

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 5, 2025**

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert; Vice Chair Christopher Lincoln; Members Zanna Leiendecker, and Cody Rhoads; Zoning Officer and Code Department Manager Chad Moyer; Borough Manager Randall Miller; Borough Engineer, Pamela Stevens. Members Jennifer Bressler, Daniel Horman, and Kacie Rodriguez were unable to attend.

Visitors

Mark Evans, Derck & Edson, LLC

Nicholas Johnson, Johnson Environmental Engineering

Chairman Wert called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

The agenda was modified to add a request from the Engineer for a letter of support.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve minutes of the January 9, 2025 meeting. **Moved** by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Mr. Rhoads. **Motion carried 4-0.**

New Business

a. **Review of Berks County Planning Commission (BCPC) Comments on the Final Draft Downtown Zoning and Sign Ordinance**

A few comments were received from the BCPC (letter dated February 21, 2025). Mark Evans of Derck & Edson had time to review and make recommendations. The Members discussed each point as a separate item:

1. For the definition of "Building Entrance" the Borough may want to specify "Main" or "Secondary" because "Principal Entrance" is a specific definition. This could cause confusion with regards to which type of entrance is being referred to.

Mark recommended a change to "Principal Entrance" instead of "Main Public Entrance" and the removal of "Building Entrance" as a definition. The Members discussed and agreed to this recommendation with the added change to the definition of: "main point of pedestrian ingress and egress to a building."

2. The definition of "Commercial Laundries" is confusing because it cites the definition below "Commercial Laundries, Neighborhood" which is a separate term. These should be treated as two separate terms.

Mark recommended a change to the definition: "Any establishment that provides laundry cleaning services on-site for hotels, hospitals, restaurants, other large operations, or for off-site laundry cleaning services." The Members briefly discussed and agreed to this recommendation.

3. The definition of "Downtown Overlay District" specifies "Central Business District" (C) being part of it. The Central Business District is shown as (CB) on the proposed Zoning Map for the Downtown Overlay District. However, (C) is represented as the "Conservation District" on the Official Zoning Map. Prior to adoption, the appropriate labeling should be provided.

Mark recommended the fix be made and “CB” will be inserted with Central Business District; the Members agreed to this change.

4. To stay consistent with other restaurant definitions, staff recommends specifying alcohol consumption regulations for “Fast Casual Dining/Fast Food”.

Mark reviewed this comment from the BCPC in depth. The discussion, with the Members, centered on Parking definitions versus Use definitions. The reference to “Fast Casual Dining/Fast Food” is only found in the Parking requirements section of the Zoning Ordinance. Members have concerns about limiting adult beverages at these types of establishments as a whole.

There was discussion on how to handle the differences between the ‘Uses’ and ‘Parking’ sections of the Zoning Ordinance. Adding a footnote at the bottom of the Parking requirements section, stipulating that the parking regulations were only to determine numbers of parking spaces required and had no effect on what Uses, was considered. The members noted that this could work, but that there is a need for defining “Fast Casual Dining”.

Following this discussion, Mr. Evans made the recommendation to include a notation in the header paragraph that stipulates that the Parking Uses Table does not define a Permitted Use. Additionally, redefine “Fast Casual” so that adult beverage consumption would be allowed.

The Members were in agreement with the proposed changes. They moved on to the next item.

5. The proposed amendment shows two definitions for “facade” which are both different. Staff are not sure if this is a typographical error and if the one in red is proposed to replace the one in black. Clarification is needed.

Mr. Evans noted that the proposed definition in red was the correct version to be used, and the amendment will be adjusted in answer to this item. The Members were in agreement.

6. Staff recommends adding the word “dwelling” in front of “units” in the definition for “Manor House”.

Mr. Evans recommended that this request be honored, and the Members agreed.

7. The definition for “Traveled Way” should specify “transportation other than by foot”.

Mr. Evans recommended that this request be honored, and the Members agreed.

8. Section 455-112(1)(C)[5] is not clear how it is written. The Borough may want to review and restate this. Specifically, Staff notes that the Borough is trying to surround the civic spaces with ground floor retail uses however, as written this is not conveyed.

Mr. Evans recommended that this request be accepted as prescribed, and the Members agreed.

9. The word “proscribed” is used repeatedly through the proposed regulations for the Downtown Overlay District. It appears this might have been mistakenly used instead of “prescribed”.

Mr. Evans noted that this was a typo, and recommended the acceptance of this change, and the Members agreed.

10. With regards to Section 455-168.G, staff recommends changing the word “treated” to “treating”.

Mr. Evans accepted that this was a correct use, recommended the change, and the Members accepted.

11. Staff suggests using the more common terminology of Drive-Thru Service Place rather than Drive-In Service Places as proposed in the Definitions section. In addition, Section 455-181 specifies regulations for the term "Drive-In Place". If the Borough does not wish to use Drive-Thru Service Places, staff notes that the proposed "Drive-In Service" should be consistent with the same term in the Definitions section.

The Planning Commission Members agreed with this term on the recommendation of Mr. Evans.

The final two notes (12 and 13) having no effect on the zoning amendment were acknowledged.

The Planning Commission Members discussed whether these changes necessitated a submittal to the Solicitor for review. The consultants noted that there was nothing substantive to the recommendation from the Berks County Planning Commission, and it was agreed by all that there was no need to have the Solicitor review these changes.

A motion was then made by Ms. Leiendecker, seconded by Mr. Lincoln to forward a recommendation to Borough Council for the scheduling of a Public Hearing and for adoption of the Zoning Amendments as submitted. **Motion carried 4-0.**

b. Discussion with the Consultants regarding a coordinated strategy for Civic Spaces, Stormwater Management, Impervious Coverage and incorporation into Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) updates in Downtown West Reading

Chairman Wert noted that the consultants, Mark Evans, Pamela Stevens, and Nick Johnson along with Chad Moyer, Randy Miller, Cindy Madeira and himself were all on a Zoom call this past Monday to discuss how to proceed with incorporating updates needed as a result of changes to the zoning ordinance. The Borough's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) and the Stormwater Ordinance are critical to the support of these Zoning changes. The impetus for increasing impervious lot coverages to 100% from existing zoning requirements had been previously discussed (minutes of January 9, 2025). To accomplish this, the Conditional Use process would be used, thereby giving Borough Council the ability to set parameters.

Discussions about the use of 'Civic' spaces and internment of stormwater are the mechanisms for developers to request an increase in impervious lot coverage. Ideally, civic spaces would be incorporated into each development, or re-development. Stormwater would be kept on-site and percolated at prescribed rates in accordance with the Best Management Practices (BMPs). It was noted by Mr. Johnson that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is already considering updates, which will significantly impact water retention on-site.

The SALDO and Stormwater Ordinances prescribe guidelines that Borough Council can use when hearing and deciding on applications for increased, impervious lot coverage. There are a number of other issues that would also need to be addressed: would this be an all, or be a graduated scale? Would a developer be allowed to "buy-out" or provide monetary security for the Borough to ensure compliance. Would the Borough have areas that they develop to meet Civic Space requirements? Would the Borough develop areas for water internment and discharge?

The consultants and Members of the Planning Commission discussed these questions and agreed that the next course of action was to draft amendments to bring back for further discussions. They also agreed that the same issues as discussed at their January meeting and recorded in minutes of that date (**Civic Spaces, Stormwater Management, and Impervious Coverage in Downtown West Reading**), are still applicable.

A motion was made by Mr. Lincoln seconded by Ms. Leiendecker, to recommend Borough Council have the consultants Pamela Stevens of SDE, Mark Evens of Derck & Edson, and Nicholas Johnson of Johnson Environmental Engineering work to provide recommendations for upgrades to the Borough's SALDO and Stormwater Ordinances for compliance with the amended Zoning Ordinance. **Motion carried 4-0.**

All three consultants will submit an estimate of costs in time for Borough Council's next meeting. They also agreed that they could have draft changes proposed in three months.

c. Discussion with the Engineer, Pamela Stevens, on a request to have the Planning Commission submit a letter in support of a PA Small Water and Sewer Statewide Program grant

Engineer Stevens noted that she is requesting a letter of support from the Planning Commission. Borough Council intends to submit a Construction Funding/Grant Application to the DCED/CFA under the PA Small Water and Sewer Statewide Program for grant funds to be used for the 7th Avenue Water Main Replacement Project.

The project is to replace approximately 885 linear feet of existing 12" water main with 12" ductile iron pipe along 7th Avenue in the Borough of West Reading. From the 100 block to the 200 block of 7th Avenue, the existing 12" diameter water main will be replaced with 12" ductile iron water main. The estimated project cost is \$500,000.

A motion was made by Mr. Lincoln seconded by Ms. Leiendecker, to have the Borough Manager draft a letter of support from the Planning Commission for the Construction Funding/Grant Application to the DCED/CFA under the PA Small Water and Sewer Statewide Program for grant funds to be used for the 7th Avenue Water Main Replacement Project. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m. by Mr. Lincoln and seconded by Ms. Leiendecker. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Randall Miller
Borough Manager