

**BOROUGH OF WEST READING
PLANNING COMMISSION**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 2014

The West Reading Planning Commission met for their regular meeting on Wednesday, January 8, 2014 at Borough Hall with the following persons present: Chair Philip Wert, Vice Chair Terry Siggins, Deborah Hutcheson, Christopher Lincoln, Christin Kelley, and Terry Naugle (Great Valley Consultants). Maxine Goodwin, Kim Collins, and Zoning Officer Tracey Levering were unable to attend.

Visitors in attendance were Amber Rambo and Elizabeth Heckler.

Mr. Wert called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Amber Rambo asked for clarification regarding the addition of a 'Torii Gate' in her yard. She explained that a Torii Gate is Japanese in style, and much like an arbor, used for ornamentation in a garden. She also noted that it will not be placed in the setback area. Mr. Naugle explained that according to the definition of a structure in the Zoning Ordinance, the Torii Gate would be considered a structure if it is attached to the ground, which would require a permit. If she constructs one that is not attached to the ground, it will be allowed and not require a permit, however it should be constructed in such a manner that ensures it can't be knocked or blown over.

Elizabeth Heckler asked if a committee is being formed to review the things that were discussed at the last Council meeting, such as the clearing of sidewalks and building requirements. She also asked if the Planning Commission has reviewed or changed anything in this regard. Mr. Wert said that Council gave no direction after all of the public comment at the last Council meeting therefore nothing has been discussed or changed. Concerning the Zoning Ordinance revision which is a separate issue, he said that the Solicitor Dan Becker has provided his legal review which needs to be discussed by the Commission.

Terry Siggins said that what he had proposed at the Council meeting was for the Planning Commission to review all of the Codes regulations, and to sit down with retailers, contractors, restaurateurs, etc. to determine what should be changed. He then read the list of items from the Borough website that do not require a permit (painting, wallpapering, carpeting, some landscaping) and said that many other municipalities do not have such stringent requirements. He noted his personal issue with the replacement of boards on his deck, however Mr. Naugle stated that this particular requirement is state law, and although he personally doesn't like how the UCC is written, there is nothing that can be done. Mr. Naugle further stated that changes were made to the UCC that relaxed some of the requirements pertaining to residential renovations, however many local municipalities such as Shillington, Lower Alsace, Wyomissing, Mt. Penn, and including West Reading chose to adopt the more stringent regulations.

Chris Lincoln said that it was Council's decision to adopt the more strict regulations which is what the Codes Department is enforcing. He also said that he would be interested in being a part of a committee that would be discussing these issues. He did note that according to the MPC, it is not a Planning Commission issue.

Mr. Naugle gave examples of situations where permits are required under the UCC:

- A roofer patches the roof, no permit is required, however the roofer takes part of the roof off to replace, a permit is required.
- The front door is replaced – this requires a permit because the front door is the primary means of egress from a home. The rear door replacement however doesn't require a permit because it is not the primary means of egress.

Mr. Naugle was asked if the 'optional' requirements that West Reading and other municipalities have adopted can be broken down with some of the requirements being added and some left out to which he replied that it can be done, however most municipalities adopt it as a whole.

As a final note, Mr. Wert said that Council plans to form a committee to review these issues.

REORGANIZATION

The MPC requires that the Commission reorganizes annually, therefore it was moved by Ms. Hutcheson and seconded by Mr. Siggins to appoint Mr. Wert as Chairman of the Commission.

Motion carried. (Mr. Wert abstained)

It was moved by Mr. Siggins and seconded by Ms. Hutcheson to appoint Mr. Lincoln as Vice Chairman of the Commission. **Motion carried.** (Mr. Lincoln abstained)

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

The solicitor's review was discussed with the following changes being implemented:

Section 147. Conditional Use Procedures

(d)(3) Language was added regarding additional hearings, consistent with the MPC.

Section 202. Definitions

The definition of 'façade' was expanded to include 'façade, front', 'façade, side' and 'façade, rear'.

The definition of 'temporary use' was modified to state "A temporary use may be authorized only if it is a permitted use in the zone . . ."

Under the 'yard' definition, a 2nd diagram was added to more clearly depict the locations of the right-of-way, cartway, etc.

Section 403. Accessory Building and Structures

(d) The language, which originally said 'An accessory building or structure shall not be within the required front yard on the lot' was changed to: 'An accessory building or structure, other

than a fence, shall not be permitted within the required front yard on the lot. A fence, while included within the definition of "structure", may be permitted within the front yard of a lot, provided that it complies with all other provisions of this Chapter.'

Section 414. Temporary Structures and Uses

(d) The language was amended to read: 'A temporary use *may be authorized only if it is a permitted use in the zoning district . . .*'

Section 504. Signs Permitted in all Districts

(d) The word 'public' was added to describe the street frontage.

Section 505. General Sign Regulations

(o) There is a concern that an awning or canopy could interfere with the use of a public sidewalk, therefore Mr. Naugle will prepare the appropriate language for review at the next Commission meeting.

Section 533 and 534. Signs Permitted in the Central/General Business District

There was a inconsistency regarding sign square footage where a single use building could potentially be allowed 150 square feet of signage on the façade however in the case of a shopping center or group of stores with single ownership, the allowable square footage is maximum 70 square feet. The Commission noted that this was not the intent, therefore Mr. Naugle will prepare the wording that will permit a shopping center to also be allowed 150 square feet.

In addition to these changes as recommended by the solicitor, Mrs. Levering also noted a discrepancy under Section 501 (d) where the last line states 'There is no permit required for temporary signs used for commercial purposes (advertising).' This is incorrect and will be removed.

Mr. Naugle will make the final changes and send them to Mr. Becker for his review, then the finalized document will be returned to the Planning Commission for review at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Hoffman
Administrative Assistant