

**DRAFT Minutes**  
**City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**February 23, 2021**

**Members Present:**

Lee Olsen, AIA, Chairman  
Bob Conklin, AIA  
Wayne Bealer, Vice Chairman  
Will Cinfici  
Philip Ashear

**Staff Present:**

David Peris, Planning and Zoning Manager  
Naomi Crimm, Planner  
Michelle Mayfield, Hartman Valeriano Magovern Lutz, Solicitor  
Jerome Skrincosky, Hawk Valley Associates, Planning Consultant  
Tim Krall, Public Works

**Others Present:**

Aristedes Otero, Stackhouse Bensinger  
JD Turner, Reading Skate Park Association  
Thomas Ludgate, Ludgate Engineering  
Edward Stock, Reading Housing Authority  
Nick Szeredai, SSM  
Chuck Frantz, C2C Design Group  
Karen Krater, Hoffert Surveyors  
David Talarico, Reading Housing Authority  
Aaron Booth, Reading Housing Authority  
Stacy Keppen, Reading Housing Authority

Chairman Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:04pm. He noted that he will recuse himself when the Commission discusses the Buttonwood Gateway project and Commissioner Bealer will take over as chair.

**Item #1 - Agenda**

Commissioner Conklin made a motion to accept the February 2021 agenda. Commissioner Bealer seconded the motion. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous, 5-0.

**Item #2 – Subdivision and Land Developments**

PC- 2019 – 113: 645 N 6<sup>th</sup> Street (Hope Rescue Mission)

Mr. Ludgate presented the Hope Rescue Mission plan. He mentioned that the plan has not changed significantly since late 2019.

Mr. Krall said that the only real item of Public Works concern was the DEP Planning module approval. That was received in May 2020. Mr. Krall asked the applicant to note that on the plan. There is a new address for the site (715 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street), so there should be a note about that on the plan as well.

Mr. Skrincosky said that there is an area within the plan located along the driveway that is dedicated for trucks that can be used to create a twelve by forty-foot loading space. It wouldn't affect their erosion management. Mr. Ludgate confirmed he would put that in the plan. Mr. Skrincosky stated that the rest of his comments can be easily addressed.

Ms. Mayfield stated that she has no comments, apart from some guidance from Mr. Skrincosky and Mr. Krall as to what the necessary agreements might be.

Commissioner Conklin stated that the area proposed for the loading zone is gravel. He asked how the driver would know where to stop. Mr. Skrincosky responded that the creation of the loading zone would extend the paved area for the off-street parking. Mr. Ludgate confirmed that he would include that in the plan.

Commissioner Bealer asked if there were still a plan to put a play area on the north side of the building. Mr. Ludgate stated that there were security issues. The current plan will fence off an area, but not much more than that. He said that the Hope Rescue Mission staff will need to figure out a security situation for that area.

**Action:** Chairman Olsen called for a motion for final plan approval. Commissioner Bealer made a motion to grant conditional final approval for the Hope Rescue Mission plan with the condition that the plan meets the approval of staff, that the loading zone is shown on the plan, and that the plan is clearly marked with the new address. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0 ([Resolution 03-2021](#)).

#### PC-2020-106-PF 601 Canal Street (Reading Skate Park Association)

Mr. Szeredai of SSM presented the plan. The plan last came before the Planning Commission on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It had a similar layout at that time. A twenty-six thousand square foot skate park is proposed. The park will have a large underground infiltration bed under the parking lot. The applicant is proposing a six-foot tall fence around the park. They have now added dark sky lighting. There is a ninety-six inch sanitary sewer pipe that bisects the site, which forces them to put all improvements on one side. A grass field will be on the other side. The land is currently owned by the Reading Redevelopment Authority. There are multiple parcels, so the applicant is proposing a lot consolidation. The lots were proposed to be consolidated in the past but it was never recorded. The applicant is offering a thirty-eight-foot easement area over the pipe. The park is designed by Grindline Skateparks, Inc. Three phases are proposed. There is currently enough funding to construct Phase 1, which will include a portion of the skatepark, ADA improvements, stormwater management, trashcans, and a fence. Phase Two will add additional portions of the park and fence, while Phase Three includes adding the prefabricated bathroom inside the fence and finishing the lighting. There are three shade structures proposed, one of which is designed to look like the pagoda. The applicant has acquired the NPDES permit. They

have conducted an environmental site assessment, and found there to be lead in the soil. This is a concern if anyone comes into contact with the dirt, but the applicant is not intending for users of the park to interact with the site in that way. Therefore, they are not planning on doing a Phase Two Site Assessment.

Mr. Szeredai addressed the landscaping. He stated that Hawk Valley Associates asked for a landscape buffer of evergreen trees on the southern portion of site. The applicant is not proposing any landscaping, but they are open to discussion. They were planning on better maintaining the current street trees. Mr. Szeredai stated that the solid waste management would be figured out closer to construction, but they are open to putting in more trash cans.

Chairman Olsen asked Mr. Szeredai if they are requesting approval for all three phases. Mr. Szeredai confirmed that they are requesting approval for all three phases, as this makes it easier for grants.

