

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
MAY 1, 2024**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Cody Rhoads, Daniel Horman and Jennifer Bressler; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Interim Borough Manager Richard Sichler (arrived 6:50 p.m.); and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Members Kacie Rodriguez and Zanna Leiendecker were unable to attend.

**Visitors**

None

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the April 3, 2024 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Rhoads and seconded by Mrs. Bressler.

**Motion carried.**

**New Business**

- a. **Review Final Draft of Downtown Zoning Ordinance** – Mr. Wert noted Mark Evans of Derck & Edson, LLC request to review a number of draft ordinances documents this month including a zoning map, regulating plan, downtown overlay ordinance, zoning ordinance, civic space design standards, and sign ordinance. The sign ordinance was thought to be an aspect that would be best discussed during a separate meeting.

**Zoning Map**

Mr. Moyer inquired as to thoughts on retaining the General Business Overlay District (GBO) within the 300 block of Penn Avenue. Prior discussions were noted that removed the GBO from the two southern parcels closest to Fourth Avenue and from the 700 block of Penn Avenue. It was noted that the 600 block of Reading Avenue and the northern parcels of the 500 block of Reading Avenue are proposed to be revised from General Business to Central Business District and include the GBO. The GBO would provide additional allowed uses that are auto oriented such as retail, governmental, hotel, apartments on upper levels, art studios, and accessory buildings. The zoning map as presented was approved by the Planning Commission.

**Regulating Plan**

The Neighborhood Professional Frontage that would allow an attached or detached structure with a small to medium footprint up to three stories with primarily stoops and porches was a preferred designation to the 300 block of Tulpehocken Avenue and the northern parcels of the 400 block of Elm Street.

Frontage designations were not thought to be necessary on Juniata Street.

It was recommended to add the Neighborhood Professional Frontage designation to the side and front of the parcel known as 415 Reading Avenue.

Commercial Frontages with storefronts and active ground floor uses that faces primary streets were recommended to be added to the 000 block of Olive Street from Buttonwood Street to Hazel Street, and to the parcel known as 416 Reading Avenue. A Commercial Frontage was also recommended to be added to North Seventh Avenue from Reading Avenue to Walnut Street. The designation along Eighth Avenue to Reading Avenue was recommended to be removed as this is not a public roadway.

The Regulating Plan was approved by the Planning Commission with the above noted changes.

### **Civic Space Design Standards**

Mr. Moyer noted that Civic Space Design Standards are to be considered as a part of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) in coordination with the map of preferred locations for future civic spaces. The creation of civic spaces would become a requirement during developments or redevelopments within the Downtown Overlay District that exceeds 10,000 square feet. Mr. Lincoln recommended removing the designation of a preferred civic space within Delaney Circle now that memorial items are being moved to the park and safety improvements are being made to deter pedestrian crossing of the traffic circle. The North Sixth Avenue pocket park theory is on hold until the owner of the shopping center formulates redevelopment plans.

Questions arose that needed additional details regarding:

- Available use hours versus designating hours of availability that would be imposed on a private property owner.
- A one-time or annual fee-in-lieu of civic space.
- Community agreement with the private property owner for public access.
- Operation and maintenance responsibility agreements.
- Allowing Borough Council the ability to determine if a civic space is appropriate.

### **Downtown Overlay District**

Mr. Moyer noted revisions to the draft zoning ordinance that would allow one entrance per street frontage with a minimum average separation of 50'. A chamfered corner entrance would be allowed on corner lots.

Revisions were made to maximum lot coverages. The Main Street Frontage would allow 100% lot coverage, which is realistic to current conditions within the Central Business District. It was thought that pervious surfaces should be expanded upon wherever possible. Mr. Moyer shared the opportunity to assess a stormwater maintenance fee for instances that exceed allotted maximum impervious coverages to enhance stormwater maintenance opportunities in other areas of the borough. Mr. Moyer shared the proposed maximum lot coverages by frontage district:

- Main Street 100%
- Main Street Transition 100%
- Commercial 90%
- Neighborhood Professional 90%
- Eastern Redevelopment 90%

It was noted that crushed stone and gravel are assumed to be impervious surfaces in both the existing and proposed definitions. Mr. Moyer shared the residential maximum lot coverages that

range from 50% to 75%. It was noted that current regulations would require 25% of the shopping center lot to be pervious. The proposed regulations classify pervious paving surfaces to be hardscape material, or an impervious surface. Mr. Moyer shared a conflict within the planting strips regulations that allow pervious pavers, brick, stone, or mulch coverages. Mr. Lincoln noted that stone in a driveway becomes compacted by vehicles and therefore becomes impervious. Planting strip stone should not become compacted. No final decision was made on lot coverages.

Following a recent inquiry for a ghost kitchen, Mr. Moyer requested a definition to be established in the zoning definitions and to include a reference to Ghost Kitchen within the definition of Catering Establishment to allow this use in the same districts. Catering Establishments are allowed by conditional use in the Central Business District, permitted use in the General, and General Business Overlay Districts, Light Industrial District, and Gateway District. Planning Commission members felt this was a similar use and agreed to the noted use districts.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to edging elements and encroachment discussions. Mr. Moyer shared a conflict within current Artificial Fence regulations that allow fences in the front yard up to 3' tall or 4' tall with a uniform open area of 25%. The proposed edging element regulations would allow ornamental fences up to 42" in height. Mr. Lincoln noted that privacy fences are not permitted within the front yard along any frontage type. There appears to be a discrepancy though between the text and grey Street Frontage Type boxes. It was also recommended to revise the reference to Eastern Gateway to Eastern Redevelopment. Encroachments were not previously reviewed but appeared to make sense.

Mr. Lincoln inquired as to revisions to the supplemental design standards as they pertain to drive-throughs. It was noted that drive-through lanes may not exit into the primary frontage. Therefore, Wendy's could not exist as it stands now. Mr. Wert noted that the word drive-through in item 5 needs to be hyphenated. It was noted that item 4 regulates menu board placement to accommodate noise levels and placement within district boundary lines. A question arose as to the intent of item 4.a. to determine if the reference to menu board placement was intended for residential district boundary lines.

Mr. Moyer stated that this concluded the items he wanted to review from Sections 455-101 through 455-116. A review of the sign-off checklist provided by Mr. Evans appeared to have a duplication of Civic Space Standards #3, 36, and 37. Mr. Moyer noted that a number of the Articles listed were moving uses into a chart format. An outline of tonight's discussions will be shared with Mr. Evans and the Planning Commission to prepare for a joint meeting again next month.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira  
Borough Secretary