

THE MINUTES OF THE 363RD STATED MEETING OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

10 June 1992

City Council Caucus Room
Room 401 City Hall

Present

Wayne S. Spilove
William Brown
David Brownlee, Ph.D.
William Candelori
Stephanie G. Wolf, Ph.D.
James Cuorato, First Deputy Commerce Director, Commerce Department
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
Louis Einhorn, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Scott Wilds, Executive Assistant, Office of Housing & Community Development

E. Jane Hix, Assistant City Solicitor, Law Department
Richard Tyler, Ph.D., Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner
Sara Jane Elk, Historical Research Technician
Daniel W. Simcox, Executive Secretary

Also

Ted Beitchman, Office of the Mayor
Bert Jackson, Morse Diesel/Temple - Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority
Thomas W. Ventulett and Kenneth J. Bryson, Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback & Associates
Nan Gutterman, Vitetta Group
Nathan Saltz and Timothy Johnson, Saxon/Capers
William McDowell and Mary Ann Duffy, McDowell Associates
Bryan W. Yachyshen, Kelly/Maiello Architects
Augustus Baxter, Office of Councilman Herbert DeBeary
John Connors, Brickstone Realty
William Brennan, Burt Hill Kosar Rittleman
Jeff Player, Philadelphia Center Realty
Ken Carlin, Carlin Associates
Howard Kittell, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

In June 1992, Mayor Edward G. Rendell appointed new members to the Philadelphia Historical Commission. As the Mayoral appointment of longest tenure, David Brownlee assumed the chair, announced the presence of a quorum and requested nominations for the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE-CHAIRPERSON

James Cuorato introduced a motion to nominate Wayne S. Spilove as Chairman and Stephanie G. Wolf as Vice-Chairwoman of the Historical Commission. Mr. Wilds seconded this motion. William Candelori made a motion to close the floor to nominations. Mr. Wilds seconded this motion, which was approved.

The members unanimously elected Wayne S. Spilove as Chairman of the Historical Commission.
The members unanimously elected Stephanie G. Wolf as Vice-Chairwoman of the Commission.

To the congratulatory applause of the members, Mr. Spilove assumed the Chair. Mr. Spilove expressed his gratitude to Mr. Brownlee for a gracious introduction and to all Commission members for electing him chairman. Mr. Spilove then explained his involvement with the Commission staff, upon invitation of Mayor Rendell, since February 1992 to assist with endeavors to preserve the Victory Building. Mr. Spilove conveyed the Administration's dedication to historic preservation. He also commended Mr. Tyler as a professional of the utmost honesty and commitment. Mr. Spilove expressed his eagerness to work with the other Commission members and closed his opening statement with an allusion to John F. Kennedy's remark that "while defeat is an orphan, victory has a thousand fathers." In regard to the future of the Historical Commission, Mr. Spilove conveyed his hope that its members will celebrate many victories together as a family.

The Minutes of the 362nd Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, held 8 April 1992, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Wilds, seconded by Mr. Brown and approved by unanimous vote.

The Report of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held 29 April 1992, Herbert W. Levy, Presiding Chairman. In the absence of a sitting historical architect or a representative from the Architectural Committee, Mr. Tyler presented this report.

Deferral

104-106 South Eighth Street: The Committee deferred review of a proposal to install a large sign until the applicant submits more complete drawings. The Committee made specific design suggestions and asked the applicant to return after review of his proposal by the Art Commission.

Rodin Museum, Benjamin Franklin Parkway at 22nd Street: The Committee deferred this matter pending further exploration by the Fairmount Park Commission of several alternatives to replace the museum's historic limestone steps with Indiana limestone. Given the beauty and significance of this major public monument, the Committee requested that the applicant examine three alternative possibilities: conservation of the existing steps with patches where necessary; turning around the stone block steps, so the less worn side faces out; and replacement in granite. The Committee encouraged the Park Commission to consult with stone conservation specialists before proceeding.

The Commission endorsed the deferral of these two applications.

Approval in Concept

Olivet Covenant Presbyterian Church, 610-622 North 22nd Street: The Committee recommended conceptual approval of a proposal to replace an existing sign on the church tower. *The Committee recommended approval in concept for the installation of this sign.*

The Church also proposes to install a new sign at the southeast corner of an adjacent parking lot in order to enable motorists driving up 22nd Street to see notices of services and other special announcements. Following preliminary discussion of this proposal with the Spring Garden Civic Association (SGCA), however, the Church revised its plans. The drawings submitted to the Architectural Committee depict a sign that has been reduced significantly in size, placed atop a small berm and modified to evoke features of the church architecture.

