

**THE MINUTES OF THE 358TH STATED MEETING OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

11 December 1991

**Conference Room of the
Philadelphia Historical Commission**

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
William Brown
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
Reverend William D. Thompson
Stephanie G. Wolf
James Cuorato, Deputy Director, Commerce Department
Louis Einhorn, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
Scott Wilds, Executive Assistant, Office of Housing & Community Development
David Wismer, Deputy Commissioner, Licenses and Inspections

Maria Petrillo, Esquire, Deputy City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historical Research Technician
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Thomas Hine, The Philadelphia Inquirer
Kathleen Catalano Milley, National Park Service

Mr. Montgomery, called the meeting to order and announced the presence of a quorum.

The Minutes of the 357th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, held 13 November 1991, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. A motion to adopt the minutes, made by Mr. Nathan and seconded by Mr. Brownlee, was approved.

The Report of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held 26 November 1991, David Hollenberg, Chairman. As the Commission received the written report of the Committee prior to the meeting, Mr. Hollenberg reviewed the four applications briefly.

Approval

College Hall at Temple University: Built in 1893 from a design by Thomas Lonsdale, College Hall was the first building constructed specifically for academic purposes at Temple

University. In recent years, it has been unoccupied. Temple recently installed a new chiller system in its basement for air conditioning much of the campus. Now, the University has submitted plans proposing exterior alterations including construction of a new entry pavilion to the rear, re-roofing and re-pointing. The Committee recommended conceptual approval of this work. Mr. Wilds seconded this recommendation, which the Commission adopted unanimously.

The applicants also proposed replacement of existing wooden windows with aluminum. The Architectural Committee has approved replacement windows for other institutional buildings contingent upon a close match in form and detail to the historic windows, as well as a non-metallic color. Because the applicant did not submit window details, the Committee could take no action on this part of the proposal. Mr. Nathan seconded this action and the Commission ratified this deferral.

Reading Railroad Terminal, 1115-1141 Market Street

New Construction of a Pedestrian Bridge over Twelfth Street: The Committee recommended approval of a proposal by the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority to construct a bridge spanning Twelfth Street from the link building of the Terminal to a proposed hotel. The Commission previously voted an approval in concept of plans by Kelly/Maiello Architects. Both the Art Commission and the Redevelopment Authority's Advisory Board of Design approved the revised design, which consists of a tube of grey-painted metal with green-tinted glass, supported by a green-painted bridge truss system. The Committee, which focused primarily on the connection of the bridge with the Terminal, viewed the revised design as a considerable improvement. The Committee recommended approval of this revised design.

The Commission examined a model of the proposed bridge.

Mr. Wismer seconded the recommendation for approval, which the Commission adopted.

Fleisher Art Memorial, 711-721 Catherine Street: The Committee recommended approval of a proposal for a new entry treatment for this building. Mr. Brown seconded this recommendation, which the Commission approved unanimously.

Disapproval

Foot Comfort Shoe Store, 1106 Chestnut Street: The owner of this property received violations for altering the facade of this 1933 Art Deco building without a permit. He installed an inappropriate, internally-illuminated, plastic box sign without Commission approval. The Committee recommended disapproval of the request to approve this work undertaken without a permit. Mr. Nathan seconded this recommendation, which the Commission approved unanimously.

The Report on Staff Activities, November 1991, Randal Baron, Preservation Planner.

A MOTION to adopt this report, made by Mr. Nathan and seconded by Mr. Brownlee, was approved.

OLD BUSINESS**Discussion: Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District**

Mr. Tyler recommended that the Commission cease its review of building permit applications for properties nominated for designation as part of this proposed historic district. In April 1988, the Commission notified property owners of a hearing to consider the historic designation of this district. Following the adjournment of these hearings sine die to prepare rules and regulations, the Commission sent notice on 1 June 1991 of their resumption. Since 1988, the Commission has reviewed many applications for alterations and a few for demolition. The authority for this review derives from Section 14-2007(7)(I) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, which provides for review of applications during the period that an historic resource is under consideration for entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

On 14 August 1991, the Commission postponed indefinitely its hearing on this nomination. Because of that action, Mr. Tyler suggested that the Commission cease its review of building permit applications for those buildings nominated for designation as part of the proposed district. Though the staff could invite owners to use the Commission's resources and to discuss proposed alterations, this consultation would be voluntary. Mr. Tyler stressed that the Commission would continue to review proposed work to properties within the boundaries of the district which already were designated as historic.

Considerable discussion ensued regarding the means of implementing this policy, as well as its ramifications.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Brownlee to declare that the Philadelphia Historical Commission shall no longer exercise authority over those resources documented in the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, unless they already were designated individually. The Commission and its staff, however, shall continue to offer their services in an advisory capacity. Ms. Kaplan seconded this motion, which the Commission adopted by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Tyler will meet with Mr. Wismer to discuss the means of implementing this resolution.

Discussion: Legal Issues

Ms. Petrillo offered remarks on two pending matters. First, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has not yet ruled on reargument in the United Artists' case. Second, Samuel Rappaport appealed the denial of a demolition permit for the Victory Building to the Board of Licenses and Inspections Review.

NEW BUSINESS**Discussion: Knowlton, 8001 Verree Road**

Mr. Tyler introduced a discussion of this historic landmark, built in 1881 from a design by Frank Furness. Tyler noted that the information provided was for discussion only; at present, there was no formal application before the Commission.

Since the death of Elizabeth Snodgrass in January 1990, the building has been unoccupied. Now, it is held in a testamentary trust. Sole trustee John P. Green, Jr., who lives in Massachusetts, has retained attorney Alvin J. Ivers to explore the economic value of the property. Mr. Ivers has spoken with Mr. Tyler and Ms. Kaplan.

Earlier this year, City Council re-zoned this property from "R-2" to "R-1", which Ms. Kaplan explained is consistent with the character of the surrounding land uses and the site. Though some neighboring land is zoned "R-5", several adjacent lots zoned "R-2" are developed only to an "R-1" density. The terrain of the parcel, which is traversed by streams and marked by significant grade changes, suggests the greater suitability of a planned unit development. The trustee and his attorney view re-zoning to "R-1" as a "taking."

Kaplan and Tyler have spoken with the attorney regarding development schemes which would afford a reasonable rate of return while preserving the historic building. Ms. Kaplan presented renderings of conceptual plans for three different zoning classifications: "R-1", "R-2" and "RC-6". The first would allow the construction of 18 dwellings in conventional "cookie-cutter" form. The second would permit 32 in this manner, or 60 if the historic building were razed. Using this number, the most permissible under prior zoning, the Planning Commission explored possible development schemes with "RC-6" zoning, which allows mixed use and planned residential development. If zoned "RC-6", the property could be developed with 60 clustered units, while preserving more open space and other natural features, as well as the historic landmark. Ms. Kaplan suggested that the Planning and Historical Commissions try to explain the value of a re-zoning to "RC-6" and a planned residential development to the relevant civic associations.

Mr. Wilds suggested that support for the zoning change emerged from an interest in preserving the character of the site. The challenge before the Commission is to find a way to direct that energy toward a more viable strategy for preserving the building.

Considerable discussion ensued while Mr. Baron presented slides of the building, including its interior.

Howard Kittell of the Preservation Coalition stressed the importance of Knowlton, urged its preservation and offered the assistance of the Coalition.

Kathleen Catalano Milley, who lived in a neighborhood near Knowlton, indicated that the residents were interested in preserving this site. She suggested several people to contact.

Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund

Mr. Tyler requested authorization for the expenditure of \$450 from the Harry A. Batten Memorial Fund to pay the registration fee for Ms. Petrillo's attendance at a conference of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy on Land Use and the Constitution -- the New Realities. Ms. Petrillo explained that the conference included several sessions on the ruling of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in the United Artists' case.

A MOTION to approve this request for reimbursement of costs for Ms. Petrillo to attend the conference, made by Mr. Nathan and seconded by Mr. Wilds, was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned.

Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary

MINUTES APPROVED: 8 JANUARY 1992