

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
OCTOBER 2, 2024**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, October 2, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Cody Rhoads, and Jennifer Bressler; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira. Members Zanna Leiendecker, Daniel Horman, and Kacie Rodriguez were unable to attend.

Visitors

Steve Ware, Derck & Edson, LLC

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the September 4, 2024 minutes. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mrs. Bressler. **Motion carried.**

New Business

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

Downtown Overlay District Sign Ordinance Review – Mr. Ware provided an updated sign ordinance that included red-lined changes based on last month’s discussions. Review of the proposed regulations began at Section 455-192 Permit Exempt Signs with the following requested revisions:

- **Section 455-192 Permit Exempt Signs** – The reference within Subsection B. (4) to limit placement of on premises signs not less than one hundred fifty feet was recommended to be revised to one per parcel boundary.
 - The reference within Subsection B. (13) exempts real estate signs from permit exemption. Wording would be revised to “Real estate signs on the property for sale.”
- **Section 455-193 Prohibited Signs** – The reference within Subsection A. to out-of-date political billboards was recommended to be revised to out-of-date political signs.
 - The reference within Subsection I. to include electronically controlled copy changes was removed.
 - Subsection J. that prohibits string lights did not include café lights that are currently an allowable use that does not outline the structure. Mr. Moyer appreciated the limit of sixty days for temporary seasonal lights.
 - A definition for Interactive will be added to clarify the reference to Interactive Signs within Subsection O.
 - A definition for Obscene will be added to clarify the reference within Subsection S. “...words or pictures of obscene or pornographic subjects.”
 - Subsection T and U were recommended to be reversed.

- **Section 455-194 Nonconforming Signs; Signs on Nonconforming Use Premises** – There were no recommended revisions to this section of draft provisions.
- **Section 455-195 Definitions and Word Usage** – Definitions were reviewed within each sign type standard description and recommended changes noted below.
- **Section 455-196 Sign Type Standards** – Mr. Moyer recommended revising Table X.1 Permitted Sign Locations and Permit Types to simply Table 1. The following definitions and standards were discussed:
 - **455-196.1 A-Frame/Sidewalk Sign** – Rewording of the second sentence within the description was recommended to read: “It is pedestrian-oriented and may be used to announce daily specials, sales, or to direct pedestrians to shops located off the sidewalk.” Regulation (5) was recommended to be reworded as: “Shall be removed during inclement weather.” The addition of regulation (8) was recommended: “May only be displayed in front of the intended business.”
 - **455-196.2 Awning Sign** – There were no recommended revisions.
 - **455-196.3 Canopy Sign** – There were no recommended revisions.
 - **455-196.4 Corner Sign** – The Area was recommended to be revised to specify 20 square feet maximum per side, 40 square feet maximum total.
 - **455-196.5 Façade/Wall Sign** – The third sentence of the description was recommended to read: “The sign may have a minimal depth not exceeding 12 inches from the face of the wall.” The reference to constructed box and lighting were removed. Regulation (3) was removed since lighting is addressed elsewhere in the ordinance. It was agreed to remove these references throughout the sign type standards.
 - **455-196.6 Freestanding Ground/Monument Sign** – Number of signs allowable within the Commercial and Gateway Districts were recommended to be revised from one per building corner to one per parcel.
 - **455-196.7 Freestanding Pole/Pylon Sign** – The Area was recommended to be revised to specify 20 square feet maximum per side, 40 square feet maximum total.
 - **455-196.8 Marquee Sign** – There were no recommended revisions.
 - **455-196.9 Projection/Hanging/Blade Sign** – The second sentence within the description was recommended to read: “Projecting signs are pedestrian-oriented, as they protrude perpendicular to the building façade ...”. Regulation (4) that required a minimum separation of fifteen feet from another projecting sign was recommended to be removed based on limited building widths.
 - **455-196.10 Wall Directory Sign** – Regulation (1) was recommended to have grammatical corrections to read: “Signage should contain the names of the tenants/businesses and may include primary products and services.”
 - **455-196.11 Wall Landscape Sign** – There were no recommended revisions.

- **455-196.12 Window Sign** – The first sentence of the description was recommended to read: “A sign that is applied, painted, or affixed to a window, or placed inside a window, within three (3) feet of the glass, facing the outside of the building, and easily seen from the right-of-way.” Regulation (2) (c) was recommended to read: “Vinyl applique letters applied to the window. Appliques shall consist of individual letters or graphics with no visible background.” Regulation (4) was recommended to read: “Window signs shall not be illuminated except as below.” The prohibition of neon signs was discussed, the limitations of one per window with a maximum coverage of 10% and no flashing was thought to be acceptable regulations.

Mr. Lincoln spoke of a projected lighted pattern on the sidewalk in front of the West Reading Drug Store, Mr. Moyer shared the recent permitting of a similar projection light for the Gem on Penn signage on the sidewalk. Provisions for and a definition of projected signs was recommended.

- **455-196.13 Back-to-Back Sign** – Mr. Moyer indicated that this type of sign is similar to other double-sided signs. This sign type was recommended to be removed.
- **455-196.14 Banner Sign (Temporary)** – There were no recommended revisions.
- **455-196.15 Banner – Building Mounted Sign (Temporary)** – This type of sign is similar to Banner Sign (Temporary) and was recommended to be removed.

Mrs. Bressler departed the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

- **455-196.16 Business Identification Sign** – Mr. Moyer asked how this differs from any other type of sign, this terminology causes confusion within the existing regulations. It was recommended to remove this type of sign.
- **455-196.17 Directional Sign** – There were no recommended revisions.
- **455-196.18 Redevelopment/Construction Sign (Temporary)** – There were no recommended revisions.
- **455-196.19 Flag Sign** – Regulation (1) was recommended to be removed to remove the limitation of a minimum fifty-feet of spacing. Two flags per frontage was thought to be acceptable.
- **455-196.20 Kiosk Sign** – This type of regulation, similar to a freestanding sign, was thought to be unnecessary and therefore recommended to be removed.
- **455-196.21 Personal Expression Sign** – Mr. Moyer felt these regulations would be helpful. The Area was recommended to be revised to specify 6 square feet maximum per side. It was thought that these regulations could also pertain to political signs.
- **455-196.22 Real Estate Sign (Temporary)** – The Area was recommended to be revised to specify 6 square feet maximum per side.
- **455-196.23 Roof Sign** – A graphic will be provided for roof signs that may not extend vertically higher than the highest point of the roof. Flat roof installments would be prohibited. Placement and Dimension criteria were established to

allow one sign per building, a maximum area of 40 square feet, height would be nonapplicable and copy height would be 18 inches or 30 inches if over forty feet from the right-of-way. An additional Regulation (6) was recommended to read: "Prohibited on flat roofs."

- **455-196.24 V-Type Sign** – This would be similar to the current Marquee sign at the dance studio or the Chinese restaurant sign. It was recommended to remove this sign type.
- **455-196.25 Electronic Message/Digital Display Sign** – Mr. Ware indicated that this section was added based on current regulations. It was thought that these types of signs detract from the aesthetics of the downtown. It was recommended to prohibit these types of signs by adding electronic message or digital display signs to Section 455-196.3 Prohibited signs.
- **455-196.26 Commercial Way-Finding Sign** – Due to placement primarily in the public right-of-way which would inherently be prohibited it was recommended to remove these regulations.

Review of parking minimum recommendations by Walker Consultants was tabled until next month.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Madeira
Borough Secretary