

Minutes
City of Reading Planning Commission
January 26, 2021

Members Present:

Lee Olson, Chairman
Wayne J. Bealer, Vice Chairman
William F. Cinfici
Robert Conklin
Philip Ashear

Staff Present:

David Peris, Zoning Administrator
Tim Krall, City Engineer, Public Works
Naomi Crimm, Planner
Jerome Skrinicosky, Hawk Valley Associates, PC, Planning Consultant
Stan Rugis, Public Works
Michelle Mayfield, Hartman Valeriano Magovern Lutz, Solicitor
William Stoudt, Reading Fire Department
Jeremy Searfoss, Reading Fire Marshal

Others Present:

Tony Ganguzza, Boyle Construction
Rob Manns, Manns Woodward Studios
Evan Gray, Manns Woodward Studios
Joe Gurney, First Capital Engineering
David Talarico, Reading Housing Authority
Stacey Keppen, Reading Housing Authority
Aristides Otero, Stackhouse Bensinger
Ed Stock, Solicitor for Reading Housing Authority

Chairman Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

Item #1 – Agenda

The draft agenda for this January 26, 2021 meeting was reviewed. The agenda was amended to remove the Reading Soda Works and Hope Rescue Mission projects. Commissioner Cinfici proposed a motion to accept the minutes as revised. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous, 5-0.

Item #2: Subdivision and Land Developments

PC-2021-100-S: 1201 N. 9th St. (Marion Street Station)

Mr. Ganguzza introduced his team. Mr. Gurney presented the schematic and sketch plan designs. The fire house will be across the street from its current site, on the Northeast corner of Ninth and Marion. Ninth Street will be the entrance and exit of the fire station, with three bays.

The existing lot is a little over 12,000 square feet and it is 100% impervious surface. There are six employees currently (but there will be up to eight employees going forward). Ten parking spaces are proposed. The site is served by public sewer and water. The project will need a special exception and a number of variances: including, front yard set-backs, and impervious coverage. A submission has been made to the Zoning Hearing Board. The building will take up most of the lot. A PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) for access onto 9th Street is required, because it is state highway [SR 2007].

Chairman Olson asked if the applicant has ensured that all fire apparatus will be able to enter and exit. Mr. Gurney assured that they have looked at this.

Mr. Ganguzza responded to the planning review letter's question about the loading zone – their idea is to use the apron for a loading area.

Commissioner Bealer asked about a solid waste disposal area. Mr. Gurney identified the area on the plan for refuse (a 7- by 10-foot concrete pad). Commissioner Bealer added that the waste disposal needs to be enclosed. He also asked about improvements on North Mill Street, as the ambulance will come out there. Mr. Manns shared the elevations.

Commissioner Cinfici expressed pleasure that the project is finally moving forward. He mentioned that the application says the site is in a historic district, but it is not. He stated that the backup generator is prudent, but it needs to be away from the building. That would be a gasoline one which would create noise for the neighbors. He suggested they might want to look into an alternative energy supply and put it inside the building. He asked the applicant to clarify the line of sight.

Commissioner Conklin asked about the building capacity. Mr. Manns said that they have flex space in order to have enough bunk space to accommodate more people in the case of emergencies/surges.

Mr. Peris stated the applicant will be able to submit for the March Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Krall and Mr. Gurney discussed whether sewage modules are required. Mr. Krall mentioned that they will need a PennDOT highway occupancy permit. Since a bus stop exists at the corner, BARTA will need to look and see if the bus stop needs to be reconfigured or moved. Bump-outs are a change to the curb alignment – a realignment change to the map will need to happen via ordinance to amend the topographical plan. This will affect plowing and stormwater drainage. Mr. Krall wants to make sure they have the correct conveyance for stormwater. He indicated that the applicant can probably get an exemption for a drainage plan, but they will still need to address water quality. Mr. Krall said that the section of North Mill Street behind the fire station is probably a street, but it could be an alley – the applicant needs to make sure it is properly documented on the plan. Mark Connelly, Engineering Aide, is working on determining if it is a street or an alley.

Ms. Mayfield asked about the collective bargaining agreement requirements for the manning of the trucks. If they are using the loading zone in the front they will need to seek a variance. She asked if there will be warning signs for when the trucks go out, or just a sign saying 'fire house ahead.' Mr. Gurney said that the installation of flashing signals was discussed.

PC-2020-113-PF: 1001 Scott St (Reading Housing Authority [RHA])

Mr. Talarico introduced his team. Mr. Otero reviewed the proposed preliminary/final plan. An expansion of RHA's administrative building is proposed. The project has been delayed because the City is proposing a realignment of Liggett Ave.

Mr. Otero explained that it is a 1,590 square-foot building expansion to the Northern side of the existing building. The current administration building has no off-street parking spaces. Fifty-four parking spaces are proposed.

He indicated that two waiver requests were submitted: The first was for the City to review the plan as a preliminary/final plan; the second was for plan scale.

