

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2016

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, February 3, 2016 at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert, Christopher Lincoln, Jennifer Bressler, Terry Siggins, Christin Kelley and Oswald Herbert.

Visitors:	Scott & Wendy King	732 Penn Avenue
	Mark & Carole Shearer	727 Penn Avenue
	Mark & Steve Woodward	606 Penn Avenue
	Karen Livingood	Recreation Commission
	Helen Moyer	Recreation Commission
	Nathalie Kulesa	Recreation Commission
	Tom Unger	Borough Engineer

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Scott & Wendy King spoke about the situation where the notary on Penn Avenue leased space from them at 734 Penn Avenue in October 2015 with the intention of relocating the business to that location however the Zoning Officer denied the application based on the information at hand. When it was investigated further, it was determined that the Zoning Officer's decision was incorrect because he was using an out-of-date zoning map which didn't take the 2012 Overlay District into consideration. The situation has since been resolved and the notary may move to the new location, however Mr. King said that the business owner is out \$6000. Mr. King also faulted the Borough for treating her relocation as a new business even though she has been there for 27 years. He said that the zoning on Penn Avenue should be broader and allow offices on the first floor instead of the maximum 25% that is currently permitted.

Mr. Wert explained that the zoning requirements concerning the first floor 25% office/75% retail space regulation that has been in place for 15 or 16 years, was changed when taxpayers spent \$6.2 million to refurbish Penn Avenue and create the "Main Street" that it is now. As part of that project, consultants recommended the zoning change to ensure the viability of Penn Avenue for the future. He also noted that in this unfortunate situation, the notary owner should have come in for a zoning permit in October before she leased the property.

Much discussion ensued concerning existing non-conforming uses, state laws (MPC) and the overlay district. Mr. King said that the Borough should not have zoning that hurts existing local people and should look at the local businesses more kindly. Mr. Siggins spoke about the types of businesses on Penn Avenue and indicated that a notary business should have always been a permitted use and that there should have been a way to permit this business to relocate before the error was found. It was also noted that the business owner could have sat down with the zoning officer to discuss the situation further, particularly with regard to her options and the appeal process.

Mr. King and his supporters left at 8:53 p.m.

Concession Stand Waiver Request

Recreation Director Helen Moyer was on hand to discuss the details for the concession stand that will be constructed over the next year. She reviewed drawings regarding the location of the structure, size, façade details, etc. Mr. Unger noted that SDE has been working on the specifications with Mrs. Moyer and noted that all Borough Code requirements will be met or surpassed, such as the inclusion of a grease trap, building permit, electrical and plumbing inspections, etc. He stated that at this point, they are simply requesting a waiver from the land development process, since this is a Borough owned property.

Moved by Mr. Herbert and seconded by Ms. Kelley to recommend to Council that the land development process for the new concession stand be waived. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Narrow Holdings Proposed Development

Kevin Hughes, owner of the property at 701 N. 7th Avenue (Narrow Fabrics building) has submitted preliminary building plans for the conversion of the top three floors into 90 residential apartments. Mr. Unger noted that the first floor will be commercial (as required in this zone) however there has been no indication as to what that will be. Also, there is a walk out basement at the rear of the property. Apartments currently are a permitted use however only 30% of the building may be used for that purpose. In order to allow 90 apartments, a special exception for 60% of the building would need to be granted by Council. The property is located in the Light Industrial Zone as well as the Commercial and Industrial Redevelopment Overlay District.

Zoning requires 1.5 parking spaces per residential unit or a total of 135 spaces in addition to the parking necessary for the commercial space which could total an additional 270 spaces depending on the particular type of use. The property currently has parking for 102 vehicles, therefore a variance will be required in order to proceed.

Mr. Unger will send a letter to Mr. Hughes detailing the steps that will need to be taken to move forward with this project.

Code Hearing Board

The appeals process for the International Property Maintenance Code has been discussed in the past and Mr. Unger indicated that the IMPC has mandated provisions for the creation of a board that shall consist of a minimum of three members who are qualified by experience and training to hear these appeals. The composition of this board was briefly discussed and it was suggested that perhaps Planning Commissioners might potentially be the best choice because of their background. This will be discussed with the solicitor to determine if it would be appropriate.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on Thursday, February 11th at 7:00 p.m. at which time work on the codification project will continue beginning at the bottom of page 47.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Borough Secretary