

THE MINUTES OF THE 331ST STATED MEETING

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

19 June 1989

Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman

Present: Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman
Carolyn Golab
David Hollenberg
Jason Nathan
William Thompson
John Street, Esq., Philadelphia City Council
Barbara Kaplan, Executive Director, Philadelphia City
Planning Commission
Scott Wilds, Office of Housing
Benjamin F. Ellis, Commissioner, Department of Public
Property

Maria Petrillo, Esq., Chief Assistant City Solicitor
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation
Officer
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner

Also: John Taxis, President, Old Original Bookbinders
Restaurant
Michael Stack, Esq., Counsel for Old Original
Bookbinders Restaurant
Donald McDonough, Esq.
Seth Cooley, Esq. of Duane, Morris & Heckscher
Roger Prichard of the Old City Civic Association
Jane Cutler of the Parkway Corporation
Joseph Zuritsky of the Parkway Corporation
D. H. Dobbins of Thomas Jefferson University
Dave Johnson of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers
Association
Jay Tackett of Partridge Tackett Architects
Mark K. Lee of Partridge Tackett Architects
Edna M. Irving of Councilman Street's Office

THE MINUTES of the 330th Stated Meeting of the Philadelphia Historical Commission held on 10 May 1989, Edward A. Montgomery, Jr., Chairman, were reviewed and approved.

OLD BUSINESS

At the request of representatives of the Pennsylvania Manufacturer's Association, the Chairman changed the order of the agenda to allow the presentation of the PMA Chestnut Street Progress Report listed on the agenda under Old Business.

Mr. Zuritsky of the Parkway Corporation began the presentation by providing the Commission members with a brief history of the site under study. Approximately twelve years ago, the Pennsylvania Manufacturer's Association began acquisition of the properties on the south side of Chestnut Street in the 900 block. It was the intent of the Association to gain control over these deteriorated and under-utilized properties and to improve substantially this portion of Chestnut Street. Over the past several years, the Association has assembled approximately 60 to 70 percent of the block.

Mr. Zuritsky approached Jefferson Hospital and the Pennsylvania Manufacturer's Association concerning the possible development of this block of Chestnut Street for the benefit of the neighborhood and the institutions. The parties proceeded to develop a plan and to produce a model of the proposed development. Mr. Zuritsky discussed the project briefly and presented the model for the Commission members to examine. The project will offer a mix of retail, office and hospital use and include a garage and a life care center.

Shortly after the plans for this project were developed, PMA learned of the Historical Commission's interest in the historic designation of several properties in the block. These include the buildings located at 920-22, 926 and 930 Chestnut Street. In view of the possible designation of these buildings, the parties requested time in which to study the possibility of preserving the historically significant buildings in this block and incorporating them into the proposed new development.

To this end, the parties engaged the firm of Partridge Tackett Architects to study the possibility of preserving the historically important buildings in the block and incorporating them into the

proposed new development. The report will address the impact of preservation upon the utility, composition, phasing and constructibility of the overall project and will provide the groundwork for an assessment of the project and its preservation potential.

Mr. Tackett reviewed with the Commission members the first of three reports to be presented over a six-month period. This initial document presents the issues and raises the questions to be answered in the subsequent reports.

The next report, according to Mr. Tackett, will contain a structural assessment of the existing buildings to determine whether they can be preserved and incorporated into the new design. This second document will also attempt to answer all of the questions contained in the preliminary report.

Mr. Nathan expressed some concern over the possibility of the presence of additional historic buildings in the 900 block of Chestnut Street and questioned whether the report would address this issue. Carolyn Golab, a member of the Committee on Historic Designation, reported that her committee identified as historically important at least one other building on the proposed development site which is not currently under consideration for designation. Mr. Nathan suggested that the Commission advise the consultant of any other buildings on the block which might be eligible for historic designation. Mr. Tyler reported that the three buildings currently under consideration clearly meet the criteria for local historic designation and that at least another two in the row may meet those criteria.

Mr. Tyler suggested that the initial report be distributed to the members of the Historical Commission, its Architectural Committee and Planning Commission staff. Mr. Tyler further suggested that the parties appear before the Architectural Committee at its July meeting to discuss with that committee some of the questions raised in the preliminary report. The Chairman asked that a member of the Designation Committee be invited to attend this meeting as well.

At the request of Mr. Nathan, Ms. Kaplan reported on the City Planning Commission staff's support for the proposed development project which complies substantially with the Chestnut-Walnut controls. These controls set a minimum and maximum height requirement at the building line that would permit preservation of historic fabric in the streetscape and above those limits encourage set-backs to allow for increased light and air on Chestnut Street.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of the Pennsylvania Manufacturers' Association, the Parkway Corporation and Jefferson Hospital for appearing with their consultant, Mr. Jay Tackett, to present to the Commission the first part of the Chestnut Street study.

THE REPORT of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission for 25 May 1989, David Hollenberg, Chairman. Mr. Hollenberg reported on the Architectural Committee's evaluation of ten projects at its May meeting. Mr. Hollenberg recommended to the Commission a final approval for five projects. These projects involve properties located at 220-22 Spruce Street, 1027 Arch Street, 1916 Rittenhouse Street, 135 Carpenter Street, and 2056 Pine Street. Mr. Hollenberg pointed out that revised drawings for 135 Carpenter Street were received and determined to be acceptable. As a result of having received the revised drawings, Mr. Hollenberg recommended to the Commission an approval, rather than a denial, of this application.

