

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 7, 2021**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Jennifer Bressler, Joseph Scoboria, Daniel Horman, Terry Siggins, Cody Rhoads, and Zachary Shaver; Interim Borough Manager Dean Murray; and Zoning Officer Cathy Hoffman.

Visitors None

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the May 5, 2021 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Scoboria.

Motion carried.

Downtown West Reading Master Plan – SDE Review Letter

Mr. Wert referred to the review letter received from Planner Phil Ashear of Systems Design Engineering concerning the WRCRF downtown master plan:

1. **Eliminate the General Business District Overlay** – SDE agrees that it should be eliminated. Mr. Wert added that an owner in the CBD (304 Penn) currently intends to use the GBDO to allow him to convert first floor office space into a residential rental unit which is permitted as a ‘conditional use’. This will be discussed further when a completed application is presented.
2. **Expand the Commercial and Light Industrial Redevelopment Overlay** – SDE agrees that this would be appropriate and recommends adding the ManorCare employee parking lot and 401 Buttonwood to the proposed list.
3. **Allow mixed use development with residential uses over retail that faces shopping streets** – SDE agrees that mixed use zones would be appropriate given the walkability of the proposed streets. The Commission agrees that the list should potentially include all of Penn Avenue, the 100 block of S. 5th Avenue, the 0 hundred blocks of North and South 6th Avenue, Reading Avenue from the Circle to 8th Avenue, S. 3rd and S. 4th Avenues to Cherry Street, and Buttonwood Street.
4. **Allow residential-only development along areas that are inappropriate for pedestrian-oriented uses** – SDE indicates that this type of use could be regulated by conditional use when specific conditions are met however Mr. Wert indicated that the problem is figuring out where this would be appropriate. Derck and Edson’s plan didn’t provide suggestions for specific locations where this would work and may need further discussion.
5. **Incentivize maker spaces** – SDE indicated that this would pertain to Artisan production which typically includes some types of subsidies. The Commission felt that this referred to small scale manufacturing and recommended the addition of definitions if it were added to some zones such as LI, RP, CGB and GBD.
6. **Allow a maximum height of 45 feet** - SDE indicated that the existing maximum height is 65 feet and that form-based code should be utilized to control building heights. It would also allow the

Borough to control other building features with more flexibility. Derck and Edson is in the process of preparing a proposal to assist with design standards using form-based codes.

7. **Adopt a Regulating Plan** – Derck and Edson will assist with this.
8. **Modify Front Yard Standards** – This will require assistance as well.

Mr. Wert indicated that the zoning amendments discussed in items 1 through 4 should be able to be drafted in house, along with definitions. He asked that some language be drafted for review by the Commission at the August meeting. The removal of the GBD Overlay may require that all effected property owners be advised of the changes. It was felt that this could be done fairly easily and cost effectively by being done in-house.

Animal Ordinance Amendments

The proposed amendments to Chapter 152 ‘Animals’ which were provided in a red-lined version for review, were discussed at length. The goals established for this section were that an animal:

1. Can be unrestrained within a fenced area.
2. Can be tethered outside if the owner is with them.
3. Can’t be unrestrained, untethered and unfenced.

Based on these goals, the following definition changes were recommended:

Domestic Animal	No change
Fence	No change
Leashed	Remove ‘a person’ and replace with ‘owner’.
Owner (new addition)	Any person having temporary or permanent custody of, sheltering or having charge of, harboring, exercising control over, or having property rights to, any animal covered by this ordinance. An animal shall be deemed to be harbored if it is fed or sheltered for 3 or more consecutive days.
Restraint	The last phrase was restated as: ‘by means of a cage or leash under the direct control of a person of sufficient strength to control the animal.
Tethered	Entirely restated as: ‘An animal that is attached to a stationary object by a leash.’

Section 152-12 ‘Animals at large’ is proposed to be amended to read as follows:

- A. It shall hereafter be unlawful for any owner to permit any animal owned by or under the custody, supervision or control of such person to be at large without controlled restraint either upon the public streets, alleys or sidewalks in the Borough or upon property of another, including the property of the Borough or of any school district. This prohibition shall apply to public and private property.
- B. Restraining Animals

1. It shall be unlawful to tether any domestic animal outside unless an owner remains with the animal throughout the period of restraint. This prohibition shall apply to public and private property.
2. Exception. Animals may be restrained within a fenced area from which it cannot escape when unattended outdoors. (No change)

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman

Zoning Officer