

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 4, 2024**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, September 4, 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; Borough Manager Randall P. Miller; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Members Zanna Leiendecker and Kacie Rodriguez were unable to attend.

Visitors

Mark Evans, Derck & Edson, LLC

Steve Ware, Derck & Edson, LLC

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

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

Motion carried.

New Business

a. **Continued Review of Downtown Zoning Ordinance**

Removal of General Business District Overlay – Mr. Evans indicated that this overlay district is more restrictive than the underlying district, and the intent several years ago was to allow additional automobile-oriented uses. A clear message was received during review of the downtown ordinance regulations that automobile uses are not a desired use in a pedestrian friendly downtown area. It was agreed to remove this overlay district in its entirety while retaining the numbering sequence as reserved for any future overlay districts.

Refining and Adopting Services – Mr. Evans stated from a contract perspective that we are entering a phase where needed team members would attend additional meetings on an hourly basis. He noted that six meetings were agreed to in the beginning, which extended to eight meetings, Mr. Evans was willing to absorb this expense. It was noted that the simultaneous review of signage had not been feasible, and that Mr. Ware is the author of signage text while Derck & Edson, LLC is the author of signage graphics. Out of respect for time and money Mr. Evans offered to depart the meeting early tonight to allow time to review the sign ordinance.

Parking Alternatives – Mr. Evans stated that Walker Consultants would be the best consultant to address parking alternatives and various scopes of work and pricing points were provided by Walker Consultants for the borough's consideration. It was recommended to consider the following parking criteria's:

- Focus on shared parking standards at the edges of the Central Business District for economic viability.
- Consider the ability to include parking amenities located in front of parcels in the total number of required parking spaces.
- The required width of parking spaces is currently nine feet, it was thought that seven or eight feet would be sufficient.

- Utilize Urban Land Institute of Smart Code to ensure optimization of parking by season, day, or hour.
- Consider ratio standards that are based on required spaces per bedroom for apartments.

A reasonable approach to the \$3,000 level of service to begin discussions with Walker Consultants was decided to be their review of Derck & Edson comments relating to Sections 455-138 through 455-141 Off-Street Parking and Loading.

Impervious Coverage Ratios/Civic Space/Stormwater Standards – Per previous conversations it was decided to retain the impervious coverage percentages while reviewing options to create innovative stormwater controls within pocket parks, civic spaces or green building designs. Portions of these aspects may need to be updated within the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). A joint conversation with the borough engineer may facilitate refining of aspects between both the SALDO and Zoning Ordinances. Mr. Miller recommended addressing requests for relief from impervious coverages via either special exception or conditional use to allow requests to be presented to both the Planning Commission and Borough Council as opposed to the Zoning Hearing Board until updates can be made to the SALDO.

Mr. Evans noted that the next couple of meetings would be to discuss the sign ordinance criteria with Mr. Ware. The ability to incorporate parking alternatives and signage regulations within a redlined draft zoning amendment was thought feasible within a few months to provide a full draft to the Berks County Planning Commission and the solicitor's office for review and comment.

Mr. Evans departed the meeting at 7:12 p.m.

Sign Ordinance Review – The following comments were made on the proposed signage sections:

- **Section 455-189 B.** – The reference to excessive signage would be quantified within Table X.1.
- **Section 455-190 B.** – The word refacing was requested to be included in the list of permitting requirements.
- **Section 455-190 C.1.(c)** – Existing electronic message sign criteria would be incorporated into the draft amendment.
- **Section 455-190 C.1.(d)(3)** – The intensity of glare determination and enforcement could be addressed through the borough's nuisance ordinance.
- **Section 455-190 D.(2)** – The body that would determine if a sign is occupying a vehicular sight triangle would be Borough Staff as opposed to the Borough's Traffic Safety Department.
- **Section 455-190 E.(2)** – The reference to Table X.2. General Sign Type Standards and Regulations will be modified to Table X.1.

- **Section 455-190 F.2.(d)** – Mr. Moyer shared that the existing ordinance, Section 455-161 I., is more restrictive with regards to flag or banner signage placement timeframes. The existing criteria will be incorporated into the proposed criteria.

Further review of sign regulations will begin next month at Section 455-192.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary