

**THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
HARRIS STEINBERG, CHAIR**

**MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, 20 JULY 2017, 2:30 P.M.  
ROOM 18-029, 1515 ARCH STREET**

**PRESENT**

Harris Steinberg, chair  
Dominique Hawkins, vice chair  
Peter Angelides  
Oscar Beisert  
Duane Bumb  
Cathy Califano  
Carl Dress  
Mike Fink  
Patrick Grossi  
Julia Gutstadt  
Nan Gutterman  
David Hollenberg  
Lou Iatarola  
Bob Jaeger  
Roland Kassis  
Cory Kegerise  
Melissa Long  
Randy Mason  
Shawn McCaney  
Matt McClure  
Doug Mooney  
Justino Navarro  
Aparna Palatino  
Laura Spina  
Mark Squilla  
Bob Thomas  
James Wright

Karen Black, Task Force Facilitator  
Seri Worden, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Rob Nieweg, National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Ryan Debold, Lindy Institute for Urban Innovation  
Anne Fadullon, Department of Planning and Development  
Jon Farnham, Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Laura DiPasquale, Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Meredith Keller, Philadelphia Historical Commission

**ALSO PRESENT**

**Do we want to list the members of the public who signed in?**

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Steinberg called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Steinberg welcomed the Task Force members and the public to the first meeting of the Task Force. The Task Force members introduced themselves and indicated their institutional affiliations. Mr. Steinberg introduced Anne Fadullon, the director of the City of Philadelphia's Department of Planning and Development.

Ms. Fadullon presented the Mayor's charge to the Task Force, explaining that Mayor Kenney has created a historic preservation Task Force to help reassess how Philadelphia preserves its historic resources. The Task Force is charged with exploring strategies and making recommendations regarding:

- Surveying historic resources
- Incentivizing preservation
- Regulating for preservation outcomes
- Educating about the value of preservation

Ms. Fadullon thanked the members for donating their valuable time to the Task Force and the cause of historic preservation. She stated that the Task Force is charged with addressing the new pressure on historic buildings in a city that was in decline for 50 years and is now experiencing substantial growth. She directed the Task Force to identify ways of facilitating growth while retaining those aspects of the city that make it unique and interesting. She suggested that the Task Force develop a preservation tool kit that will be applicable to other large cities that are experiencing growth again.

Mr. Steinberg introduced Seri Worden of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Ms. Worden explained that the Trust will serve as the technical advisor to the Task Force. She noted that the Trust has had a long relationship with Philadelphia and looks forward to expanding on that relationship. She told the Task Force about a letter that Anne Fadullon had sent to the Trust, requesting its assistance with a broad range of preservation issues that the city was confronting. She spoke about the Trust's advocacy tools programs including Preservation Green Lab and ReUrbanism. She explained that she and her colleagues will be advising the Task Force under the auspices of the Trust's National Treasure Campaign; the Trust has declared the Historic Neighborhoods of Philadelphia to be a National Treasure.

Mr. Steinberg thanked the William Penn Foundation for its generous support of the Task Force. He informed the Task Force members of the basic ground rules of the body. He noted that the Task Force will not engage in specific preservation battles that may arise during the 18 months. He asked the Task Force members to refrain from speaking individually to the press in the name of the Task Force. He spoke about the dates of upcoming meetings. He introduced Dominique Hawkins as the vice chair of Task Force. Mr. Steinberg asked the Task Force members to think about a series of broad questions that they will confront over the coming months.

- What is your vision for the Task Force? How will we steer the ship?
- How do we define preservation?
- Are the four areas of exploration and recommendation in the charge appropriate?
- How can we incentivize and encourage preservation?
- How do we balance preservation and growth?

- Is the existing preservation law sacrosanct, or can it be improved?
- How does preservation intersect planning and zoning?
- How can preservation be integrated into other programs, initiatives, and efforts?

Mr. Steinberg concluded that preservation is a big tent and observed that many people who are achieving preservation outcomes do not call themselves preservationists. He stated that, at the end of 18 months, the Task Force must present a report that is comprised of actionable recommendations.

### **DISCUSSION: WHAT DO WE WANT PHILADELPHIA TO LOOK LIKE IN 2030?**

Mr. Steinberg asked the members of the Task Force to comment on their visions for preservation in the year 2030.

Bob Thomas stated that the city needs a survey of historic resources to tell us what we have, what should be preserved, and where there is development potential. He stated that preservation is interconnected to many other realms including transportation. The Task Force recommendations will need to take into consideration future changes to transportation modes and the subsequent demands on land use, parking lot demolitions, car-sharing, increased trail and other multi-modal alternatives, and how these movement patterns affect preservation efforts. He spoke of preserving the “zones of wonderfulness” in Philadelphia.

Matt McClure spoke of the need to retain a strong sense of place in every neighborhood. He stated that we need to recognize that neighborhoods are not static; development will happen, but it should retain the scale and be compatible with historic fabric. He stated that we need to ensure both a sense of place and economic vitality.

Peter Angelides observed that change is constant and evolution is natural. Historic assets need to be understood and managed in the context of shifting density, demographics, and technology. We need quality and good design in new development.

Oscar Beisert stated that we need to develop incentives for preservation on the local level. He noted that he is apprehensive about surveying and identifying resources without ways of protecting them. He noted that important buildings are being lost. Important buildings often sit on easily developable sites. He observed that our commercial fabric is largely unprotected. He stated that he has concerns about the loss of intact streetscapes. He suggested that “facadectomies” may be acceptable; they are better than the complete loss of buildings. He stated that we need to develop grades of protection; not every building needs to be treated like the most important buildings.

Patrick Grossi agreed with Mr. Beisert that we need grades of protection; not every historic building should be regulated in the same way. He stated that the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards may not always be best review criteria for regulating historic buildings. He observed that we need to be mindful of false binary of preservation and growth. He stated that we need a regulatory environment that encourages preservation and growth. Good preservation is not about preventing change, but managing it instead.

Randy Mason suggested that we should preserve enough of the city such that we can recognize the Philadelphia of our youth in 2030. He observed that preservation is not an end in itself. Historic assets tell stories to the future about the past. All people involved in preservation must

to work together; we need to build trust and public confidence between one another, administrators, the public, and other players in the field.

Carl Dress stated that education on historic preservation is vital for widespread buy-in to the effort. The Task Force must define preservation and explain to all what it means and why it is valuable. The general public has vastly different understandings of what to value, or what is of value to others, and sharing these perspectives can lead to a greater appreciation of our historic assets. The preservation net should be cast much wider than it is currently.

Laura Spina stated that, during the Phila2035 district plan process, she has heard many opinions about “neighborhood preservation” from residents. How do you marry ideas of incentives for historic preservation to the “lowercase ‘p’” of neighborhood preservation? How do you take into account the sentiments of neighborhood residents, who consider preservation locally? They have concerns about new development, new residents of different demographics moving in, long-term resident displacement, and neighborhood change in general. Also, incentives are not only needed for developers, but also for average homeowners. One quarter of the city population lives below the poverty line, but many low and moderate-income people want and deserve to participate in preservation.

Roland Kassis stated that the Task Force should focus on buildings outside of Center City. It should identify buildings for preservation, but also ways to assist various types of preservationists, especially homeowners. What can we do to assist owners with historic assets who do not have the resources to preserve them? We need a flexible preservation apparatus applicable in different situations. What is actually worthy of preservation? What degree of preservation is appropriate based on owners’ resources? Are there resources that can be provided to those owners in need?

Cory Kegerise suggested that we need to change the cultural context and policy environment so that preservation is the norm, not the exception in 2030. We need a cultural, political, and financial environment that favors preservation. This needs to be supported by regulatory controls, but should also be undergirded by residents themselves feeling empowered to maintain these resources, to stay in their old houses. We should not just preserve buildings, but streets and open space too. The goal of this Task Force should be to create the right tools and mechanisms to prevent the race to the permit counter between preservationists seeking to designate and developers seeking to obtain demolition permits.

Aparna Palatino stated that we should ensure that we are building tomorrow’s historic buildings today, whether they are sustainable (LEED), architecturally significant like Norman Foster’s Comcast 2, or important for some other reason. We should define what is significant now in new construction so future generations do not have to struggle with the question.

Mark Squilla stated that the Task Force should seek to understand the historic values of neighbors and their neighborhoods. The Task Force should focus on neighborhoods. He stated that the Task Force must identify ways in which the City can provide assistance to enable homeowners with limited means to stay in their historically-listed homes.

James Wright opined that the Task Force must understand and highlight the layered, textured history of Philadelphia’s neighborhoods.

Melissa Long agreed with Mr. Wright and stated that the Task Force must focus on neighborhood preservation.

Justino Navarro asked how much of our Philadelphia in 2017 will still be intact in 2030. He stated that the success of Task Force and of preservation in Philadelphia will be measured in its historic districts. He observed that Compatible design and development needs to reinforce the preservation, and should be specific to the neighborhood. Every neighborhood has its character and identity, which should be preserved and respected by new development. He emphasized that educating public is the best way to ensure that the city will be preserved.

Doug Mooney observed that preservation should encompass more than buildings. Preservation of below-grade resources, archaeology, is also important. The Task Force must develop a process by which archeological sites can be preserved. Archaeologists have already documented 9,000 years of history in Philadelphia. Archaeology expands the stories we can tell. He spoke of the discovery of a pair of spectacles in Fishtown, the oldest eyeglasses ever found in the United States.

Dominique Hawkins observed that Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods. She suggested that the Task Force consider preservation with a lower-case “p” as well as preservation with an upper-case “P.” She remarked that the people in the communities know what is significant in their neighborhoods. People in the preservation advocacy sector, city government, and developers forget that frequently and do not always ask. We need to be mindful of the cultural built assets that neighborhood residents value. The Task Force needs to slow down and ask them about their historic resources.

Duane Bumb observed that, in 2030, we will still want investment and growth, but to also protect places in conflict. The Task Force should seek ways to promote for new development and adaptive use to accommodate new demands while respecting historic resources. He noted that much of the city is still devalued and depopulated. He stated that the City must encourage reinvestment alongside preservation in areas not experiencing growth.

David Hollenberg stated that we need to start with respecting what exists because it exists. He observed that there are two levels of sense of place, the city as a whole, and senses of places, individual neighborhoods with differences like Tacony and Germantown and Rittenhouse. He stated that we need subtle enough regulatory mechanisms to treat places differently. Many great zones that are wonderful do not necessarily need to be overburdened by regulations. The first rule should be: do no harm. Do not overregulate, he advised.

Bob Jaeger observed that we are seeing strengths and weaknesses colliding with devastating effects, like the loss of churches in the South of South area. He stated that we need to determine where are buildings most at risk and why. He noted that many sacred spaces are at risk. He added that Philadelphia needs to rethink how it markets itself. The entire city is historic. We should not simply market the “historic district.” Philadelphia has the best collection of historic sacred places in the country.

Julia Gutstadt stated that the Task Force should focus on creating policies and education initiatives to promote preservation; the city has many components, all of which play a role, including transportation and parks. She stated that we need to find a symbiosis between change and growth on the one hand and preservation on the other.

Lou Iatarola emphasized that Philadelphia is a diverse city. He stated that we have a tendency to undervalue the historic resources we have citywide. He noted that historic character exists all over the city, not just in Old City and Rittenhouse. There is a need to communicate the value of these lesser known, neighborhood-level assets. He observed that we need to be sensitive to the

fact that different neighborhoods face different issues. We need to find a balance between increased development pressure and preservation.

Shawn McCaney reported that the William Penn Foundation funded historic preservation initiatives for years, but then its direction shifted because it did not see any progress or leadership around preservation. He noted that the current Mayor is committed to historic preservation and that has brought the William Penn Foundation back to the table. He stated that his foundation is not involved in this effort because of the Jeweler's Row matter, but because it sees the possibility of stabilizing neighborhoods outside Center City through preservation.

Mr. Steinberg highlighted some of the themes that came out during the discussion, including:

- Systems,
- Strong sense of place,
- A city that is recognizable in 2030,
- Building trust is vitally important,
- Harmonize growth and preservation,
- Preservation is the norm, not the exception,
- First, do no harm,
- Acknowledge and celebrate diversity,
- Leadership is essential.

Mr. Kegerise remarked that, in the past, Philadelphia was hub of preservation innovation. The Task Force offers an opportunity to again be a leader in preservation and to

#### **THE PROCESS MOVING FORWARD: SCHEDULE, MEETINGS, REPORTS, PRESS, SUBCOMMITTEES**

Mr. Steinberg introduced, Karen Black, the Task Force's consultant. Ms. Black provided information about several aspects of the Task Force. She explained that each Task Force member will be asked to serve on one of four subcommittees. She directed the members to a form, which they can complete to indicate their subcommittee preferences. She provided information on the Task Force schedule. The Task Force will operate over the next 18 months. It will meet 10 times and will alternate between morning meetings in Center City and evening meetings in neighborhoods. The Task Force will hold a listening session on 28 September, at which members of the public can speak on preservation issues. The National Trust for Historic preservation will provide the Task Force with information on best practices. The Task Force will produce three reports over the next 18 months. By 1 December 2017, the Task Force will issue a Baseline Assessment Report on the current state of historic preservation in Philadelphia. By 1 June 2018, the Task Force will issue an Interim Report summarizing the look at national and local strategies that have proven effective at incentivizing adaptive reuse, regulating for preservation outcomes, surveying for historic resources, and educating about the value of preservation. By 1 December 2018, the Task Force will issue a Final Report, conceived as an implementation prospectus, which identifies selected strategies from the Interim Report, and provides plans for the implementation of those strategies including identifying responsible parties from the government, for-profit, and non-profit realms as well as estimated costs and time frames for implementation. Ms. Black explained that all Task Force materials will be available on a website.

Mr. Steinberg noted that he is working to establish relationships with members of the press, who will promote the Task Force. He stated that he is working with Ashley Hahn and PlanPhilly as well as Sandy Shea at the Inquirer. He also noted that he had been interviewed by WURD

about the Task Force and will continue to work with the radio station to ensure that its listeners are informed of the work.

Mr. Steinberg spoke about the four subcommittees of the Task Force, which will be focused on:

- Surveying historic resources,
- Incentivizing preservation,
- Regulating for preservation outcomes, and
- Educating about preservation.

Mr. Steinberg stated that Task Force members should plan to attend every meeting of their assigned subcommittees. He explained that, while he will take preferences into account, he will make subcommittee assignments to ensure that each committee represents a diversity of positions.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Mr. Steinberg asked for any concluding remarks from Task Force members.

Mr. Beisert stated that the City government itself can do a better job of preserving its historic resources.

Mr. Mooney reminded his fellow Task Force members of the importance of archaeology. He noted that the City has not had an archaeologist on staff for 30 years. Mr. Steinberg quipped that 30 years is a drop in the bucket when compared to the 9000 years of human occupation of Philadelphia that Mr. Mooney spoke of earlier.

Mr. Grossi suggested that the Task Force cannot be blind to the preservation controversies going on around it. Members need to keep their eyes open.

Mr. Thomas stated that half of the city publicly owned, when one includes streets, bridges, and other infrastructure. The Task Force must consider the whole experience of the built environment. Mr. Steinberg agreed that the Task Force needs to look at systems, be holistic, and be mindful of the “big picture.”

Ms. Spina suggested that the Task Force’s outreach efforts will need to extend to politicians at the state and federal levels. Also, the Task Force will need to communicate with City Council before the final report is issued.

Mr. Squilla stated that he will keep his colleagues on City Council up to date. He noted that there is significant support for preservation on the Council.

Mr. Kegerise stated that the Task Force will need to make its recommendations known to state and federal officials. He suggested that the Task Force make its interests in tax credits and funding levels known now to politicians. He noted that tax credits should be made available to smaller projects and reported that Philadelphia is the largest federal rehabilitation tax credit user in state.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Steinberg adjourned the meeting at 4:14 p.m.