

**THE MINUTES OF THE 379th STATED MEETING OF THE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

12 January 1994

**Wayne Spilove, Chairperson
City Council Caucus Room
Room 401 City Hall**

Present

Wayne Spilove, Chairperson
David Brownlee
Louis Einhorn, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Property
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, City Planning Commission
Bennett Levin, Commissioner, Department of Licenses & Inspections
Arlene Matzkin
Carmen Torres-Rodriguez
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing and Community Development
Stephanie Wolf

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Randal Baron, Historic Preservation Planner
Lori Plavin Salganicoff, Historic Preservation Specialist
Jeffrey Barr, Historical Research Technician

Also

Mimi Dubiel, Historic Landmarks for Living
Ruth Macqueen, Old City Civic Association
Richard W. Thom, Old City Civic Association/HEMS
Bob Solvibile, Department of Licenses and Inspections
George R. Zacharkow, Mattioni, Mattioni and Mattioni, Ltd.
Heather A. Cicalese, Mattioni, Mattioni and Mattioni, Ltd.
Warren Bradway, 345 S. Camac St.
T. Turaddel, 1120 Pine Street
Milton Marks, Preservation Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
Ted Beitchman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

The 379th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission was called to order at 10:00am by Wayne Spilove, Chairperson, who announced the presence of a quorum.

THE MINUTES of the 378th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 8 December, Dr. Stephanie Wolf, Vice-Chairperson, were approved by unanimous vote and adopted.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, 30 December 1993, Arlene Matzkin, Chairperson, Architectural Committee:

345 South Camac Street (at Pine Street)

Mr. Warren Bradway, Owner

PROPOSAL: Facade Alteration and Gable-end Bargeboard Replacement

Architectural Committee Recommendation (30 December 1993): Allow removal of existing cornice; require Applicant to redesign replacement storefront cornice with Commission assistance; Commission was asked to investigate alternatives. Applicant must present a drawing of the bargeboard to the Committee before replacement.

Mr. Bradway proposed to address a demolition by neglect order issued for a missing gable end bargeboard and deteriorating wraparound shopfront cornice by replacing the bargeboard in kind and profile and removing the wraparound cornice. Mr. Bradway proposed to replace the wraparound cornice with a cornice atop each of the two windows. While the replacement cornice presented was deemed inappropriate, the Committee agreed with Mr. Bradway that the replacement need not be a wraparound but asked him to work with the Commission staff in developing a design.

Subsequent to the Committee meeting, Committee members and staff found several examples of intact wraparound storefront cornices on buildings similar and roughly contemporary to 345 S. Camac Street and no examples of cornices of this period only above the windows. Furthermore, an historic photograph in the Commission files shows physical evidence of a heavier storefront cornice. As a result, Ms. Matzkin recommended that the applicant replace the current cornice with another wraparound and present the Committee with new drawings for it. Mr. Tyler described possible designs including a bracketed cornice resembling the roof cornice of this building, one which has stencil-like cut outs and a slight slope, or simply repairing the existing cornice.

Mr. Spilove made a motion to approve (1) replacing the present storefront cornice with another wraparound cornice and (2) replacing the missing bargeboard to match the existing one on the front slope of the roof. Richard Tyler will assist Mr. Bradway in his solution; final drawings must be presented for Commission review.

7127 Germantown Avenue (at Durham Street)

Peter Pinnola, Esq. and Mike Bomstein, Esq., Applicants

PROPOSAL: Porch Enclosure

Architectural Committee Recommendation (30 December 1993): Alter enclosure to recall porch beneath by affixing appliqued wood to corners and porch post areas and adding a porch skirt.

This proposal resulted from a violation written by the Department of Licenses & Inspections for the enclosure of a porch without a permit. The enclosure, located on the Durham Street side of the building and quite visible, obscures all evidence that this portion of the building once served as a porch. Rather than requiring that the applicant undo finished work, the Committee recommended that the applicant affix appliqued wood to corners and add porch posts and a porch skirt so that the space resembled an enclosed porch.

Commission members found that the sense of the porch would not be sufficiently recalled under the Committee-recommended design. Commission members recommended requiring another design which exposes what porch posts remain and leaves more sense of a glazed porch.

Dr. Brownlee made a motion to disapprove the finished work and require the Applicants to return to the Committee with a design that better respects the enclosed porch and its original materials. Mr. Wilds seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the motion.

110-112 South Front Street

George Zacharkow, Esq., Mattioni, Mattioni, & Mattioni Ltd.

PROPOSAL: Demolition

Architectural Committee Recommendation (30 December 1993): Since pertinent information was not presented for Committee review, the Committee recommended that the applicants be required to provide an engineer's cost estimate for partial demolition with rehabilitation of the first three floors, as well as realistic cost estimates for total rehabilitation and total demolition. Additionally, the Committee recommended that the applicants be required to provide economic feasibility and return on investment figures for each of these options. Finally, the Committee asked for a description of the insurance proceeds from both fires to assist in the evaluation of economic feasibility.

110-112 South Front Street was built ca. 1835 as a pharmaceutical wholesale warehouse. The building was designated by the Philadelphia Historical Commission for this association with historic Philadelphia, for unique architectural elements such as its cartway, and as a document of the mode of development before the railroad.

Dr. Brownlee noted that this building, in addition to its age and its unique architectural elements, is part of a block which serves as the front door to the Old City; no architecture remains to the east of it. This block is the last part of the face that Philadelphia presents to the world; an uninterrupted commercial streetscape starts with this building and extends north. Dr. Brownlee stressed the importance of recognizing the unusually high value of this block, and therefore this building, to the City.

This proposal calls for the demolition of this five-story ell-shaped building which suffered two fires in May and July of 1993. During the months between the fires and the demolition permit application in December of 1993, the owner considered the possibility of rehabilitating the building. The owner contends that the building, vacant since 1991, is dangerous and not economically feasible to rehabilitate. The Department of Licenses and Inspections labeled the building Imminently Dangerous in July because of the fire damage, and because the building was not sufficiently sealed and therefore a target for vandals and further fire damage. The building has since been sealed with masonry and the sidewalk in front of it has been closed.

The Commission staff, presented with the demolition request shortly before the Architectural Committee meeting, asked the owner or its representatives to provide insurance proceeds information and cost figures for three options: 1) restore/rebuild the top two floors and secure the rest of the building, 2) remove the top two floors and secure the rest of the building, 3) demolish the entire building. None of this information was received for this meeting, although the staff did receive and distribute to Committee members an in-kind replacement cost estimate prepared for insurance purposes. Members of the Committee took issue with this estimate, finding many of the items listed

and the high cost of several items unrealistic.

During a discussion of the present safety of the building, Mr. Baron inquired about bracing the building's facade with large wood members so that this discussion may continue without endangering the public. Mr. Levin contended that the structure of the upper floors was not sufficient to support a braced facade. Mr. Wilds suggested that, as a temporary measure, the building could be scaffolded like the St. James House. Mr. Levin declared his dislike of roofed-over safety tunnels, stating that they all-too-often become part of the permanent streetscape and have no significant benefit in preserving the facade. Mr. Levin stated that in order to preserve the streetscape of this block, the building would have to be taken down to the ground and completely rebuilt.

Mr. Tyler noted that while this building is categorized as Imminently Dangerous, there is a precedent for abatement of a building's imminently dangerous conditions in lieu of its demolition. Mr. Levin responded that in the case of 110-112 South Front Street, the front of the building would have to be rebuilt to abate the condition. In response to a request from Mr. Tyler that a "demolition zone" be identified, Mr. Levin contended that the top three floors must be demolished. Several Commission members voiced the opinion that the third floor seemed Ms. Matzkin recommended that the Commission retain an independent engineer to make an assessment.

Mr. Zacharkow described the cost estimates distributed the morning of the Commission meeting as representing four schemes of action. According to Mr. Zacharkow, the first estimate represents the minimum construction costs using modern-day materials to stabilize the building's first three stories. Ms. Matzkin found elements in the estimate which relate to more than stabilization such as ceramic tile and acoustical ceiling tile. The second estimate, although described as a stabilization of all five stories at a cost \$1.5 million, also contains several line items which exceed the definition of stabilization. Mr. Wilds, noting that the \$1.8 million original estimate provided to the Architectural Committee included restoration of the building and all of its finishes, questioned this \$1.5 million "stabilization" cost. Mr. Zacharkow described estimate three as representing the minimum construction cost for stabilizing the first three stories to a depth of forty (40) feet and estimate four to stabilize all five stories to that depth.

When asked about expected insurance proceeds, Mr. Zacharkow stated that these proceeds should have no bearing on the decision of what is to be done with the building -- the future of this building is simply a matter of public safety. Mr. Wilds noted that any building may be rebuilt -- accomplishing this is a matter of feasibility -- and explained that the ordinance under which the Commission operates has a financial hardship clause. Ms. Kaplan stated that the Commission meets to weigh the public interest benefits of a designated building's historic and architectural significance against financial hardship and the classification of imminently dangerous. Insurance proceeds information is therefore very important to make a determination about the stabilization/rehabilitation of an historic building. Later in the discussion, Mr. Zacharkow stated that any available insurance proceeds will be put to a \$4,650,000 outstanding mortgage; this mortgage covers this building and two in New York. Mr. Spilove stated that the insurance company has an obligation to provide money to make the structure sound.

Mr. Tyler suggested that the Commission consider allowing the demolition of the upper two floors to abate the imminently dangerous condition. Subsequent to their removal, the owners could petition under the hardship provisions of the ordinance. Dr. Brownlee stated that the order is to repair or demolish and that the only basis upon which the Commission can authorize demolition is under financial hardship. As a repair order, then, the Commission should consider the removal of the top

two stories with the requirement that they be replaced. The Commission's position is that the sound portion of the building ought to be retained as a foundation for the reconstruction of the imminently dangerous portion. Unlike the first floor, the upper floors of this building are easily replicated. Any financial hardship claims coming from this decision could be taken up with the Financial Hardship Committee by the owners. Mr. Levin stated that the abatement of imminently dangerous conditions would require the removal of most of the facade.

Mr. Tyler stated that if the engineers at the Department of Licenses and Inspections held that the building is in immediate danger of collapsing, the Historical Commission would sign a demolition permit immediately. Dr. Brownlee concurred and noted that under those conditions, we should require salvaging the architectural elements of the ground floor. Mr. Levin stated that saving the first floor will increase the demolition cost. Mr. Tyler suggested that if L & I finds that everything above the first floor cornice is imminently dangerous, the entire building could be demolished, leaving only a one-story facade wall as a streetscape screen. Dr. Brownlee noted that there may be other salvageable elements, such as window lintels or sills, in this building.

Richard Thom of the Old City Civic Association (OCCA) presented the opinions of the community group, stating that too many Old City historic buildings have been demolished for parking. He noted that one of the arguments for the destruction of the Elisha Webb Chandlery, also in Old City, was the existence of another building with an historic cartway similar to the Chandlery located at 110-112 South Front Street. Finally, Mr. Thom argued for the retention of the building as this is the last remaining intact block on Old City's Front Street. Milton Marks of the Preservation Coalition concurred with OCCA's opposition to the building's demolition and requested that a requirement be added to the permit that any floors demolished be rebuilt. Mr. Marks stated that the owners should have placed a temporary roof over the structure after the fire.

Mr. Einhorn proposed a motion to deny the demolition permit with the recommendation that the owner or its representative then claim and pursue Financial Hardship. Dr. Wolf argued that the Commission should avoid suggesting financial hardship to any applicant; that decision is for the applicant to make. She recommended that the Commission consider partial demolition of imminently dangerous elements to an extent determined by Commissioner Levin, with subsequent study of the remaining structure to determine what could be salvaged.

Mr. Levin suggested that a motion be made to allow demolition down to the top of the first floor, noting that the Department of Licenses and Inspections would then inspect the condition of the remaining structure and possibly demolish that as well.

Dr. Brownlee made a motion to authorize the selective demolition of this property to be conducted with the oversight of the Department of Licenses and Inspections and the Philadelphia Historical Commission to abate the imminently dangerous conditions with the objective of preserving as much of the historical fabric as possible. This motion was seconded by Mr. Wilds and approved by unanimous vote.

THE REPORT of the Activities of the Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff, December 1993, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Levin stated that the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I) will begin writing violations for large stainless steel commercial kitchen exhaust systems which route kitchen exhaust through windows and doors and up and over buildings. Mr. Levin stated that there will be a particular emphasis on historic buildings, and that he will forward relevant information to Mr. Tyler during the next week (week of January 17) so that the two agencies may act in concert. These exhaust systems not only mar the appearance of buildings but also create an unpleasant air quality.

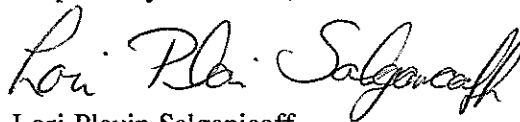
Commenting on the L & I Review Board hearing for the Mayfair House, Mr. Levin noted that a "reasonable accommodation" had been reached that took care of everybody's needs. Mr. Tyler stated that the lower floors will be sealed with masonry, above that a fireproof material will seal window openings. During the hearing, the Department of Licenses and Inspections expressed an interest in removing all sash due to the possibility of falling glass; Mr. Tyler disagreed with this as unnecessary and counterproductive. Mr. Levin stated that he would send the owners a letter saying that the City would prefer materials which do not give the appearance of an abandoned building. Dr. Wolf recalled painted boards used in New York City to seal window openings.

Mr. Tyler stated that the owners were given seventy-four days from the mid-December hearing to accomplish the required sealing of the building. Given the time granted and the fact that the Commission has yet to see any permit applications for the Mayfair House, the timeframe is a source of concern.

Mr. Wilds noted that once again no one from the City's Law Department attended this meeting to advise the Commission.

There being no further business, Dr. Brownlee moved to adjourn. His motion was seconded by Dr. Wolf and the Commission unanimously voted to adjourn at 12:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Lori Plavin Salganicoff