

THE MINUTES OF THE 302nd STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

25 June 1986

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
Joan Ferreira
Grace Gary
Caroline Golab
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
Henry Herling, Commissioner, Department of Licenses and
Inspections
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
Becky Northrop, Director of Policy and Planning, Office of
Housing
Charles Pizzi, First Deputy Director, Office of Director of
Commerce
John Street, Esq., Councilman, Fifth District
Dudley Sykes, Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Mark MacQueen, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Terri Koob, Executive Secretary

Also: Caroline Hogue, Law Clerk, Law Department
William Blades and A. Robert Jaeger of the Philadelphia
Historic Preservation Corporation
Patrick Starr, Foundation for Architecture
Mary Lou McFarland, Executive Director, Preservation Coalition
of Greater Philadelphia
George Thomas, Clio Group
Dave Davis, WHYY
Jerry Roller, Architect, for 713 Walnut Street
Kevin Boyle, Esq., representing the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
for Roman Catholic High School and Our Lady of Mercy Roman
Catholic Church and Rectory
Robert Cahill, Jr., Bruno J. Talvacchia, George Forde, Eugene
Murray, James McSherry, and others representing the Alumni
Association of Roman Catholic High School
And others.

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

THE MINUTES of the 301st Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 30 April 1986, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman, were reviewed and approved.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 16 June 1986, David Hollenberg, Chairman. Mr. Hollenberg reported that a Committee recommendation to relocate condensers from the front entrance of 2315 Green Street was omitted from the report. Mr. Hollenberg stated that the architect agreed to this change and an approval of this project is now recommended. Mr. Hollenberg noted that the report submitted by Growth Properties containing economic data supporting their demolition request for 136-148 N. Delaware Avenue has been turned over to an independent consultant for evaluation. The results of this evaluation are pending. Mr. Hollenberg informed the Commission that subsequent to the 16 June 1986 meeting, Mr. Taxin submitted a one page report supporting justification for demolition of 149 S. Hancock Street. According to Mr. Hollenberg, this information is inadequate and the Committee recommends that Mr. Taxin supply further information.

The Commission unanimously voted to accept the Report of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 16 June 1986 with the inclusion of the additional recommended information presented today by Mr. Hollenberg for 2315 Green Street, 136-148 N. Delaware Avenue and 149 S. Hancock Street.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 15 May 1986, David Hollenberg, Chairman. Mr. Hollenberg reported that the additional information requested for 907 Pine Street and 423 Vine Street has not been received. These two projects are still pending. In addition, the staff report evaluating the canopies and lighting on the Colonnade at 1601-1623 Spring Garden Street has not been received. A committee recommendation on this submission is also pending. An amended front elevation for 1827 Delancey Street has been received and an approval is now recommended for this project.

Mr. Hollenberg next introduced the submission for 713 Walnut Street included in the report of 15 May. Ms. Siemiontkowski presented an overview of the issues that emerged over the last several months concerning the design of a commercial display area for this 1799 row house attributed to Benjamin Henry Latrobe. Ms. Siemiontkowski explained that this building constitutes part of the first speculative row house development in the city, the form that dominated future residential development in Philadelphia. The original submission made to the architectural Committee on 12 December 1985 involved the installation of a greenhouse type structure to the front of 713 Walnut Street covering the original ground floor window openings. At that time, the Committee recommended that the design for this display area be confined to the portion of the building below the ground floor window sills. That area, as shown in a 1960's photograph, underwent significant alteration in the past. The Committee also recommended as an alternative solution the construction of a free-standing kiosk type structure on the sidewalk. Subsequently, the architect appeared at the Architectural Committee Meeting of 9 January 1986 with three schemes, one for a free-standing kiosk which the Committee found acceptable and recommended its approval to the Commission.

The Commission agreed. The architect next sought approval from the Art Commission and the Streets Department. The kiosk was rejected by both these agencies which required the architect to begin the process anew. At the 15 May 1986 meeting of the Architectural Committee, the architect presented a proposal for a glass display case mounted on brackets attached to the building facade. This display case actually is positioned in front of one of the windows. It is the opinion of the staff, as reported by Ms. Siemiontkowski, that this seriously impacts on the integrity of the building for two reasons. First, the proposal is not in conformity to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines which are specifically cited in the preservation ordinance as a criterion for evaluating proposals. Secondly, the staff contends that the approval of the architect's proposal may set a bad precedent in terms of signage and other attachments to historic building facades. The proposal not only obscures historic fabric of the building but is out of character with the historic features of the structure. In conclusion, Ms. Siemiontkowski stated that it is the staff recommendation that the Commission not approve the submission as presented.

Mr. Hollenberg informed the Commission that at the 15 May 1986 meeting, the Committee recommended that the display case be reduced in height to a point below the center meeting rail of the ground floor windows and that the case be centered precisely on the windows. In addition, the Committee asked that the architect simplify the details of the display case and avoid historicism. Mr. Hollenberg added that the Committee also requested that the brackets be lowered almost to the sidewalk level to keep the line of the showcase down. As indicated on the latest submission presented by the architect, all of these recommendations have not been heeded.

Commissioner Sykes recommended that a coordinating meeting be held between the Historical Commission, the City Planning Commission, the Art Commission and any other department having jurisdiction. Out of this meeting a recommendation could be made to the architect as to what design would be acceptable for each agency involved. Councilman Street interjected that the duty of the Historical Commission should be to concern itself with historical aspects of the issue only. Commissioner Stykes disagreed stating that we should try to prevent any further delay and emphasized the need for interdepartmental coordination.

Patrick Starr of the Foundation for Architecture addressed the Commission and voiced his support for Councilman Street's statement that the Historical Commission should only base its decisions on historical integrity. Mr. Starr stated that as a representative of the Foundation for Architecture he would like to support the idea of a non-permanent structure, i.e., the use of a vendor cart, window flower boxes and the like.

Jerry Roller, Architect for 713 Walnut Street, addressed the Commission and stated his concurrence with Commissioner Sykes. He indicated he would welcome an opportunity to work jointly with all the departments having jurisdiction over this project.

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the Report of the Architectural Committee Meeting held on 15 May 1986 including the approval of 1827 Delancey

Street. However, the Commission voted to reject the recommendation in the report for 713 Walnut Street and further directed that the Historical Commission staff set up a coordinating meeting with all the agencies involved with 713 Walnut Street in an effort to find a solution acceptable to all departments.

THE MINUTES of the Meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation held on 14 March 1986, Grace Gary, Chairman. Ms. Gary requested that the Commission consider historic designation of Roman Catholic High School, 301-313 N. Broad Street, and Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church and Rectory, 2135-2159 N. Broad Street. These two items are pending from the report of the 14 March 1986 meeting.

Roman Catholic High School, 301-313 N. Broad Street

Ms. Gary presented an architectural and historical description of Roman Catholic High School and Mr. Baron showed a slide for the Commission's review. Ms. Gary pointed out some of the architecturally significant features of the building and emphasized that the Committee holds that in addition to significant architectural integrity, this building possesses major historical importance.

Kevin Boyle addressed the Commission and stated that he was authorized to act in behalf of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Roman Catholic High School. Mr. Boyle stated that the Cardinal, as President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, has exclusive control to manage the school according to the charter established under the Cahill will. Mr. Boyle agreed to forward a copy of this charter to Mr. MacQueen, counsel for the Historical Commission. Mr. Boyle stated that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia would like to present testimony opposing the historic designation of Roman Catholic High School. However, owing to the illness of its key witness, Thomas Mangan, an architect and former member of the Art Commission, the Archdiocese would like to have the hearing postponed. In addition, testimony has been prepared by the Controller of the Archdiocese, Monsignor Cunningham, who is currently out of the country. Mr. Boyle stated that this testimony would concern historical significance, architecture and the architect involved as well as evidence pertaining to constitutional issues.

Mr. MacQueen asked Mr. Boyle the position of the Board of Trustees of Roman Catholic High School, owners of the property. Mr. Boyle stated that to the best of his knowledge they have not adopted a position. At their last meeting, they dealt with the issue of whether or not to close the school operation and historic designation was not voted upon.

Mr. George Forde, a member of the Alumni Association of Roman Catholic High School, stated that to the best of his knowledge, the Board of Trustees has met only once in the last three or four years and that meeting was to decide if the school should remain open. According to Mr. Forde, the Cahill will stipulates that the Board of Trustees shall meet monthly.

Robert Cahill addressed the Commission on behalf of the Alumni Association of Roman Catholic High School in support of the proposed designation. Mr.

Cahill urged the Commission to hear this submission at today's meeting and cited the fact that this is the third appearance for representatives of the Alumni Association.

Dr. Golab questioned Mr. Boyle on the real issues involved in the objection to designation. Mr. Boyle said that First and Fifth Amendment rights formed the principal bases for the Archdiocese's opposition. Mark MacQueen stated that the Commission has no power under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania and the City Charter to decide legal questions. Mr. MacQueen informed Mr. Boyle that he may offer factual information as testimony before the Commission, but he should realize that the City Solicitor's office will determine if its initial interpretation of the constitutional issues is correct or incorrect based upon the testimony and will so advise the Commission. Mr. MacQueen further stated that should the Archdiocese disagree with the decision, they have the recourse of seeking a review of the action of this Commission in the Court of Common Pleas. Councilman Street requested a policy determination as to what extent the Commission was obligated to listen to extended testimony on issues irrelevant to the Commission. Mr. MacQueen stated that he will provide the Commission with this information.

The Chairman proposed and the Commission unanimously voted to grant a continuance to ensure ample opportunity for testimony by all interested parties. However, Mr. Montgomery stated that four months was more than sufficient time to prepare testimony and this would be the last postponement. Mr. Montgomery suggested that the Archdiocese prepare a back-up person to deliver the testimony in the event that the witness is unable to appear. Ms. Kaplan suggested further that written testimony be prepared and submitted. Mr. Boyle agreed to supply the Historical Commission with such a paper in approximately one week. The Chairman informed Mr. Boyle that a special meeting of the Commission would be held in approximately two weeks to decide the historic designation of Roman Catholic High School. Mr. Tyler agreed to coordinate the Commission members and set up the meeting. Mr. Tyler added that he will apprise Mr. Boyle and Mr. Cahill of the date, time and place of this special meeting and will satisfy legal notification requirements by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper of the date, time and place of meeting.

Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church and Rectory, 2135-2159 N. Broad Street

Ms. Gary presented a description of Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church and Rectory and Mr. Baron showed a slide to the Commission for review. Mr. Boyle again addressed the Commission on behalf of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia requesting postponement until the specially scheduled meeting in approximately two weeks based on the same reasons as offered on the Roman Catholic High School issue. Mr. Boyle stated that this property was under an Agreement of Sale and that the perspective owners were aware of the proposed designation.

The Commission agreed to postpone the consideration of the designation of Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church and Rectory until the special meeting of the Historical Commission which will be held in approximately two weeks.

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THE REPORTS on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for 15 April - 15 May 1986 and 15 May - 15 June 1986, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer, were reviewed and approved for filing. Mr. Tyler informed the Commission that the Archaeologist position would probably be filled by 1 August 1986. In the event of a strike by City employees, Mr. Tyler advised the Commission that he would be in his office by the second or third day of the walk-out, if possible.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Koob
Executive Secretary

TK/pas