The Commission voted to accept the Committee recommendations and grant a final approval of these five projects.

Mr. Hollenberg next reported to the Commission his committee's recommendation of an approval, in concept, for the proposed renovation of the property at 301 South 21st Street. The Commission voted to accept the Committee's recommendation and grant an approval, in concept, for the 301 South 21st Street project.

Next, the Committee reviewed work undertaken at 241 Catharine Street without a building permit and without the Historical Commission's approval. The Committee recommended the decertification of the building at 241 Catharine Street owing to the replacement of the original front facade with an inappropriate replacement facade. The Commission discussed briefly the circumstances surrounding this particular application and voted to accept the Committee recommendation and decertify the building at 241 Catharine Street. Councilman Street congratulated the Architectural Committee for recognizing the special circumstances of this case and recommending an equitable course of action to the Commission. Mr. Street expressed his concern for the contractor's ability to avoid liability in a situation where it appeared that the owner was willfully and maliciously misled. The Chairman asked Ms. Petrillo to research for the Commission the matter of contractor liability in such cases.

Mr. Hollenberg further reported on two projects which were discussed by the Committee but for which Commission action is not required. They include 1818-1820 Chestnut Street and the City Hall Tower Observation Deck.

Finally, Mr. Hollenberg reviewed for the Commission his Committee's consideration of a demolition permit application for the buildings located at 136 South Front Street. The Committee voted to recommend to the Historical Commission that action on this application be tabled for sixty (60) days and that the applicant be directed to submit to the Architectural Committee the information required under Section (7)(f) of the historic preservation ordinance.

Michael Stack, Esq., representing John Taxin, advised the Historical Commission that sixty days (60) would provide sufficient time to gather the information requested under section (7)(f) for submission to the Architectural Committee. The Chairman expressed concern regarding the applicant's understanding of the level of documentation required under section (7)(f) and asked that the staff prepare a letter advising Mr. Stack of the specific information expected for submission to the Architectural Committee.

Mr. Tyler outlined briefly for the applicant, his client and the Commission the information required under section (7)(f). The applicant will be expected to submit all of the individual items specified in section (7)(f)(.1) through (.6) such as the date of purchase of the property, the amount paid for the property, appraisals, etc. In addition, under section (7)(f)(.7) the applicant will be expected to submit a ten year pro forma of anticipated rehabilitation costs, revenues and expenses for reasonable reuses for the subject building. Given the building's location and configuration reasonable reuses would include residential, office, hotel or a mix of residential/commercial use. Mr. Tyler cited the report submitted to the Commission for 149 S. Hancock Street as a good example of the level of documentation required by the preservation ordinance.

Mr. Stack advised the Commission that his client's business, an historic institution in itself, has suffered and will continue suffer severely without adequate parking. The subject site, according to Mr. Stack, will provide Bookbinders Restaurant with approximately 200 parking spaces. He asked that the Commission in reviewing his client's application balance the competing interests of preserving Bookbinders Restaurant as an institution against the preservation of a single building.

In response to Ms. Petrillo, Mr. Stack reported that his client was offered five parking spaces in the Parking Authority garage to the north of the restaurant. Although his client's negotiations with the Authority have been unsuccessful, Mr. Stack offered to continue meeting with the Parking Authority in an effort to obtain an adequate number of parking spaces for his client. It was further learned that Mr. Taxin recently sold the parcel of land at the corner of Front and

Sansom Streets for development. This site had been used by Mr. Taxin as a surface parking lot and has now become unavailable to him. As part of a larger development, an underground parking garage will be constructed on this site. Mr. Stack noted that parking in this underground garage will be made available to Bookbinders upon completion of this development. He pointed out, however, that, in the meanwhile, no alternative parking opportunities exist.

Following some general discussion concerning the City's need for a comprehensive parking plan and other related matters, the Chairman thanked Mr. Stack and Mr. Taxin for their presentation and proceeded with the agenda.

THE REPORT on Philadelphia Historical Commission Staff Activities for the month of May, 1989, Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer. Mr. Tyler's report was accepted and approved by the Commission.

Ms. Petrillo reported to the Historical Commission members that Sameric Corporation has filed an appeal of the recent Commonwealth Court decision concerning the Boyd Theater. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania must now determine whether or not to hear the appeal in this case.

NEW BUSINESS

Nomination of Don Stevenson as a member of the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission. The Commission discussed the qualifications of Mr. Stevenson for appointment to the Architectural Committee.

Mr. Hollenberg noted that Mr. Stevenson had attended several meetings of the Architectural Committee and had performed well on this interim basis. The current members of the Architectural Committee have expressed their enthusiastic support of Mr. Stevenson's nomination.

Councilman Street and Scott Wilds expressed concern with regard to Mr. Stevenson's not being a resident of the City of Philadelphia. Both members agreed that familiarity with the urban context and an understanding of the City's physical, social and cultural fabric are important factors not unrelated to city residency. Mr. Tyler noted that the Committee was searching for yet another person to add to the Architectural Committee and that a city resident would be sought to fill that position. Following considerable discussion concerning the

importance of city residency, a motion to approve the appointment of Mr. Stevenson to the Architectural Committee with the requirement that the next appointment be a city resident was made. Mr. Street objected to the appointment of Mr. Stevenson at this time and expressed his preference for a delay of his appointment until a qualified city resident could be found and a dual appointment made. The motion on the floor was seconded and a vote taken. Councilman Street and Scott Wilds opposed. The motion was carried by a vote of 6 to 2.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer