Hancock Street.

Mr. Tyler stated that at the meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 25 March 1987, it was suggested that the staff explore the utilization of the Redevelopment Authority rental rehabilitation program. The staff has been in contact with the Redevelopment Authority and is awaiting the results of the study which was performed by an independent consultant.

Patricia Smith of the Redevelopment Authority stated that the consultant hired by them to conduct the study was Growth Properties and the Redevelopment Authority has tried to contact them but has not yet received a response.

Mr. Tyler explained that the decision before the Commission today is to grant or deny the demolition permit.

Herbert Bass, attorney for the owners of 149 S. Hancock Street, delivered a lengthy presentation reiterating his client's position. Mr. Bass stated that the feasibility study conducted by Growth Properties does state that the sale of the property is impracticable. Mr. Bass continued that the Jackson Cross evaluation, prepared for the Historical Commission, also states that the development of the property is economically infeasible and would not yield a reasonable rate of return to the owner. In conclusion, Mr. Bass stated the ordinance stipulates that the owner of a property must prove the following:

1. the sale of the property is impracticable;
2. rate of return is not viable; and,
3. there are no other available uses for the property.

Mr. Bass stated that his client has satisfied these three stipulations and that a demoliton permit should be issued.

Roger Prichard, Old City Civic Association, addressed the Commission and cited numerous points of disagreement between his Association's study and the Growth Properties' study, and the subsequent independent evaluation by Jackson Cross. In particular, Mr. Prichard noted the inflated purchase price and emphasized the possibility of this property's being reused as an overflow facility for a nearby "Bed & Breakfast" establishment, a scheme currently being investigated.

After lengthy comment from the floor, the matter was opened for Commission members only for discussion. Mr. Brownlee stated that he thinks that if the building is going to be used as a parking lot, the demolition request should not be granted. Mrs. Washington stated that she does not agree that the Commission has the authority to tell an owner how he can use his property. Councilman Street asked Mr. MacQueen if he thought that the Commission could reasonably deny a permit on the basis of the established record.

Mr. MacQueen responded that the Commission may make its decision based upon anything or everything that has been presented and upon its assessment of the data submitted pursuant to subsection 7(j) of the ordinance.

At this time, Mr. Montgomery called for a vote of the Commission. The members voted to deny the demolition request by a vote of five to three. The three Commission members to vote in favor of demolition were Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Christine Washington and Jason Nathan. The opposing votes were cast by Barbara Kaplan, David Dambly, John Street, David Brownlee and William Thompson.

Councilman Street expressed his discomfort over the inability of the Historical Commission to secure the results of the Redevelopment Authority's study in time for a decision on this demolition request. Mr. Tyler responded that this study had been put on hold temporarily while a very promising hotel development scheme was being investigated. Mr. Tyler continued that when negotiations for this development were abandoned owing principally to the opposition of the Old City Civic Association, the Redevelopment Authority was contacted with a request that the study be undertaken immediately. Subsequent telephone calls to the Authority revealed that no report yet existed for submission to the Commission. The commission members agreed that the staff should continue to pursue the Redevelopment Authority and inform Mr. Taxin of the results.

NEW BUSINESS

Eastern State Penitentiary

Owing to the length of the meeting, Mr. Tyler requested that this item be taken up at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Heaney
Clerk Stenographer I