BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 3, 2024

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Members Cody Rhoads, Kacie Rodriguez, and Zanna Leiendecker; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Interim Borough Manager Richard Sichler; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln and Members Daniel Horman and Jennifer Bressler were unable to attend.

Visitors
Mark Evans, Derck & Edson, LLC Steve Ware, Derck & Edson, LLC

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Public Comment
There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes
Motion to approve the March 6, 2024 minutes. **Moved** by Ms. Leiendecker and seconded by Ms. Rodriguez. **Motion carried.**

New Business
a. **Discussion with Derck & Edson – Downtown Zoning Ordinance – Session 7** – Mr. Wert shared plans to continue downtown zoning discussions focusing on the Downtown Overlay Zone, Frontage Type and Standards, Accessory Dwelling Units, and ideas regarding the Schweitzer Service Center acquisition.

Mr. Evans reviewed the current standing of the overall process; the zoning aspect is roughly 80% complete with $14,000 unbilled of the $71,000 contract. The sign ordinance amendment contract is roughly 84% complete with $1,800 unbilled. Items that have not yet been presented are parking and civic space standards, projections and appurtenances, and text for the commercial and light industrial overlay zones. Walker Consultants will be requested to provide general parking recommendations based on the proposed zoning amendments in a future meeting. Additional services for the refining and adoption phase that could be presented by the county and neighboring community are unknown.

Mr. Evans' goal for this meeting was to answer any questions to allow the Commission to enter the phase of reviewing drafted text. The added service of amending the sign ordinance was unknown as to whether there would be adequate time to review in conjunction with zoning amendment discussions, it was recommended to dedicate a portion of an upcoming meeting to complete this task.

Mr. Ware provided an example Skill Games Ordinance that was recently adopted by the Borough of Phoenixville. It was recommended to incorporate the definition of Skill Game Use into the borough's zoning ordinance. Mr. Moyer appreciated the definition of Skill Game Use differentiating from an amusement game. It was thought that this use could be allowed as a Conditional Use in the Light Industrial District.

Mr. Ware also provided an example definition of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) that was recommended to be inserted into the zoning ordinance. The missing middle transformative housing concept highlights the need for diverse, affordable housing choices in sustainable, walkable

neighborhoods. Conversions of single-family homes that would provide ADUs to house adult children or aging parents were discussed. The example ordinance limited the number of ADUs to one per residentially zoned lot. Varied parking regulations may be needed. Mr. Evans recommended the calibration of parking spaces be driven by the number of bedrooms as opposed to units. Concern was expressed as to accomplishing this goal without creating any long-term issues. It was recommended to avoid the creation of additional rental units, long-term or short-term, while promoting family type uses.

Frontage Type Standards

Eastern Redevelopment District was a recommended name for what was previously referred to as the Chocolate District. Building height minimum and maximums were discussed. Mr. Evans referred to the Regulating Plan where the Commercial Frontage, depicted in blue, spans Reading Avenue and Buttonwood Street, and includes portions of North Third through Seventh Avenue from Court Street to Reading Avenue. It was noted that commercial uses, such as Main Street, Main Street Transition, and Commercial Districts would require a minimum of two stories while the Neighborhood Professional, Eastern Redevelopment and Service Districts would only require a one-story minimum. Maximum height restrictions of six stories in the Main Street District was acceptable with a 10' stepback above 45'. It was noted that structural stepbacks are costly.

Lot width and depth were considered from a form perspective such as stacked townhomes, or multi-family uses. It was noted that a reduction to lot depth from 80' to 50' would provide for a variety of liner uses such as garage structures. Mr. Moyer noted that smaller lot sizes would impact coverage limits, which will be reviewed for possible revisions.

Clear glazing percentages may be lowered 5-7% based on a recent review of existing structures to avoid the need for multiple appeals to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Clarification was provided as to the distance between entries requirement question that arose last month. A minimum of one entry per use would be required to activate the commercial street and to avoid dead zones.

The depth of ground floor minimums was noted to be 20' to avoid instances of small retail spaces.

Mr. Moyer inquired as to thoughts on the definition of Gymnasium/Indoor Recreation Facility to differentiate from membership clubs. It was noted that when lessons are provided it is considered a personal service use. Zoning districts where an Indoor Recreation Facility would be allowed were recommended to be the General Business (GB), Light Industrial (LI), and Gateway (G) Districts.

Mr. Evans noted that mixed uses are currently allowed in the GB, General Business Overlay, and Residential Professional (RP) Districts, it is currently not an allowed use in the Central Business (CB) District. A revised definition of Mixed-Use Development was recommended. It was thought that allowed uses could be combined, however, if one of the uses requires Conditional Use or Special Exception the request would result in a denial. It was decided to allow mixed use development as a use by right in the G, GB, LI, General Business Overlay, and CB Districts, by Special Exception in the RP District and by Conditional Use in the Commercial Light Industrial Redevelopment Overlay, and CB Districts. Mr. Evans stated with these changes, the Commercial Light Industrial Redevelopment District becomes irrelevant. Mr. Wert noted a number of large lots that are located in the LI Districts that are ripe for redevelopment. Mr. Evans stated that low and mid-rise apartments are not permitted in the LI District, it was decided that this should be an allowed use in this district. Mr. Evans noted that a one-way northbound Second Avenue traffic pattern removes all commercial

viability to that area. From an infrastructure perspective it was recommended to revisit this traffic pattern for ease of access.

Mr. Evans expressed his admiration of the borough's decision to acquire the Schweitzer Gas Station property on Penn Avenue. This site has the potential to be catalytic to Penn Avenue. He encouraged thoughtful short- and long-term visions for this property, noting that unified redevelopment could include Tulpehocken Avenue. Mr. Wert stated that the agreement has not yet been finalized and welcomed thoughts prior to demolition of the building.

Mr. Evans planned to provide an updated draft for the Commission's consideration in two to three weeks. Commission members agreed to review the draft zoning and sign ordinance text in a workshop format next month. Mr. Evans offered to meet beyond the contract limitations on an hourly basis if needed.

Adjournment
A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 p.m. by Ms. Rodriguez and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary