

THE MINUTES OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

23 February 1989

Present: David Hollenberg, Chairman
John Dickey, A.I.A.
Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A.

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation
Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Maria Petrillo, Chief Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department

Also: Richard Balka, Developer, and Ignatius Wang, Architect, to
present plans for the rehabilitation of 4313-17 Main Street.
Mark Thompson, Architect, to discuss with the Committee plans
for modifications to the PECO transformer at Emanuel Court,
22nd and Chestnut Streets.
Ed Cialko, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, and David
Baldinger, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, to review
with the Committee a set of preservation standards for the
rehabilitation of the Ridgway Library at Broad and Christian
Streets.
Hugh Zimmers, Architect, to present plans for the adaptive
reuse of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church at 37th and
Chestnut Streets.
Robert Wayne Tomlinson, Department of Public Property, to
discuss with the Committee proposed plaster repair in the
Mayor's Reception Room, 202 City Hall.
MaryLou MacFarland, Executive Director, Preservation Coalition
of Greater Philadelphia.

ALTERATIONS

4313-17 Main Street, Richard Balka, Developer, and Ignatius Wang, Architect. Messrs. Balka and Wang presented to the Committee their plans for a substantial rehabilitation of the building at 4313-17 Main Street. The developer proposes to convert this building, originally the Masonic Hall of Manayunk, to commercial use in the basement story and on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors.

The architect reviewed with the Committee all proposed exterior and interior alterations including the treatment of the Mason's Ceremonial Room on the third floor. The Committee found the proposed rehabilitation to conform substantially to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines and agreed to recommend a final approval of this project subject to several minor revisions and the submission of additional information.

The Committee asked for the submission of shop drawings for all millwork and a mortar specification for the masonry repointing. The Committee also expressed its concern over the introduction of a new mezzanine dividing the second floor into two stories. Mr. Wang described for the Committee the detail he devised which will allow the floor to narrow and to meet the center rail of the window without being visible from the street. The ceremonial altar on the third floor will be preserved and be incorporated into a single large apartment. In addition, the developer has agreed to preserve one of the early interior walls with its stenciling which exists behind a later wall added at the turn of the century. Photographs of this wall will be taken and given to the Commission for its file.

On the exterior, it is assumed that the original cornice will be found under an existing aluminum cover and that this original fabric will be retained and repaired. If the original cornice does not exist, the submission of a drawing showing a replacement cornice will be required. Finally, it was agreed that wood doors with glazing should be installed within the large, arched basement openings rather than glass block. These doors can be fixed in place for security reasons and need not be operable. The design of these doors should match the pair of original doors which has survived intact within one of the basement bays.

RECOMMENDATION: Final Approval subject to minor revisions and the submission of additional information.

Emanuel's Court, 22nd and Chestnut Streets, Mark B. Thompson, Architect.

Mr. Thompson appeared before the members of the Architectural Committee to discuss his proposed treatment of the PECO transformer located near the entrance to Emanuel's Court at 22nd and Chestnut Streets.

The architect initially intended to place the transformer underground. However, PECO refused to allow the unit to be buried and as a result, it now sits approximately six feet above grade. Mr. Thompson explained to the Committee his current intention to landscape the area around the transformer by creating a berm planted with shrubs. Since PECO also requires direct access to the front of the transformer, this area must be kept open. In order to screen this area, the architect intends to place tubs of evergreens in front of the transformer door.

The Committee expressed its concern over the size and placement of the transformer and discussed several alternatives to the existing condition. The members suggested the use of several smaller transformers, placement of the transformer(s) within the building and partially lowering the unit in its current position. Mr. Thompson suggested that none of these alternatives were acceptable and that the proposed landscaping should adequately solve the problem.

The Chairman pointed out to the Committee that the placement of the unit above ground constituted a violation of the permit since the approved drawings showed the transformer underground. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that members of the Committee and staff should meet with PECO to discuss this particular problem and the placement of transformers in general on historic properties.

RECOMMENDATION: No action required.

Tabernacle Presbyterian Church, 37th and Chestnut Streets, Hugh Zimmers, Architect. Mr. Zimmers presented to the Committee for its consideration schematic plans for the conversion of the main sanctuary of the Tabernacle Presbyterian Church into a theatre for dance and movement. The congregation has not used the main sanctuary for a number of years.

Mr. Zimmers explained to the Committee that the proposed conversion will not damage or destroy any original building fabric. The steel structure, stage, theatrical Equipment, etc. will float within the space and not intrude into the fabric. Theoretically, these alterations can be removed and the sanctuary restored. The basement will be converted into a performing arts studio.

Following some discussion of this project, the Committee voted to recommend its approval in concept. Working drawings and details will be submitted at a later date.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval in concept.

Ridgway Library, Broad and Christian Streets, Ed Ciolko, Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, and David Baldinger, Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Messrs. Cialko and Baldinger appeared before the Architectural Committee to request an approval of the preservation standards developed for the Ridgway Library at Broad and Christian Streets. The Ridgway Library, owned by the City of Philadelphia, stands vacant except for the basement which the City uses as a recreation center. Recently the City of Philadelphia entered into a long term lease with the Redevelopment Authority for the purpose of finding a developer for the property. The Authority has begun the preparation of development controls for the property and will soon advertise it as a part of its agreement with the City. Included in these development controls will be preservation standards to which the developer must conform.

The standards as drafted by the Redevelopment Authority in consultation with the Historical Commission staff require that the developer comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. In particular, the preservation standards identify several significant interior spaces which deserve special attention in planning the development and reuse of this property. The volume and architectural character of the former central reading room with its mezzazine level must be preserved and rehabilitated without the introduction of any unsympathetic structural or decorative elements such as new floors, mezzazines, etc.

The Committee agreed with the general intent of the preservation standards and recommend its approval subject to some rewriting for clarification.

RECOMMENDATION: Final Approval of Preservation Standards

Room 202 City Hall, Mayor's Reception Room, Wayne Tomlinson, Department of Public Property. Mr. Tomlinson appeared before the Architectural Committee to discuss with its members the problem of failing paint and plaster in the Mayor's Reception Room. Owing to a 30-day time constraint for the completion of repairs imposed by the Department, Mr. Tomlinson suggested the installation of wallboard rather than a replastering of the room. The Committee found this treatment unacceptable since the addition of wallboard over the existing plaster walls will significantly change the wood reveals in the room and alter its character.

Following considerable discussion of the problem, the Committee agreed upon a recommendation to the Department of Public Property. Owing to the 30-day time constraint, it was agreed that the failing

areas within the room should be scraped, to remove loose plaster and paint, and repaired with new plaster. The Committee suggests, however, that the Department attempt to identify the cause of the deterioration and find a long-term solution to it.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of plaster repair.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer