

THE MINUTES OF THE 281st STATED MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

7 June 1984

F. Otto Haas, Chairman

Present: F. Otto Haas, Chairman of the Commission
Janet S. Klein, Vice Chairman of the Commission
Edward Pinkowski
Commissioner Dudley Sykes, Department of Public Property
Commissioner Warren Eisenberg, Procurement Department
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Kenneth Cooper, Esq., Deputy City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian

Also: Theodore T. Bartley, Jr., F.A.I.A., Member of the Architectural Committee
Barbara Gilbert, Esq.,
Frank Scipione, Deputy Commissioner, Fire Department
Raymond Tate, Department of Licenses and Inspections
Harry Fertik, Owner of 243 S. Quince Street and 222 S. Jessup Street
Diana Fertik
Peter Kelsen, Esq.
Francis Henkels, Architect
Katherine Niven
Wayne Senville
Irv Kosmin, Let Lits Live Coalition
Ellen Miller, Let Lits Live Coalition
Keith DeVries, 225 S. Jessup Street
Roger T. Prichard, Let Lits Live Coalition
Astrid M. Caruso, Old City Civic Association
David McKenna, South Street Star
Joann Weeks, Washington Square West Project Area Committee
Barbara Halpern, Let Lits Live Coalition
Bill Blades, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation
Jefferson Moak, Philadelphia Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians
Councilman John Street, Philadelphia City Council
and others.

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

Owing to there being numerous persons in attendance at the meeting concerned with the fate of the Lit Brothers Department Store complex, the Chairman directed that the Lits issue be discussed before routine business.

NEW BUSINESS

City Council Resolutions Concerning the Lit Brothers Department Store Buildings.
The Historian reviewed the current status of the Lit Brothers Department Store complex. On 29 May 1984, the Historical Commission met to consider reports laid before it by the Fire Department and the Department of Licenses

and Inspections. The numerous violations of the Fire and Building Codes mentioned in the reports included open shafts and holes in the floors, the absence of an activated sprinkler system, the lack of certified standpipes, the abundance of combustible materials throughout the buildings, fire doors either jammed open or shut and the like. From this, Commissioner Richmond of the Fire Department concluded that Lit Brothers constituted a critical and life threatening hazard to the people of Philadelphia and to members of the Fire Department. Owing to the hazardous condition of the buildings, the Historical Commission, in the interest of public safety, voted on 29 May for the removal of the six month delay on demolition approved on 3 May.

Since then, new developments regarding Lit Brothers occurred. Mr. Tyler reported that City Council, earlier in the day, passed two resolutions regarding Lit Brothers. One, urged the Historical Commission to reinstate its six month delay; the other, initiated an inquiry into the City's and Hansen Properties' participation in the Lits project. In addition, Councilman John Street introduced for Council consideration a transfer ordinance to provide up to \$250,000 for the correction of the outstanding building and fire code violations at the Lits complex.

The Historian also reported that Hansen Properties and Richard I. Rubin have entered a preliminary agreement for the development of Lit Brothers. This has effectively halted the proposed immediate demolition of the buildings. Hansen Properties and Richard I. Rubin have agreed to study the site for a mixed use development to include the relocation of the Greyhound bus terminal from 17th and Market Streets to the Lits parcel. While negotiations between Hansen Properties and Richard I. Rubin continue, representatives of the Fire Department, Licenses and Inspections and the Historical Commission, the developers and Councilman Street will meet on 8 June to discuss the steps needed to be taken to secure the buildings and reduce or eliminate the fire and safety hazards which presently exist.

The Chairman recognized Councilman John Street who informed the Commission of the Resolution unanimously passed by City Council urging that the Historical Commission reimpose a moratorium of six months on the razing of the Lits property. Mr. Street read the Resolution and submitted a certified copy of it to the Commission.

In view of Hansen Properties' intention not to proceed with demolition, the Commission's Historian recommended that the Historical Commission not reinstate its six month delay on demolition at this time. The members of the Commission agreed and no action was taken. The Commission's removal of the moratorium on 29 May stands.

Mr. Pinkowski asked that a copy of the City Council Resolution urging the reimposition of the six month delay and the Historian's report on the scheduled 8 June 1984 meeting be appended to the Minutes of this meeting.

THE MINUTES of the 280th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 3 May 1984. Mr. Pinkowski asked that the Minutes of 3 May 1984 be corrected. The original motion to delay the demolition of the Lits Buildings for a period of up to six months received its second before a separate motion to table the vote was offered by Mr. Beckman.

Subject to this amendment, the Minutes of the 280th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 3 May 1984, were approved and directed to be filed.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee for 16 May 1984, Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman. Mr. Levy presented to the Historical Commission for consideration the Report of the Architectural Committee for 16 May 1984. He noted that owing to his absence from that meeting, he requested Mr. Bartley's presence at the Commission meeting to answer any questions concerning the Committee's recommendations.

Before acting upon the report, Mr. Levy and Mr. Bartley suggested the removal of two items of concern to various persons present at the meeting. These included 243 S. Quince Street/222 S. Jessup Street and 712 S. Front Street. It was agreed that these would be acted upon separately. A motion to accept and approve the Report of the Architectural Committee for 16 May 1984, exclusive of the items concerning 243 S. Quince Street/222 S. Jessup Street and 712 S. Front Street, and subject to two minor changes, was made seconded and carried. The two changes are as follows: On page 1, the name "Thomas Rienzi" should read "Tony Rienzi." And on page 2, paragraph 1, the last sentence should be corrected to read: "The members recommended that the bracket below the belt course at the addition to the south...."

At the request of Mr. Levy, Mr. Bartley reported the Architectural Committee's unanimous recommendation that the Historical Commission approve the proposed additions and alterations to 243 S. Quince Street/222 S. Jessup Street subject to the modification of the dormer window on the two story addition to the Quince Street property. Mr. Bartley explained that the Committee members found the proposed alterations and additions to be compatible in scale and character with the Quince and Jessup Street houses.

Keith DeVries, resident of 225 S. Jessup Street, spoke in opposition to the proposed additions. In Mr. DeVries' opinion, the proposed additions do not continue the historic tradition of the houses and are inconsistent with the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, he suggested further that the proposed new construction would introduce sprawl into the Washington Square West neighborhood. In summation, he asked that the Commission not approve the proposed additions.

Joann Weeks of the Washington Square West Project Area Committee (PAC) reported to the Commission that the PAC Board met on 21 May 1984 and voted "no opposition" to the proposed undertaking.

The Chairman thanked Mr. DeVries and Ms. Weeks for their comments. Mr. Bartley reiterated the Committee's recommendation expressing once again the Committee's opinion that the architect's design for the proposed additions and alterations had been handled in a professional and respectful manner. Following some additional discussion, the Historical Commission voted to accept the recommendation of its Committee and approve the proposed renovations to 243 S. Quince Street/ 222 S. Jessup Street, subject to the dormer window revision.

The Commission next took under consideration a request for permission to demolish the building situate at 712 S. Front Street. Mr. Bartley explained the owner's desire to demolish the existing house and to construct a new house of contemporary design on the two properties at 712 and 714 S. Front Street. 714 S. Front Street stands presently as a vacant lot. On 16 May, the Architectural Committee asked the owner, Louis Esposito, to discuss with his architect the possibility of preserving 712 S. Front Street, or at least its facade, and constructing an addition to it on the adjoining lot at 714.

In compliance with the Committee's recommendation, Mr. Esposito asked his architect, James Kise, to examine the feasibility of preservation of the building at 712 S. Front Street. Owing to the narrow lot size of each of the two parcels and the owner's need for adequately sized rooms, the architect was unable to include, in a satisfactory manner, the existing building, or its facade, into the new plan. As a result, Mr. Bartley recommended that the Historical Commission allow the demolition of the building at 712 S. Front Street but not until plans for the construction of the replacement structure have been prepared and submitted for review and approval by the Architectural Committee and the Commission.

The Commission members agreed with Mr. Bartley's recommendation and voted to allow the demolition of 712 S. Front Street subject to the review and approval of the proposed new construction for the site.

THE REPORT of the Committee on Certification for 22 May 1984, Edward Pinkowski, Chairman. The Commission members agreed to table the Report of the Committee on Certification for 22 May 1984 until its next scheduled meeting to be held on 5 July 1984.

THE MINUTES of the Emergency Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 29 May 1984. The Minutes of the 29 May Emergency Meeting were reviewed, approved and directed to be filed. Mr. Pinkowski asked that copies of the Building and Fire Code violations issued by the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Fire Department and Commissioner Richmond's statement on the condition of the Lits buildings be appended to the 29 May Minutes.

THE REPORT on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for the month of May, 1984, Richard Tyler, Historian. The Historian's report for May was reviewed, approved and directed to be filed with the official copy of the Minutes.

OLD BUSINESS

New Preservation Ordinance. Upon the recommendation of the ad hoc Ordinance Committee, the Historical Commission voted to endorse the final draft of the proposed preservation ordinance for review by the Administration and introduction into City Council.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Architectural Historian