

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 7, 2022**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Members Jennifer Bressler, Daniel Horman, Cody Rhoads, James Keller, and Mariella Napoli; Borough Manager Dean Murray; Zoning Officer Cathy Hoffman; Assistant Zoning Officer Chad Moyer; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln, and Members Zanna Leiendecker, and Kacie Rodriguez were unable to attend.

**Visitors**            Michael Rohrer, SDE Planner

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the August 3, 2022 minutes. **Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Keller.

**Motion carried 6-0.**

**New Business**

- a. **304 Penn Avenue Conditional Use Application:** The owner of this property has submitted a request to convert an existing commercial/retail space on the first floor to a residential dwelling unit. The subject property is located in the Central Business District, as well as the General Business Overlay District. Based on adjacent properties and other properties within the 300 block of Penn Avenue, the proposed use is similar in appearance and not out of character in the neighborhood or existing zoning district.

Currently the rear of the property provides four angle off-street parking spaces that is compliant with the minimum off-street parking requirements for the proposed use. It was recommended that wheel stops be installed to prevent vehicles from traveling across the sidewalk onto a neighboring property.

Motion to recommend to Borough Council the approval of the conditional use application for 304 Penn Avenue contingent upon the installation of wheel stops within the onsite parking spaces.

**Moved** by Mrs. Bressler and seconded by Mr. Rhoads. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Mr. Wert requested feedback on the removal of the General Business Overlay District from the 300 block of Penn Avenue, similar to the recent overlay removal from the 700 block of Penn Avenue. Removing this overlay would prohibit first-floor residential uses in the future. The existing residential uses within this block would be grandfathered until a change in use. It was agreed to pursue an amendment to the zoning ordinance to remove the General Business Overlay District from the 300 block of Penn Avenue in the coming year in conjunction with other zoning amendments and budgeted funding.

- b. **Code Red/Code Blue for Animals:** Mr. Wert noted that last August was the hottest August on record in 124 years and the concern expressed by residents in the Borough's ability to enforce animal welfare conditions in extreme hot and cold temperatures. Currently the only recourse for the Code Department is to threaten notification to the Animal Rescue League. An example ordinance from the City of Reading was provided for further consideration and discussion next month.

- c. **Election Signage:** The solicitor's office provided comments to questions regarding the constitutionality of time limits placed upon election signage within the Zoning Ordinance. Enforcement of these regulations are currently suspended. It was noted that sign regulations were reviewed and amended not too long ago against case law, and to consider regulating aspects of signage uniformly in relation to placement, number, and size. Commission members were requested to review the information for further discussion next month.
- d. **Rental Occupancy Ordinance:** Solicitor comments were recently received pertaining to questions that were posed during the July meeting. The original list of questions, new red-lined ordinance version and solicitor responses will be shared with Commission members to review for further discussion next month.

Mr. Moyer shared concern in modifying the definition of Dwelling Unit in relation to the fee schedule's reference to unit. A property owner recently argued the price per unit discount based on owning eleven units divided among a number of parcels. The current definitions are broken into Dwelling and Dwelling Unit and the proposed definition of Residential Rental Unit only references dwelling unit. It was decided to best clarify the discount price per parcel by modifying the fee schedule.

- e. **433 Penn Avenue Zoning Hearing Update:** Mr. Wert reported that the deadline to hold a public hearing has been waived by the applicant to allow the applicant time to review alternate options for this property.
- f. **West Reading Shopping Center Redevelopment:** Mr. Wert indicated that a revised sketch plan was requested from the developer to include details that meet current zoning regulations such as first-floor retail. It is difficult for the TIF Committee to determine an amount to be awarded without knowing the full project scope.
- g. **Assistant Zoning Officer:** Mrs. Hoffman introduced Chad Moyer as the new Assistant Zoning Officer. Mr. Moyer indicated that he is enjoying his new position noting that this department is integral to the prosperity and longevity of the Borough.

#### **Adjournment**

Motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 p.m. by Mr. Horman and seconded by Mrs. Bressler.

**Motion carried 6-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary