

THE MINUTES OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Hollenberg, Chairman

29 June 1989

Present: David Hollenberg, Architect, Chairman of the Committee
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect for the
Independence National Historical Park
John Dickey, A.I.A.
Donald Stevenson, Architect

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

Also: Robbie Cox, Paul Vaivoda and Philip Hooper of Curtis
Coxe Kennerly Architects
William Suchodoliski of O'Brien-Kreitzberg & Associates
Gerald Spoolstra and Michael Chicalo of A.W. Lookup
Corporation
R. Wayne Tomlinson, Department of Public Property
Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition of Greater
Philadelphia
Roger Prichard, Old City Civic Association
Marc Kaplin of Lesser & Kaplin, P.C.
Peter Rothberg of Gerswan Leeds
Luca Sena, Owner of 8 S. Front Street
Sabrina Soong, Soong Associates, Inc., Architects
Zion Bakshi, owner of 104 Market Street
Paul Hagins, III, Architect
Frank Abbott, Office of Gray Smith, Architect
Constance Spencer, Kearsley/Christ Church Hospital
Charles B. Landreth and L. S. Mezey, Owners of 723
Rodman Street

SUBMISSIONS FOR ALTERATIONS OR DEMOLITION

City Hall Tower Observation Deck, Robbie Cox, Paul Vaivoda and Phil Hooper of Curtis Cox Kennerly, William Suchodolski of O'Brien-Kreitzberg & Associates, Gerald Spoolstra and Michael Chicalo of A.W. Lookup Corporation and R. Wayne Tomlinson, Department of Public Property. Mr. Vaivoda presented to the Committee his firm's preliminary design for the proposed construction of an observation deck atop City Hall tower. The proposed deck will be of glass and steel construction. Perforated steel panels in certain areas of the roof and below the glass panel sills will allow for the circulation of fresh air. The steel frame and perforated steel panels will be finished to match the color of the restored tower. Mr. Vaivoda further explained that temporary stick antennae will be afixed to the deck. These antennae will be removed with the completion of a new transmission tower in the Roxborough section of the city. Within the transparent zone of laminated clear glass panels, the architects have proposed a series of oculus windows at the eight points which correspond to the major axes of Broad and Market Streets and the real and implied diagonals of the four squares.

Following Mr. Vaivoda's presentation, the Committee discussed with the architects some specific elements of the proposed design including the use of the oculus window and the number of vertical design elements. Mr. Hollenberg questioned the deck's ability to accommodate the scaffolding required to permit the continued maintenance of the William Penn statue. Mr. Vaivoda explained that the perforated steel roof panels will be removable to allow penetration of the scaffolding structure between the steel framework of the enclosure.

The Committee complimented the architects on the quality of their preliminary design. The Committee agreed to recommend an approval, in concept, but asked that the architects restudy their use of the oculus window. More importantly, the Committee once again expressed its concern over the reflectivity of the glass. The Committee advised the architects that shop drawings and material specifications will need to be submitted for review before any final approval can be granted.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval in concept.

24-26-28 South Front Street, Hans P. Stein and Curt Biehn of Hans P. Stein Architects, Marc Kaplin, Esq. of Lesser & Kaplin, P.C. and Peter Rothberg of Gershaw Leeds. Mr. Kaplin presented to the Committee his client's request for permission to demolish the three mid-nineteenth century commercial loft buildings at 24-26-28 South Front Street. Mr. Kaplin advised the Committee of his client's purchase of the first property at 28 South Front Street in 1985. The second and third properties at 24 and 26 South Front Street were purchased in 1986. The property at 26 South Front Street, however, was purchased subject to a lease which did not terminate until 1988.

Mr. Kaplin outlined for the Committee his client's attempts to preserve the existing buildings and undertake their rehabilitation with three separate development schemes. The first scheme called for a substantial rehabilitation of the three buildings for apartment use. Variances were secured for this proposed use and drawings prepared. The project, however, proved to be economically unfeasible and was abandoned. A second scheme called for rehabilitation of the buildings as retail and office space. Owing to market conditions at that time, this scheme, too, proved to be economically impracticable. The third and final scheme proposed a theatre and garage use. This scheme, also, would have preserved the historic buildings. This project failed, however, in part as a result of opposition to the proposed use by the Old City Civic Association.

Owing to a fire and some subsequent structural alterations to the three buildings, a problem now exists which, according to the applicant, requires demolition. Mr. Kaplin noted that the Department of Licenses and Inspections has cited 26 South Front Street as a public nuisance. In addition, Thomas J. Leidigh of the firm of Keast and Hood, Structural Engineers, evaluated the condition of the existing structures and recommended demolition as soon as possible. Mr. Leidigh reviewed with the Committee in detail the observations contained in his letter of 20 June 1989 concerning the structural integrity of each of the three buildings.

Mr. Kaplin reiterated to the Committee his client's original intent to preserve, reuse and rehabilitate the three historic buildings. However, owing to the present condition of these buildings and the failure of the various development schemes, the owners have determined that they have no choice at this time other than to correct the dangerous condition which currently exists through demolition.

The Committee questioned Mr. Leidigh concerning the possibility of stabilizing all of the existing walls or, at least, the front facades. Mr. Leidigh explained that it would be possible to brace the facades but that approximately 50% of the walls would have to be rebuilt in order to repair the cracks in the existing masonry.

