

REPORT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Robert Thomas, Chair
Commission Conference Room, One Parkway, 13th Fl., 1515 Arch St.
25 August 1998

Present

Robert Thomas, Chair
Herbert Levy
Suzanne Pentz

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
R. Scott Jacob, Executive Secretary

Also

Francis McKibbin
James Mizialko, Motorola, Inc.
Vincent Costello, Department of Public Property
Melissa Hanlon, Motorola, Inc.
Daniel Raup, Motorola, Inc.
Hitesh Patel, Department of Public Property
Chris Russo
Christina Romano
Jack Conroy
Judith Eden, Center City Residents Association (CCRA)
James Garrison, The Hillier Group
Melissa Moore, Sign Spec, Inc.
John Tucker, Bower Lewis Thrower Architects
Robert Powers, Powers and Co.
Margaret Ulrich, CCRA
Patricia Wilson Aden, Preservation Alliance
Charles Overholser
Eric Spaeth, Voith and Mactavish Architects
William Schwartz, Rittenhouse Restaurant Group, LLC
Laurence Graybill, Graboyes Commercial Window Co.
Dennis Costello, Rittenhouse Restaurant Group, LLC
Alvin Bellack

Mr. Thomas, Chair, recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.

City Hall

Department of Public Property, Owner

Vincent Costello, Applicant

DATE: 1871-1901

PROPOSAL: Antennas on City Hall Tower

This proposal in concept calls for the installation of eight antennas for the City's new public safety communications radio system. The applicant proposes to mount the antennas next to the oculus windows on City Hall dome. Vincent Costello, the applicant, explained that Federal Communications Commission requirements necessitate the installation of these antennas. Melissa Hanlon of Motorola Corporation submitted revised drawings demonstrating the appearance of the antennas on the dome. Mr. Tyler recommended installing antennas within the oculus so as not to stand out from the slope of the dome. The applicant explained that the antennas must project out from the portholes to provide optimal transmission capacity. Committee members suggested installing mock-up antennas, painted to match the dome, and with good photographic documentation to demonstrate the amount of visibility.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the installation of a mock-up of the new scheme, painted to match the dome, and with good photographic documentation to demonstrate the amount of visibility.

123 Christian Street

Chris Russo , Owner/Applicant

DATE: 1825

PROPOSAL: Legalize windows, security door

This proposal calls for legalizing several alterations to this house completed without a permit. Mr. Russo claims that a former owner:

1. Closed the basement windows with glass block
2. Changed the upper floor windows to vinyl windows with snap-in muntins before he purchased the property in 1994.
3. He added the security door for safety considerations, which he outlined in a letter to the Commission.

He claims that he does not have the money to remove the vinyl windows and he still needs the security door. Committee members shared the concern that Mr. Russo should not have to bear the cost of remedying the previous owner's errors, and agreed to recommend sending the issue to the Financial Hardship Committee meeting.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend sending the issue to the next Financial Hardship Committee meeting.

8001 Verree Road, Knowlton

Jack Conroy, Owner

Anthony Marfia, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1879-1881

PROPOSAL: Conceptual Approval - large addition, parking lot, security gate

1. This preliminary review entails adding a large ballroom addition to this Frank Furness-designed mansion to convert it to a catering and banquet facility. Mr. Thomas recommended redesigning the details of the exterior of the addition to echo the historic building, rather than the Colonial Revival style of the proposed design. The addition, which doubles the footprint of the house, wraps around the northern half of the mansion, obscuring a large portion of the house and demolishing a rear porch. The architect explained that some of the addition attaches to a somewhat later portion of the house. Committee members explained that historic additions constitute an important aspect of a buildings history, and this one was designed by Thomas Lonsdale, designer of the Baptist Temple, a celebrated architect around the turn of the century. Mr. Levy recommended recessing the proposed addition to allow for greater visibility of the porch. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of an addition in concept, but pulled back to allow greater visibility of the porch.

2. The applicants also propose a parking lot and making a new driveway and entrance in the stone wall surrounding the property. Committee members asked the applicant to consider breaking up the parking lot into smaller lots with plantings between them. Committee members did not object to the new cut in the wall, and approved of the proposal to build-up stone piers to stand at each side of the opening, much like the existing gate.

3. The proposal also entails enclosing more of a partially-glazed porch. In the early Twentieth Century two of the porch openings were glazed-in. The owner wishes to fill in most of the remaining openings with similar glazing. Committee members did not object to the proposal, as long as the new glazing walls match the existing.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval in concept of:

- 1. An addition*
- 2. Enclosure of the main house porch*
- 3. Parking lots, and a new driveway opening in the wall.*

34-48 South Broad Street, Girard Bank

Craig Spencer, Owner

James Garrison, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1905

PROPOSAL: Cut door, alter door

This proposal involves minor alterations to the domed portion of the former Girard Bank. Grand Bay Hotel, the new occupant, plans to use this section of the complex as the main entrance lobby.

1. New metal and glass doors will replace damaged, non-original doors along Broad Street. Committee members did not object to this replacement.

2. The plans also call for cutting down an existing window into a new fire exit in an alcove of the Chestnut Street facade. This location does not fall within the building's central section, and the Committee agreed that the proposal would not disrupt the symmetry.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposal, with staff to review and approve details.

1535 Locust Street

Bank Philadelphia, Owner

Melissa Moore, Applicant

DATE: 1928

PROPOSAL: Illuminated sign

This proposal entails installing a back-lit plastic and aluminum sign box above the main entrance of the building. The design of the sign involves translucent plastic letters and small star shapes laid into an internally-illuminated aluminum box. Mr. Baron suggested that the applicant consider using halo-lit metal letters instead. Committee members asked that the applicant submit more details of what remains behind the existing metal box sign of the historic stone entablature and how the new sign would fit within the opening before they recommend approval of the new sign.

The Committee voted unanimously to ask the applicant to return with more details of what remains behind the existing metal box sign of the historic stone entablature. The Committee considered the application an incomplete one.

1428-1430 Chestnut Street, Packard Building

Affirmative Equities Company, L.P.

John Thrower, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1922

PROPOSAL: Cuts for parking garage in lower floors

The applicants appeared before the Committee for preliminary review. This proposal involves renovating the empty Packard building into a hotel, with a restaurant on the ground floor and a parking garage in the third through tenth floors, within the brick portion above the stone base of the building. The proposal for the garage calls for:

1. Enlarging an opening on Sansom Street and
2. The conversion of the large and ornate arched entrance on 15th Street to a vehicle opening to accommodate just under 300 cars.
3. The removal of the glazing from every window of the seven-level parking garage.

The Committee expressed its concern that converting the ornate arched pedestrian entrance on 15th Street to a vehicle opening significantly alters a character-defining entrance, and does not conform with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Places*. Patricia Aden of the Preservation Alliance echoed these concerns. Committee members discussed the option of having both the entrance and exit to the parking structure on Sansom Street. John Tucker, architect for the project, stated that he would look into that option. The Committee and members of the community also objected to the plan to remove the glazing from every window of the seven-level parking garage. It was noted that two parking garages exist in very close proximity to the building.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval in concept of:

1. *The curb cuts*
2. *New entrance on Sansom Street only, and*
3. *To deny approval of cutting a new vehicular entrance on 15th Street and de-glazing the windows for the garage.*

2004 Spruce Street

Leroy Kean, Owner/Applicant

DATE: c. 1860

PROPOSAL: New garage and deck

This proposal calls for attaching a new garage and deck onto the back of the applicant's house. Unfortunately, the work will hide much of an original character-defining rear bay window. The proposal does not include any structures on the deck. Committee members thought the architect should design the porch railings to allow visibility from the street through to the decorative rear bay of the house.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval, provided the railing be altered to allow visibility to the rear bay, with staff to review and approve details.

124 South 16th Street

Leroy Kean, Owner/Applicant

DATE: 1881

PROPOSAL: New front door, vents

This proposal entails legalizing work done to the entrance of this store without permit. The applicant installed an aluminum door and plywood transom with vents. The Committee thought the applicant should have an architect design a solution to allow for a transom and venting.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend denial of the proposal as submitted.

1901 Walnut Street, Rittenhouse Plaza

Rittenhouse Plaza, Inc., Owner

Robert Thomas, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1926

PROPOSAL: Screens

Mr. Thomas recused himself from the vote in order to present the proposal to the Committee, and turned the Chair over to Mr. Levy.

This proposal involves installing screens on the new windows approved for the Rittenhouse Plaza. The application calls for single panel, full-height screens. Committee members preferred single panel, half-height screens, so as not to obstruct the detail and depth of the entire window.

The Committee members voted to recommend approval of single panel, half-height screens.

1910 Spruce Street

Charles Overholser, Owner/Applicant

DATE: c. 1855

PROPOSAL: Rear garage and deck

This proposal consists of demolishing a simple brick and cinder block rear garage and building a more elaborate one with a deck.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval, with staff to review and approve details.

220 West Rittenhouse Square Street

Alvin Bellack, Owner of unit/Applicant

DATE: c. 1958

PROPOSAL: Replace existing greenhouse

This proposal involves rebuilding a rooftop greenhouse. Mr. Baron noted that the existing greenhouse gives an asymmetrical look to the top of the building as seen from Rittenhouse Square. Committee members agreed to recommend approval on the grounds that it sits at the top of the tower, constitutes a replacement, and as glass somewhat transparent. Mr. Levy asked the applicant to consider lowering the air conditioner. The applicant agreed to look into that possibility.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval.

219-229 South 18th Street, Rittenhouse Regency

Daniel Logan, Owner of unit/Applicant

DATE: 1929

PROPOSAL: Storefront alterations

1. This proposal calls for demolishing a non-original, modern storefront and building a new storefront with café doors that open onto the street.

2. The restaurant will have outdoor seating, for which the applicant wishes to install a nine foot awning along Locust street and a four foot awning along 18th Street. Committee members preferred a six foot, sideless awning on Locust Street, so as not to hang too far over the sidewalk. They expressed no objection to a four foot awning on the 18th Street location.

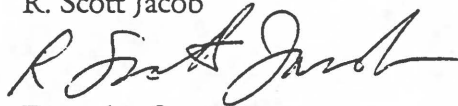
3. The proposal also calls for the installation of a granite base within the storefronts, to match the building's existing base. Committee members asked the applicant not to install the base.

The committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of:

- 1. New window configuration and café doors*
- 2. A six foot, sideless awning on Locust Street and a four foot awning on the 18th Street location.*
- 3. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend denial of the proposed granite bases.*

Respectfully submitted,

R. Scott Jacob



Executive Secretary