

THE MINUTES OF THE 343RD STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

11 July 1990

City Council Caucus Room

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chair
William L. Brown
David Brownlee
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
Reverend William D. Thompson
James Cuorato, Department of Commerce
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director,
City Planning Commission
Scott Wilds,
Office of Housing and Community Development
David Wismer, Department of Licenses and Inspections

Maria Petrillo, Esq., Chief Assistant City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historic Research Technician
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also: Michael F. Young, Classic Management, Inc.
Sal Spano, Wallach's Clothing Store, 1610 Chestnut
Emmanuel Kelly, Kelly/Maiello Architects
Eric Rahe, Bower Lewis Thrower/Architects
Avrum Kantor,
Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation
Catherine Franklin, Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association
Steve Kauffman, Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association
Marilyn Moody, 5310 Germantown Avenue
Deborah Kelly and Jennifer Goodman,
Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

THE MINUTES of the 342nd Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 13 June 1990, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. There being no objections, additions or corrections, the minutes were adopted.

The Report of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 28 June 1990, David Hollenberg, Chairman. The Committee reviewed eight applications, including two within the proposed Rittenhouse Fitler Historic District. Mr. Hollenberg provided a summary of each project and the recommendations of the Committee.

Recommendation to Retain an Independent Consultant

The Committee recommended that the Commission retain an independent consultant to assess the application to demolish the buildings situated at 5324-5326-5228 Germantown Avenue, based on claims of financial hardship. Michael Young, the owner of these properties, submitted to the Architectural Committee a study of the economic viability of several development options for these properties.

Mr. Nathan seconded this recommendation to retain an independent consultant to analyze Mr. Young's report and to assess the economic viability of these historic properties. Mr. Tyler noted that this recommendation implied a deferral, for a period not to exceed six months, of the request for demolition in order to allow the Commission to assess the report submitted by the applicant.

The Department of Licenses and Inspections assessed the building situated at 5324 as dangerous, and the other two as public nuisances. Mr. Wilds requested that the staff prepare a summary of the history of these properties, including their historical significance, a complete chain of title, a review of the Department's inspections and a record of Mr. Young's involvement with the properties. Mr. Wilds requested these records to consider the possibility of demolition by neglect. Mr. Hollenberg supported these requests.

Mr. Young indicated that he possessed considerable experience in housing rehabilitation in the Germantown area, having completed over eleven hundred units. He noted that in the context of his background in the housing rehabilitation market that his financial assessments for these properties were conservative. He dismissed the suggestion of seeking tax credits for low-income housing for these properties because of the nature of such applications and the fact that he already had undertaken more than 120 units through this program. Finally, he indicated that demolition permits had been issued for 5326 Germantown Avenue and 15-19 West Penn Street. Mr. Tyler noted that the Commission only had jurisdiction over the former.

Catherine Franklin, co-chair of the Penn-Knox Neighborhood Association, expressed her opposition to this application. A thirty-year resident of Germantown, she has been gravely concerned gravely by the neglect suffered by these buildings and by the fact that the accessibility and dangerous structural conditions of one building posed a hazard to neighborhood children. These concerns regarding present disrepair and danger were exacerbated by the possibility that the community could lose several significant historic

buildings because of ostensible neglect.

This threat of loss particularly disturbed her given the considerable decay and destruction on adjacent blocks of Germantown Avenue. Ms. Franklin specifically pointed to the demolition of three properties by the Germantown Friends School and the disrepair of the Manheim Laundry, once the Bull Market. She warned that the cumulative effect of these problems would be the loss of the historic character of this part of Germantown.

Ms. Franklin concluded that, as a longtime resident of Germantown, she has borne these costs of neglect. These buildings have become a locus for crime, drug abuse and other illicit activity. These problems led the community to petition the Department of Licenses and Inspections to seal the buildings. As the neighbors of this area have been forced to endure the deleterious economic impact of this disrepair, Ms. Franklin expressed hope that the Commission would consider not only the economic viability of these structures, but also the economic and social well-being of her historic Germantown community.

Steve Kauffman, a Germantown resident and developer, indicated that he had completed fifty-four units with the incentive of tax credits for historic and low-income properties. With this experience, he believed that two of the buildings could be rehabilitated using these programs. He noted, however, that such a prospect would have been possible if the purchase cost had not been so high. He concluded by encouraging the rehabilitation of at least some of these properties even if one of the buildings were demolished.

Marilyn Moody, owner of 5310 Germantown Avenue, indicated that she resided and operated a business at that location. Her building stands amid a row of designated properties which all have been rented, leased and occupied. She has spoken to twenty-five other owners along the Avenue who would like to see the subject properties improved and developed with mixed uses. This group asserted that by introducing commercial enterprises on the ground floor, and residences above, would provide a twenty-four hour presence on that corner of the block. Ms. Moody reminded the Commission of the particular significance of Germantown to the history of Philadelphia. She concluded that these historic properties are valuable resources worthy of preservation.

Deborah Kelly of the Preservation Coalition declared that her organization strongly supported the recommendations of

the Architectural Committee. She indicated that the buildings contributed to a National Register district and constituted an integral part of a local district nomination presently being prepared by the Coalition. The condition of the buildings, she asserted, was better than the exteriors alone would indicate. While the middle building may not be viable, the Coalition encouraged the use of the low-income tax credit program for the renovation of the flanking two structures.

The Commission unanimously approved the recommendation of its Architectural Committee to retain an independent consultant to assess the application for 5324-5326-5328 Germantown Avenue. Mr. Montgomery indicated that, in addition to the aforementioned considerations, the consultant should meet with Mr. Wilds to determine the viability of an application for low-income tax credits. Mr. Tyler stated that he would contact the owner with regard to the selection of the consultant to ensure an impartial assessment by an independent party.

Approval in Concept

The Committee recommended an approval in concept for the introduction of a pedestrian bridge over North 12th Street to link the **Reading Terminal, Pennsylvania Convention Center**, with the proposed Marriott Hotel on the 1200 block of Market Street. This application is part of a continuing conceptual review of the design of the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Mr. Hollenberg noted that the bridge design is light and transparent in order to retain a relatively unobstructed view of the PSFS Building. The Committee offered a series of specific architectural comments as part of their recommendation.

The Committee also recommended approval in concept of a proposal to install awnings and canopy on 235 Chestnut Street, Independence Park Inn. However, it recommended further study of a proposal for the installation of banners.

Having been seconded by Mr. Nathan, these recommendations for approval in concept were approved unanimously.

Approval

The Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 320 South Broad Street. The Committee voted to recommend approval of the installation of a gate with thin vertical posts between two buildings at the western end of this property, the site of the former boiler house.

The Committee recommended approval of plans for alterations to the building situated at 342 South 2nd Street. These alterations include the relocation of an automatic teller machine, the introduction of a night depository, the removal of a drive-in teller station, and the introduction of handicapped access.

Having been seconded by Mr. Nathan, these recommendations for approval were approved unanimously.

Conditional Approval

The Committee recommended approval of a proposal to install security grates at Wallach's Clothing Store, 1610 Chestnut Street. The Committee also recommended approval of an awning, contingent upon the revision of its design. Finally, the Committee recommended disapproval of a proposed canopy.

Ms. Kaplan stated that, as this building stood within the Center City Special Controls District, any proposed facade alterations would require approval of the Planning Commission. Subsequently, she expressed her opposition to the proposal because the grates would obscure the fanlights, a major architectural feature. Mr. Wilds also expressed opposition based on the premise that the security problem of this block would dissipate when the construction at Two Liberty Place and the Ritz Carlton was completed and the protective scaffolding was removed. Mr. Spano, of the Hartmarx Corporation, disputed this suggestion, indicating that even those blocks of Chestnut Street which did not have scaffolding experienced similar security problems. Mr. Cuorato reasserted that the character of the block would change dramatically with the completion of the major projects on its north side, and advocated a short-term solution to the problem.

Mr. Hollenberg expressed the vexation of the Committee on the alterations proposed for security across Center City. While he opposed this installation on its architectural merits, the Committee could not dismiss the serious problems with which it has been addressed. He noted that a suggestion from the Planning Commission to install tempered glass would not resolve the problem. While it would offer protection of the merchandise, the owners would continue to bear the considerable costs of window replacement.

Mr. Brownlee explored the possibility of alternative design solutions. Mr. Hollenberg noted that the applicant submitted documentation which indicated that an internal installation, for this building, would cost nearly \$160,000 more than an exterior installation. Mr. Brownlee next

suggested the installation of grates on the side windows with a wrought-iron gate for the central arcade. Mr. Hollenberg noted that such a gate, while opened, would obscure the display windows.

Mr. Nathan expressed his discontent with conjecture on the future of the block. He noted that a property owner, with a considerable investment on the block, expressed a legitimate concern regarding the security of his property. While the public representatives had been alerted to this problem, there was no perceived change in the security of the block. Mr. Nathan urged the public representatives to grant the present request and to pursue, by all means possible, the resolution or abatement of the security problems on Chestnut Street.

Mr. Montgomery expressed his appreciation to the Architectural Committee for its recommendation on this difficult issue. Then, he called for a vote on its recommendation of approval, contingent upon the deletion of the proposed canopy and the revision of the shape of the awning. The Commission adopted this recommendation by a vote of 7-2, with Mrs. Kaplan and Mr. Wilds opposed. The Commission noted that the applicant must submit plans for the facade alterations to the Planning Commission, and for the awnings and canopy to the Art Commission. Mr. Montgomery asked the staff to discuss this issue with the Planning Commission and asked Mr. Hollenberg to support the applicant at a hearing if necessary.

The Committee recommended approval of plans to alter the building situated at 1329 Pine Street contingent upon revision of the transom proportions. Mr. Hollenberg made two other points:

- the revised plans do not illustrate the brackets below the cornice. The plan of record should indicate that these brackets exist and will not be altered; and
- that the revised plans indicate the placement of a planter along the sidewalk; the staff should advise the applicant that this new item will require approval of the Art Commission and a permit from the Streets Department.

With these additions, the Commission adopted the recommendation of its Architectural Committee for the proposed alterations for 1329 Pine Street.

Tabled

The Committee tabled an application from Drexel University to replace existing wood sash on the Drexel Institute with

aluminum sash. While the drawings initially submitted for this project were insufficient for review of this important building, Mr. Hollenberg noted that the revised plans submitted subsequent to the meeting depicted a more complete comparison of the proposed silhouette and the existing contours. He added, however, that he did not feel comfortable offering a recommendation until the Committee had reviewed them, perhaps at an on-site meeting. Therefore, the matter remained on the table until the next meeting of the Architectural Committee on 26 July.

THE REPORT ON STAFF ACTIVITIES, June 1990. Mr. Montgomery indicated that the staff report was acceptable for incorporation into the record.

Rules and Regulations Mr. Tyler noted that the Rules and Regulations had been deposited with the Department of Records, that public notice of this action had been published in both The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Philadelphia Daily News, and that the mandatory thirty-day period for public review and comment would expire on 25 July 1990. If a citizen requests a public hearing, the Commission will be obligated by law to hold such a hearing. Mr. Tyler advised that the Commission schedule a hearing on its August agenda. After the Commission adopts the document, it must be reviewed by the Administrative Board, consisting of the Mayor, the Managing Director, the Director of Finance and the City Solicitor. Notification of owners and hearings for nominated historic districts may commence after the Rules have been adopted.

Ms. Petrillo noted that the comments of John Gallery, Commission consultant for this project, would be incorporated after the public review period. Mr. Montgomery expressed satisfaction that the document appeared close to an adoption date and that the Commission soon may be able to focus on the nominated historic districts.

At this time, Mr. Montgomery announced that the Commission had completed its agenda and would convene an Executive Session to discuss several pending legal matters.

The Commission adjourned at 11:46 p.m.

Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary

Minutes Approved: 8 August 1990