The SGCA maintains that the sign, proposed as thirty square feet rising to a height of seventeen feet above grade, is still too large and inappropriate for its residential setting. It was noted that a free-standing sign is not permitted by right in an "R-10A" zoning district and that the sign will require

approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment prior to installation.

The Committee recommended approval in concept for the proposed berm and for the proposed shape of the sign. The members, however, encouraged the applicants to sustain their discussion with the neighborhood association to reach a mutually acceptable size for the free-standing sign.

Mr. Brownlee made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Committee. Mr. Wilds seconded this recommendation, which the Commission approved unanimously.

Approval

The Ralston School, 221 Bainbridge Street: The Committee enthusiastically recommended approval of plans for the adaptive reuse of this mid-nineteenth century school building as a single-family residence. Vacant since the 1960s, when acquired by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for demolition for the aborted South Street expressway project, the building has suffered considerable deterioration. The applicants' plans entail considerable restoration, removal of the roof on a newer section of the building to create an open deck, creation of a garden in the northeast corner of the property, infill of basement windows and the addition of gates where they existed historically.

The Committee enthusiastically recommended approval of this proposal.

Ms. Wolf made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Architectural Committee to approve this proposal. Mr. Brownlee seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Reading Terminal Market, Rear of 1115-1141 Market Street

As part of the rehabilitation of the Reading Terminal Trainshed for use as the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Market will undergo alterations as well. The nearly seventy merchants expect to remain open throughout a phased construction program. Although this will entail certain inconveniences, including sharing stalls, the Merchants' Association prefers it to closing for three months. To undertake this complex project, the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority contracted with three different architectural firms: Kelly/Maiello, McDowell Associates and Saxon/Capers. The Historical Commission previously approved some plans for this part of the project. However, much of the work had not been reviewed by the Committee and other work was revised substantially. A summary of this application follows:

Kelly/Maiello Architects' scope of work includes:

- the installation of a new central air conditioning system and ductwork;
- conservation of an historic signboard behind a new sign using an historic typeface;
- rehabilitation of the exterior Twelfth Street facade at the defunct Commerce Street freight area; and
- restoration of the arcade facade south of Filbert Street, using the north side as a model.

The Committee recommended approval of this work with the following condition:

- *that the architect secure staff approval of the proposed brick for the exterior facade work.*

As a general remark for all three architectural firms, the Committee encouraged the use of historically appropriate sign lettering in all locations.

McDowell Associates' scope of work includes:

- replacement of sections of the Market's brick floor;
- removal of two mezzanine structures;
- construction of a new mezzanine in the northwest corner of the Market to conceal a new stair tower; and
- alterations to various merchant stalls throughout the Market.

In general, historic features of the market stalls will be preserved. Where non-historic stalls are being rebuilt, McDowell Associates propose to use ceramic tiles of six colors in two different patterns to achieve some visual diversity. Existing counter-tops, some of which are made of plastic laminate, will be replaced with a higher quality synthetic material that has a stone-like finish.

The Committee recommended approval of this work with the following conditions:

- *that the architects consult with individual merchants regarding the proposed color and pattern schemes for each stall;*
- *that the architects use a field of white tile on non-historic stalls;*
- *that the architects "tooth" the proposed new brick flooring to reduce the contrast between old and new materials; and*
- *that the architects replace the proposed octagonal windows for the new mezzanine structure with a row of transom lights.*

Saxon/Capers Architects' work includes most of the stalls with historic fabric. All historic features are being preserved, though some will be moved.

While members acknowledged the importance of retaining the eclectic mix of historic features, styles and forms throughout this Philadelphia landmark, they did not wish to become too detailed in their review of non-historic features or new construction. They acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the proposed renovation did not result in excessive standardization.

The Committee also delegated further detailed review of non-historic features to the staff.

The Committee recommended approval of this project, incorporating all of the preceding comments and specific recommendations.

Mr. Cuorato enthusiastically introduced a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Architectural Committee to approve this proposal. Ms. Kaplan seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Richard Tyler commended Randal Baron for working with the architects to ensure that the final plans for the Market will preserve this special Philadelphia landmark.

Disapproval

John Wanamaker's Department Store, 1301-1324 Market Street: The Committee recommended disapproval of plans to alter a storefront and entrance at the basement level. A symmetrical subterranean entrance, which projects several feet into the public concourse, features a rose-colored marble base and piers with a central recessed entrance, brass window frames, Wanamaker's name plaques and light fixtures. To ease the flow of pedestrian traffic, the Department of Public Property has asked the applicant to pull back their storefront several feet to the property line. SEPTA may establish a Security mini-station in part of the new storefront. To accommodate these mutual

interests, the applicant has proposed to demolish a marble pier and base on the west side and to construct a new storefront of gray granite and glass flush with the building line.