Mr. Skrincosky reviewed the areas of concern for zoning compliance. He is comfortable with the amount of parking. If Liggett Ave is considered to be a collector street, some waivers might be required; but, it is likely a minor street. He would like to see how leftover land will be used. Mr. Otero responded that abandoned land will go to the RHA.

Mr. Skrincosky suggested that the applicant might want to look at a dusk to dawn lighting plan so that the lights aren't on all night. Mr. Otero said that they could dim the lights for safety and security. He will look at this further and propose some reduced lighting after hours. Mr. Talarico said that he would be comfortable with that. Mr. Skrincosky said that they will need to fence in the solid waste management area. Because of the relocation of utilities, coordination with appropriate agencies will be required.

Mr. Peris said that zoning relief is not required.

Mr. Krall said that the area of annexation will be smaller than the area of vacation, which needs to be made clear on the plan. He asked if the 30-foot cartway includes bike lanes. Mr. Krall expressed that it would be a good idea, as the bike lanes would connect to others nearby. It would be very tight to do it with 30-foot cartway, but a 32-foot cartway would work. Mr. Talarico asked about placing bike lanes in front of diagonal parking. He stated that they will make that change, as he thinks that will be a benefit. Mr. Otero stated that they will make a 2-foot shift towards the proposed RHA property line to allow for a 32-foot cartway.

Mr. Krall said that there are significant stormwater concerns on Liggett Ave and over the entire intersection. The applicant will need to plan to catch and convey it correctly. The City's intersection project could change the configuration from the current plan considerably. The applicant will need an easement for any existing utilities: including stormwater and sanitary sewers; but, not for street lights, as some of those will be relocated. Mr. Krall spoke about a request for exemption from parts of the stormwater management plan – he said that he is moving towards recommending that, but they are increasing the impervious area. He would look for

calculations to show the percent increase in the rate of flow to show that the exemption is warranted. He said to make sure the loading zone is really wanted in the area indicated, and confirm the hours of operation.

Mr. Otero said that he will work with Public Works on the stormwater requirements. Commissioner Bealer expressed surprise that the project requires a NPDES permit. Mr. Otero said that they are on the threshold that it not be required, but he is not sure.

Mr. Peris stated that due to the number of pending items, he wouldn't recommend granting approval, but he advised addressing the waiver requests.

Action: Commissioner Bealer made a motion to waive the plan scale requirement per the applicant's written request. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous, 5-0.

Action: Commissioner Bealer made a motion to grant a waiver for the applicant to apply for preliminary/final review, per the applicant's written request. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous, 5-0.

Item #3 Other Business

Liggett Avenue Vacation Petition

Mr. Stock presented RHA's petition for the Liggett Avenue street vacation that was submitted to the City Clerk's office. He said that this would work well with the City's plan for the intersection. It would enable RHA to have more parking, thereby relieving parking pressure in the neighborhood. For this to move forward, the City's realignment has to move forward first. It can happen at same City Council meeting.

Chairman Olsen stated that the vacation is integral to RHA's project. Commissioner Bealer expressed that it is a spectacular way to address several problems.

Action: Chairman Olsen made a motion that the Planning Commission recommends and endorses the RHA's petition to City Council. Commissioner Bealer seconded the motion. Chairman Olsen recommended changing the petition to a 32-foot cartway to allow for the bikeway, maintaining 14-foot sidewalks. Commissioner Bealer agreed as the person who seconded the motion. The vote to approve was unanimous, 5-0. *{Resolution 01-2021}*

Gateway West Chairmen Olsen acknowledged that the Gateway West plan was signed digitally. He stated that the project was approved unanimously by consent.

SALDO Amendments

Mr. Peris said that Michelle Mayfield has comments on the draft SALDO amendments. None are substantive and they can be addressed at staff level, and then staff can send out the final changes. He stated that he would also like to remove the fourteen working-day advance submission

requirements for Planning Commission review to allow submission timing requirements to be determined by planning staff. See, for example: SALDO 515-304.C.

Chairmen Olsen stated that the Commission wants to see these changes made in written form. Staff will make the changes, resubmit them to Berks County Planning for approval and then bring them before the Planning Commission at the February 2021 meeting.

Blight Remediation Committee Report

Chairmen Olsen said that the next scheduled hearing will be in March 2021.

Commission Liaison Report

Commissioner Bealer said that a park will replace the old Marion Street fire station. He asked if the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) will require a letter of approval from the Planning Commission. Commissioner Cinfici stated that the current park is underutilized, so he would like to see something more useful there.

Commissioner Bealer asked about the status of River Road. Mr. Krall indicated that the project can start when the weather improves.

Pending/Future Cases

Action: Chairmen Olsen made a consent motion to accept the requests from all of the projects that had provided letters — as listed in the January agenda — asking for review in the future. Commissioner Bealer seconded the motion. Commissioner Cinfici stated for the record that the new deadlines are on the agenda. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0. {Resolution 2021-004}

Item #4 – Adjournment

After a discussion about the dissolution of the Downtown Improvement District (DID), Chairman Olsen moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bealer. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Naomi Crimm, Planner