

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
JUNE 5, 2024**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, June 5, 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, and Kacie Rodriguez; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Member Zanna Leierendecker was unable to attend.

Visitors

Angela Adler (arrived at 7:00 p.m.)

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the May 1, 2024 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Rodriguez.

Motion carried.

New Business

- a. **100-118 Franklin Street Notice of Intent to Remediate** – Mr. Wert shared R.M. Palmer’s plans to demolish Building #5 and the required soil testing prior to demolition that revealed lead, mercury, and arsenic levels that would prohibit residential occupancies in the future. The owner intends to remediate the subject property in accordance with Act 2 Land Recycling and Environmental Remediation Standards. The borough has requested a public involvement plan to be included in any subsequent reports.

It was noted that parcel uses would be restricted to industrial or commercial. The November 2020 adopted Downtown West Reading Vision and Master Plan is an economic development road map that envisioned upper-level residential uses in the district referred to as the “Chocolate District”. A more intensive remediation process of soil contaminants may be available; however, this may be cost prohibitive and unreasonable based on neighboring parcel soil contaminants. Mr. Moyer shared plans for a public meeting with representatives of R.M. Palmer and their consultant in a roundtable discussion. Members of the Planning Commission and Environmental Advisory Council will be requested to attend the public roundtable discussion, advertising requirements will be reviewed with the solicitor.

In the best interest of the borough from a land use standpoint, it was decided to forward a letter from the Planning Commission voicing concerns and requesting the property owner to explore remediation processes that would not result in deed restricted parcels.

Ms. Adler joined the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Motion to authorize staff to prepare a letter outlining the concerns of the Planning Commission in limiting the potential reuse of the 100-118 Franklin Street parcels remediation efforts and recommend the Planning Commission be involved in discussions moving forward. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Rodriguez. **Motion carried 6-0.**

b. **Continued Review of a Final Draft of Downtown Zoning Ordinance** – Review of draft ordinance documents continued from last month’s meeting at Section 455-101 Purpose & Applicability of the Downtown Overlay District. The following comments were made:

- Section 455-101 Purpose & Applicability - Punctuation/formatting was requested to be reviewed for uniformity.
- Section 455-103 Street Frontage Types – Mr. Moyer noted that our feedback has been incorporated into these sections. Formatting of subsets were asked to be reviewed for clarity.
- Section 455-104 Regulating Plan Location Map with Tiles – The two tile sections need to be reformatted. Mr. Moyer noted changes to the regulating plan that need to be incorporated in the map.

Mr. Horman departed the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

- Mr. Moyer inquired with commission members as to their thoughts on lot coverages found in:
 - Section 455-105 Main Street 100%
 - Section 455-106 Main Street Transition 100%
 - Section 455-107 Commercial Frontage 90%
 - Section 455-108 Neighborhood/Professional Frontage 90%
 - Section 455-109 Eastern Redevelopment Frontage 90%

Realistically existing properties are comprised of 100% impervious surfaces, the idea of lessening impervious coverages was desirable. It was unclear as to whether a 5% reduction would make a difference in stormwater management practices and would a change in allowed lot coverages conflict with the existing Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The engineer will be requested to provide feedback to assist in deciding on best practices.

- Section 455-113 Permitted Uses in Downtown Overlay District – Mr. Moyer requested feedback to tie the definition of Ghost Kitchen as either a use similar to a catering establishment or to create its own permitted use within the chart. Ms. Rodriguez noted that catering establishments are an allowed use in the Central Business District and thought that a Ghost Kitchen would create an increased vehicular traffic that should not be located on Penn Avenue. The recommended allowed use districts were the Light Industrial and Gateway Districts.
- Section 455-114 Edging Elements – Mr. Moyer noted a conflict within the existing artificial fence ordinance that restricts front yard fences to a maximum height of 3’ or 4’ with an open area of more than 25%. A definition of transparent may be warranted to differentiate between the reference to a transparent ornamental fence with a maximum height of 4’. Ms. Rodriguez inquired as to why an ornamental fence would not be allowed in a Main Street frontage type. She referred to 713 Penn Avenue that has a welcoming defined seating area with a fence in comparison to 709 Penn Avenue that is open. The transition from a public walkway to a defined seating area was preferred. A transparent ornamental fence height restriction of 48” was thought to be acceptable.
- Section 455-115 Encroachments – Mr. Moyer referred to the allowance of a maximum 14’ storefront awning distance while limiting encroachment into the street right-of-way within 2’

of the face of the curb. Interference with streetlights and trees was a concern. Mr. Moyer noted existing awning regulations that limit projections to no more than 4' into any street right-of-way. Ms. Rodriguez inquired as to allowing a restaurant with outdoor seating or an apartment building to have an extended awning, which may limit the number of variance requests. Mr. Evans will be requested to provide clarification on the proposed regulations.

- Section 455-116 Supplemental Design Standards – The ability to locate a drive-through in the Central Business District would be limited to parcels with the ability to allow vehicles to access or exit the facility from a secondary street, not a primary frontage. Mr. Moyer shared that rear drive through uses would be allowed by conditional use in the Central and General Business Districts, and the Light Industrial and Gateway Districts. Side yard drive through uses would be allowed by conditional use in the General Business, Light Industrial and Gateway Districts.
- Zoning Ordinance Text Changes – Mr. Moyer noted the majority of redlines refer to Section 455-113 Table of Uses for Downtown Districts. Definitions would need to be reviewed next month.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary