

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL HARDSHIP
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**Wayne Spilove, Chair
Commission Conference Room
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor**

30 April 1999

Present

Wayne Spilove, Chair
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
Robert Thomas
Scott Wilds, Assistant Director, Office of Housing and Community Development

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

Also

Noel Eisenstat, Executive Director, Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia
J. Randal Cotton, Preservation Alliance
Lawrence Goldfarb
and others

Wayne Spilove, Chair, recognized the presence of a quorum and called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.

401-417 West Johnson Street, Mayfair House

City of Philadelphia, Owner
Andres Perez, Commissioner, Department of Public Property, Applicant
DATE: 1925
PROPOSAL: Complete demolition

Mr. Tyler explained that the City of Philadelphia seeks approval to demolish the Mayfair House apartment building on the grounds of financial hardship. He explained that the applicant intends to demonstrate that the lack of economic viability and prospects for reasonable reuse of the building do not justify its rehabilitation. The applicant provided the Committee with an extensive report detailing this lack of visibility, the costs of rehabilitating the building and various failed attempt to reuse it.

Noel Eisenstat, Executive Director of the Redevelopment Authority, described various failed private ventures to reuse the building over the past five years. He explained that the Redevelopment Authority also failed to find a viable option for reuse. According to the financial statement submitted by Mr. Eisenstat, the cost of rehabilitating the Mayfair House would demand higher rents than expected for commensurate rental housing in the neighborhood. Mr. Eisenstat also noted the lack of public transportation

and parking required to market the reuse of the building.

Mr. Wilds addressed the costs to reuse the building. He stated that all attempts have resulted in a short fall that would require a subsidy of five to fifteen million dollars from the City's budget for housing. The rehabilitation of the Mayfair House would considerably exceed the funds available. Mr. Eisenstat stated that cost to demolish the building would amount to well over one million dollars; a manageable sum as compared with the cost of its rehabilitation.

A few members of the community who reside near the Mayfair House spoke in favor of its demolition, indicating the depreciation of the property values in the neighborhood owing to the dilapidated condition of the building, and the adverse visual effect it has on the community in general.

J. Randall Cotton of the Preservation Alliance stated that the Alliance holds a facade easement on the property. He explained that the Alliance's easement was acquired in 1981 when Mayfair House was an occupied and commercially viable property and stated that the Alliance recognizes that over the last ten years the property has existed in a state causing concern to its neighbors and community. The Preservation Alliance is in the process of extinguishing the easement, and does not object to the proposal at this time. The Alliance urges the City to apply the standards of the City's preservation ordinance and the Philadelphia Historical Commission's Rules and Regulations fully and properly in considering the demolition of Mayfair House.

Mr. Wilds made a motion to recommend approval of the proposal to demolish the Mayfair House on the grounds of financial hardship. Mr. Thomas seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Scott Jacob
Executive Secretary