In response to the staff, Mr. Kaplin explained that, as a fourth scheme, the developer has considered the possibility of placing a hotel on this site. However, no firm plans exist at this time for such a development. Since 1985, the applicant has expended more than 2 million dollars in carrying costs and in the preparation of various development schemes for these buildings. Mr. Kaplin stated that his client has no intention to use the site for surface parking.

Following some additional discussion concerning the possibility of salvaging and reusing historic fabric in any design for proposed new construction on the site, the Committee agreed to recommend as approval of the demolition permit application owing to the structural instability of the three buildings and the danger they present to the public welfare. The Committee also agreed to recommend that the applicant be asked to submit for the record the information required under Section (7)(f)(.1) through (.6) of the preservation ordinance. The Committee further recommended that the applicant be required to document the historic buildings, prior to demolition, with scale rectified photographs. And, finally, the Committee recommends to the Commission that the applicant be directed to reconstruct these facades to their original appearance using any original fabric which can be salvaged in the process of demolition.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of demolition permit application subject to conditions outlined above.

104 Market Street, Zion Bakshi, Owner and Paul Hagins, III, Architect.

Mr. Hagins presented to the Committee his plans for a rehabilitation of this three story brick structure located at 104 Market Street. The architect explained his intent to preserve and repair all existing historic fabric wherever possible and to reproduce, in kind, where necessary.

The Committee asked that the elevation drawing be revised to show a half gambrel roof which exists and which will remain unaltered.

The Committee agreed to recommend an approval of this project subject to the submission of shop drawings for all millwork replacement.

RECOMMENDATION: Final approval.

14 North Front Street, Sabrina Soong, Architect and Luca Sena, Owner.

Ms. Soong presented for the Committee's review plans for a substantial rehabilitation of an existing four story brick building with a fifth story Mansard roof at 14 North Street and the construction of a new rear addition. The building will be converted into a small hotel with a ground floor restaurant.

As proposed, Ms. Soong intends to restore the front facade of this building to its 1932 appearance as evidenced in a photograph contained in the Historical Commission files. On the south party wall, the architect proposes to infill several non-historic existing window openings and to cut new window openings to accommodate the building's new use. On the north wall, the majority of the existing window frames and sash will be retained; two will be removed and infilled; and one new window opening on the first floor will be installed.

The Committee expressed some concern over the proposed treatment of the south wall and suggested that the architect restudy the design, scale and configuration of the windows on this wall. The Committee further advised the architect to contact the National Park Service to obtain a reading on the acceptability of the proposed new windows for Tax Act certification. The Committee agreed that the snap-in muntins should be eliminated. The Committee further suggested that the new windows on the existing party wall and those on the new addition be treated in the same manner. Finally, the Committee also expressed concern over the placement and treatment of the thru-wall units on this wall.

The Committee voted to recommend an approval, in concept, with a recommendation that the south wall be restudied. The Committee also recommended the removal of the existing projecting sign structure on the facade of 14 North Front Street. All proposals for new signage must, of course, come to the Historical Commission for review and approval before installation.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval in concept.

712 N. Franklin Street, Frank Abbott of Gray Smith Architects. Mr. Abbott presented his proposal for the stabilization of the brick parapet wall on the side of this detached house. Mr. Abbott proposes to secure the wall with metal straps that will be painted to match the existing brickwork. The Committee noted that the parapet wall is not highly visible and has already been rebuilt.

The Committee voted to recommend an approval of this application.

RECOMMENDATION: Final approval.

Kearsley, Christ Church Hospital, 49th Street and Monument Avenue, Constance Spencer, Director of Development. Ms. Spencer presented to the Committee her request for permission to replace all existing wood window sash at Kearsley with new Marvin wood window sash. The original window frames will be retained and repaired. The proposed wood replacement sash will match the original as closely as possible.

The Committee examined the shop drawings with details for the various window types to be provided by Marvin. The Committee and staff agreed to work with Ms. Spencer to evaluate the shop drawings to assure conformance of the replacement window details with the original design. It was noted that the elevation drawing did not conform exactly with the details and should be corrected. Following some additional discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend an approval of this proposal.

RECOMMENDATION: Final approval subject to correction of drawings.

- 723 Rodman Street, Charles Landreth and L.S. Mezey, Owners. The Committee considered the applicants' request for permission to install a wooden roof deck and railing atop this Mansard roof rowhouse. Although the deck would be located on the rear half of the house, it would be highly visible. This results from the fact that the house is on a corner fronting a large amount of open space and because the slope of the mansard would require the street elevation of the deck to be raised upon stilts.

The Committee recommended against approval of this deck because of (1) the fact that the deck would be highly visible on this corner property no matter how far back on the roof it was placed; (2) the importance of the Mansard in defining the character of the building and; (3) the symmetry of the silhouette of this building with the similar structure behind it which would be ruined by this alteration.

The Committee was sympathetic to the fact that the house shares only a small 12 foot deep communal garden area with the house behind it. The members suggested that the deck should be redesigned to be sunken into the several feet between the ceiling and roof rafters thereby creating a hidden deck.

The owners stated that they would appeal the Committee recommendation to the Commission.

RECOMMENDATION: Denial.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer

Randal Baron
Preservation Planner