



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Bureau for Historic Preservation
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2nd Floor
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093
www.phmc.state.pa.us



June 14, 2010

Ms. Renee Sigel, Director
FHWA, PA Division
228 Walnut Street, Room 508
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1720

Dear Renee:

I am writing to request your advice concerning the future of the Mellon Arena (Arena) located in Pittsburgh.

The Arena, built in the early 1960's, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Last year, a new Sports Exhibition Center was built adjacent to the Arena, making the Arena, in the eyes of the Sports Exhibition Authority (SEA), which owns it, as well as the new Sports Exhibition Center, redundant.

The SEA would like to demolish the Arena. The last event is scheduled for June 30, 2010, so this could happen anytime after that date.

The SHPO has been consulting with the SEA under the State History Code. As you may know, the History Code has no clearly defined procedures for consulting about project effects: it merely states the Agency "will consult." A while ago, the SEA informed our office that they were "anticipating federal funding" for the redevelopment of the acreage under and around the Arena, specifically to re-establish some semblance of the pre-Arena street grid. For this reason, it was agreed that the SEA could use Part 800, the regulations that govern Section 106, as a procedural template in order to impose some structure on the process for a project that was known to be controversial, and we concurred with that course of action. While the SEA, to my knowledge, has not received official notice that the federal funding is available, the SEA may want to proceed with demolition of the Arena.

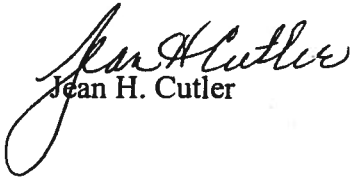
Advocates for preserving the Arena have inquired as to whether it would be considered anticipatory demolition if the SEA demolished the Arena when it is commonly known that it is anticipating federal dollars for the redevelopment of the site (street grid). From their perspective, the existence of a MOU (enclosed) calling for the SEA to demolish the Arena which, if not for the demolition, federal funds for re-establishing some semblance of the street grid would not be used. On the other hand, the Executive Director of the SEA has informed me verbally that the SEA has no money at this time for demolition.

Our purpose in conveying the concerns of preservation advocates regarding anticipatory demolition is to ensure that if a federal undertaking is identified, project consultation will proceed as efficiently as possible.

In light of the anticipated FHWA funding, I am writing to request FHWA's involvement in this consultation. Would FHWA agree to enter into consultation with us and the SEA prior to a federal undertaking being officially determined?

I know you and your staff are very busy; however, this issue is quite pressing. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience

Sincerely,



Jean H. Cutler

CC:

Barbara Franco, Executive Director, PHMC
Bill Callahan, PHMC
Mary Conturo, Executive Director, SEA
Anne Nelson, PHLF
Rob Pfaffmann, Save the Igloo
Scott Leib, Preservation Pittsburgh
Chris Cieslak, Oxford Development
Tim Zinn, Michael Baker
Gary English, avigilantone@verizon.net