

SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
FOR THE REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS FOR EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY

16 December 1987

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Christine Washington, Vice-Chairman
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
David Dambly, Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning
Commission
John Street, Esq., Councilman, Fifth District
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing
David Wismer, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Licenses
and Inspections

Steve Ludwig, Esq., Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation
Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sally Elk, Historic Research Technician
Terri Koob, Executive Secretary
Maureen Heaney, Clerk Steno I

Also: Edna Irving, Councilman Street's Office
Robert Caggiano, Rick Ragan, Maria Aristone and Pat Heron
of Kode Developers
Rod Werner, Skip Forwood and Robert Silverman of Historical
Developers of Pennsylvania
David Baldinger, Sandy Garz and Bruce Wiggins, City
Planning Commission
Frank Weiss, Architect
Jeff Brown, Russell Milnor and Pat Smith, Redevelopment
Authority
Kate Stevenson and Bill Bolger, National Park Service
MaryLou McFarland and Ellen Freedman, The Preservation
Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Carla Walters and Mitchell Mastrin, Fairmount Neighbors
Association
And others.

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY

At the request of the Office of Housing and the Redevelopment Authority, the Historical Commission met to review three proposals received by the City of Philadelphia for the development of Eastern State Penitentiary. The Historical Commission has been asked to evaluate the proposals and to determine whether any of the three meet a preservation standard. The results of today's meeting will be transmitted to the Technical Evaluation Committee to consider in its deliberations toward making a recommendation to the Redevelopment Authority.

Mr. Tyler reviewed for the Commission members and others present the history of Eastern State Penitentiary. Eastern State Penitentiary stands as John Haviland's masterpiece in prison architecture. Constructed between 1823 and 1836, the structure was designed originally with seven radials. Three more radials were added in 1877, one in 1894, and another in 1911. The building represents the architectural expression of the Pennsylvania penal system of solitary confinement, work and moral reform. Mr. Tyler noted that Eastern State Penitentiary is probably the most important complex in the City of Philadelphia having world wide significance.

Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that there were originally four proposals submitted, however, one developer has withdrawn his submission. The three remaining proposals are being presented to the Commission today. Mr. Tyler noted that each of the developers or their representatives are present today to answer any questions which the Commission members may have.

Jason Nathan pointed out that at the last Commission meeting the Commission reached a consensus that none of the proposals met any reasonable preservation standards. He asked Mr. Tyler if the proposals being presented today come closer to a preservation plan that might be acceptable to the Historical Commission.

Mr. Tyler agreed with Mr. Nathan's recollection of the Commission's previous position. At that time, no proposal met with a standard of preservation. These same developers, however, were given the opportunity to revise their proposals and resubmit. Mr. Tyler expressed his belief that the proposals being presented today come closer to the Historical Commission's standards than the previous submissions.

Mr. Tyler introduced the first proposal from Breslin Development Corporation. This proposal calls for significant demolition on the site. The building envelope of two radials will be retained as well as the base of the central guard tower. The developer proposes alterations to the non-historic portion of the central guard tower. The administration building will be retained and restored. Two new retail buildings will be erected on the site. The perimeter walls will remain in place with an additional entrance off 22nd Street and off Corinthian Avenue.

Mr. Tyler next presented the proposal prepared by Historical Developers of Pennsylvania. This proposal seeks to construct a small town within the prison walls. The administration building will be retained and converted into a Gate Keeper's House. New construction is proposed on much of the site. Two new wide entrances are proposed on 22nd Street and Corinthian Avenue. All of the radials will be demolished with the exception of number four. Radial four will be retained for conversion to commercial space, a gallery with a model of the original prison and several cells on the ground floor.

While the neck connecting the central tower with the cell blocks will also be retained, the shoulders and central corridors of the cell blocks will be demolished. However, these components will be symbolically indicated through the use of low walls and colored paving materials. Parking will be provided on the surface and on the second level of the new construction. Mr. Tyler noted that there exists the possibility of a second phase of development. Phase Two calls for housing on the third level of this new construction.

Scott Wilds noted new construction on the outside of the perimeter walls on Brown Street and Corinthian Avenue.

Mr. Tyler stated that the new construction in these areas consist of townhouses.

The third proposal offers an office and retail complex. The administration building will be retained along with the perimeter walls. Also retained will be radials 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7, the laundry and kitchen buildings, and the prison chapel. The central tower will be retained but will be encased in a glass structure.

Radials 2 and 3 will be completely demolished. Radials 1, 5, 6, and 7 will be modified to some degree. Radial 4 will be preserved and restored to demonstrate the original character of the prison.

Radial 5 will be retained largely in its original form but will have interior walls removed and window and door openings built into the walls to accommodate commercial uses.

Radial 6 will also retain much of its form but will be bisected by a passageway to allow for greater pedestrian access through the complex. Proposed additions to the radial will accomodate greater commercial space.

Radials 1 and 7 will retain much of their cell block structure; however, the connecting neck and shoulder sections will be demolished and new single story commercial structures will extend beyond the historic building envelopes.

A large new supermarket and parking structure will be built on the site of former Radial 3.

Two vehicular entrances will be cut into the perimeter walls. Ground level parking will be provided in between the radials.

Ms. Stevenson from the National Park Service addressed the Commission and expressed her concern for the preservation of this most

significant historic resource. Ms. Stevenson cited the architectural importance of the prison and noted the building's designation by the United States Department of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark. Ms. Stevenson stated that all three proposals call for major demolition and if any one of these proposals are executed she would have to recommend to the Secretary of the Interior that this landmark be required to forfeit its status as a National Historic Landmark.

The Commission members discussed at length the use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines in the evaluation of the proposals and whether any one could conform to those guidelines.

Barbara Kaplan informed the Commission that this site was previously advertised two and a half years ago with the requirement that all proposals must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines. At that time, only one proposal was received by the City. This proposal for housing was rejected by the City because it would have required public subsidies from various sources that would have amounted to between \$25,000 and \$30,000 per unit.

Richard Tyler stated that the present request for proposals cites the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines but does not require that they must be followed.

All potential developers were notified in the RFP of the Historical Commission's jurisdiction over this property and the need to comply with the preservation ordinance.

At this time, Jason Nathan invited the developers present to clarify or add to the information so far presented on each of the proposals. Mr. Nathan also requested to hear private preservationists' view on this matter and also to hear any position which the Planning Commission can offer at this time.

MaryLou McFarland from the Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia informed the Commission that a consultant has been retained by the Pew Charitable Trusts to study the need for remote storage by area museums, libraries and repositories. This study will examine the Eastern State Penitentiary as well as other properties. This report should be completed and become available in January.

Rick Ragan from Kode Developers addressed the Commission and stated that he had received a letter from the Pennsylvania Prison Society which indicated an interest in establishing 3,000 square feet for their offices on the site of Eastern State Penitentiary. Mr. Ragan also stated that there was also another request that the Chapel be preserved and that Kode Developers agreed to this. Mr. Ragan concluded that he does not think it is fair for Ms. Stevenson from the National Park Service to suggest that there be nothing done to this site after all the time which has been put into this project.

Barbara Kaplan stated that the Planning Commission informally reviewed these proposals and the consensus was that the Kode proposal was preferable.

David Hollenberg stated that for a building permit to be approved,

the proposal would first have to be submitted to the Architectural Committee.

The Commission discussed the significance of the penitentiary, the three proposals and the possibility of reasonable options at length. Although the Commission entered no formal vote, it did achieve a sense of the meeting. In the opinion of this Commission, the Kode Development proposal, while falling short of a preservation ideal, has enough merit from our perspective to warrant consideration. The Commission further anticipates that perhaps extensive negotiations will occur before it can approve permit applications for the project. The architect for Kode indicated a willingness to work with the Commission in an effort to realize the many objectives, including preservation, sought at and for this site.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Maureen Heaney
Clerk Steno I

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