Following preliminary discussion, the Commission staff objected to the destruction of this public facade's symmetry and to the contrast between the color and materials of the proposed west storefront with extant historic material. Further discussion resulted in a modified plan that would incorporate salvaged red marble into the new storefront up to its first pier. This pier would project slightly to mark the west side of the recessed entryway.

The Committee, disturbed by the proposed destruction of the symmetrical entryway and the loss of the red marble fabric, recommended retaining the existing piece of marble fabric on the west side of the entrance and building the gray granite facade in a recessed plane west of that fabric. It was noted that the passageway is sufficiently wide at that point and does not impede the flow of traffic. *The Committee recommended disapproval of this application.*

Mr. Brownlee made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Committee and to disapprove this application. Mr. Wilds seconded this motion.

Mr. Einhorn explained that the Department of Public Property is working with the management of the John Wanamaker Building and SEPTA to improve conditions in the subterranean concourse. The Department intends to allocate considerable capital funds for general concourse improvements. Mr. Einhorn stressed that the public interest in improved concourse conditions outweighed the value of preserving the little remaining historic material at this location.

Mr. Wilds expressed disbelief that a ten foot wide corridor could be considered a bottleneck. Further, as a regular user of that concourse, he maintained that the traffic through that area is generally insufficient to warrant the proposed alterations. He acknowledged that there may be legitimate sight and safety line concerns, but stressed that these did not outweigh the value of preserving a distinctive entrance to a popular Philadelphia landmark. Echoing these remarks, Mr. Brownlee noted that disapproval of the proposed design would not preclude further discussion to devise a mutually acceptable solution.

Mr. Tyler suggested that, if the Commission disapproves the proposal, that it direct the staff to work affirmatively with the applicant and SEPTA to achieve an acceptable solution.

At this time the Chairman called a vote on this matter. The Commission voted unanimously to disapprove the current proposal and directed the staff to meet with the applicant and other interested parties to discuss alternatives.

Upon the later arrival of the applicant, Mr. Tyler informed him of the vote on this proposal and asked if he wished to comment. John Connors of Brickstone Realty stressed his company's interest in improving security in the concourse, particularly as more people will use this thoroughfare as the office space in the Wanamaker Building office is occupied.

**The Report of a Special Meeting of the Architectural Committee, Herbert W. Levy, FAIA, Presiding
Chairman, 8 June 1992.**

Reading Railroad Terminal Trainshed, 1115-1141 Market Street, Rear:

The Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority and its architects presented revised plans for the ballroom, including:

- a simplified lighting and sound grid for a ballroom ceiling that will enlarge the sense of volume of the ballroom and shed;
- the installation of a ceiling that will have an open view to the Shed's trusses and roof. This design necessitates the introduction of a sound and environment control wall at the south end of the ballroom. This glass wall will extend up to a soffit below the truss, then complete a glass enclosure behind it;
- removal of SEPTA ductwork within the Shed and the accompanying louvers from the Twelfth Street elevation. The Twelfth Street elevation will be restored in that zone;
- glazing the vertical clerestory of the upper monitor, a.k.a. the dog house, above the Grand Hall.

The Committee recommended approval of this proposal.

Mr. Brownlee made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Architectural Committee to approve this proposal. Mr. Wilds seconded this motion.

Mr. Tyler thanked the Authority and its consultants for their responsiveness over the years to suggestions of the Commission to various design issues. Mr. Ventulett responded with an expression of appreciation to the Commission for its cooperation and observed that the Commission's involvement had resulted in a better design.

The Commission voted unanimously to adopt the recommendation of its Architectural Committee to approve the proposed alterations to the Reading Terminal Trainshed.

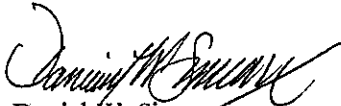
The Report on Staff Activities, May 1992, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer.

Discussion: Royal Theater: Ms. Wolf suggested that the staff contact various musical groups that previously used the Port of History Museum for performance space. These groups may be interested in discussing the prospect of using a rehabilitated Royal Theater for new space.

Mr. Tyler indicated that he had conveyed this information to Terry Gillen, Deputy Director of Commerce.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,


Daniel W. Simcox,
Executive Secretary