Mr. Krall asked Mr. Szeredai to make it clearer in the title that it is a consolidation plan. The plan doesn't need a fully enhanced consolidation plan, as the authority owns all of the lots within the property. There are no problems from an adjoining lot in the future. Mr. Krall confirmed that the NPDES permit was submitted and approved. He asked if the contractor will be doing the ADA ramps as a design build. Mr. Szeredai replied that they will go through the typical city process: put it out to bid and pick a contractor that way. Mr. Krall asked that a note be added to the plan for the City of Reading to review the plan prior to construction. He added that the city will need an operations and maintenance agreement for stormwater management. Mr. Krall said that for now to assume the owner is the Reading Redevelopment Authority. Mr. Krall also asked for Mr. Szeredai to send him the developer's approval agreement.

Mr. Skrincosky commented that the Phase One Environmental Impact Assessment report was done adequately. He said that if the site gets further developed to the south and will be utilized for recreation and open space, then a Phase Two study should be done at that stage. Mr. Szeredai said that they would agree to that condition and can add a note to the plan. Mr. Skrincosky commented that if the applicant wanted to incorporate additional landscaping, the southern portion of the tract would be the place to do it, but he will leave it to the Planning Commission to determine that. Mr. Skrincosky stated that there is only one trash can on the plan and that there should at least be a recycling can as well. Mr. Szeredai stated that he would be happy to add a receptacle or two. Mr. Krall added that Charlie Jones, Director of Public Works, determined that the kind of trash can on the plan (half trash, half recycling) was acceptable.

Ms. Mayfield asked if the applicant will record a consolidated deed. Mr. Szeredai confirmed that that is their plan. They have a new legal description prepared, as well as one for the easement. The applicant will record the plan with the legal description and new deed. Ms. Mayfield recommended to make as a condition of plan approval that the consolidated plan be recorded with the plan.

Ms. Mayfield asked Mr. Krall about having a separate stormwater agreement for the maintenance. Mr. Krall responded that it is a little arduous to do it that way. Mr. Peris asked if it

would be recorded with the plan or if it is a separate recording. Ms. Mayfield confirmed that it would be recorded with the plan.

Commissioner Cinfici asked if the Commission needs to approve the plan and the consolidation plan separately. Ms. Mayfield responded that the annexation plan and land development plan can be done in one step.

Mr. Szeredai confirmed the waivers they are requesting: one to review the plan as a preliminary/final plan, and one to use the plan scale of one inch equals thirty feet. Commissioner Cinfici moved to waive the plan scale requirement. Commissioner Ashear seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0.

Commissioner Cinfici moved to review the plan as a preliminary/final plan. Commissioner Bealer seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0.

Commissioner Bealer asked if the three phases of the project will be completed within five years. Mr. Szeredai replied that Phase One will be completed within five years. They are hoping to raise enough money for Phase Two in that time frame, but are not sure about Phase Three, as that will require additional costs due to the bathrooms and lighting. Commissioner Bealer confirmed that approval is only valid for five years, and they will need to return for reaffirmation. Mr. Szeredai stated that that is understood, but this approval is helpful for grants.

Mr. Krall stated that it is unfortunate that the applicant needs to have an escrow account for that amount of time, which causes a high annual cost. Mr. Szeredai said that most items are being put in escrow by the city, as most of the improvements in Phase One are being paid for by the city. Ms. Mayfield stated that she has typically done improvement agreements in phases. Mr. Peris added that bathrooms and lighting are not required by zoning.

Chairman Olsen stated that the applicants should come back in five years, as he wants to have oversight in the future. Mr. Szeredai said that they have provided plans and specifications for each structure and have renderings for each one. They are listed on the plan.

Chairman Olsen asked Ms. Mayfield for her opinion on approving an escrow for Phase One. Ms. Mayfield said that she is favorable to this and asked Mr. Szeredai to add a note to this effect to the plan.

Commissioner Ashear asked if there are residents nearby that would be utilizing the field for recreation that would be impacted by the lead present. Mr. Szeredai stated that people would need to be within a depth of six inches and would need to come in direct contact with dirt to be impacted. He confirmed that if there were anything to be done to that area they would pay for a Phase Two study. Mr. Krall confirmed that Liberty Environmental didn't know if there was lead because they didn't do a Phase Two study. However, Mr. Krall said that Liberty recommended that they do a Phase Two study only if there were more development in that area.

Commissioner Conklin asked the other members to clarify that they agree with the arborist approving the existing street trees. He said that he is amenable to it. Commissioner Bealer said

that he has no problem with it if they will be getting the existing trees to a better state. Mr. Szeredai stated that the current trees are overgrown or need to be replaced. The southern portion of the site is already buffered.

Chairman Olsen proposed a motion to grant preliminary/final land development approval, which includes the two waivers granted earlier in the discussion. Ms. Mayfield stated that any approval should be conditioned on the recording of the consolidation deed, the preparation of an improvements agreement, and a stormwater management agreement.

**Action:** Commissioner Bealer made a motion to grant conditional preliminary/final land development plan approval with the conditions that the escrow agreement be negotiated and finalized by the staff and administration in coordination with the applicant and be notated on the plan, that the details concerning the stormwater management have staff approval, and that the consolidation of lots is recorded with the plan, and that the applicant meet all the conditions of current and future review letters. Chairman Olsen seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0 ([Resolution 04-2021](#)).

PC-2020-108: 614 Gregg Avenue (Reading Soda Works)

Ms. Krater stated that this plan came before the Planning Commission in 2020 as a sketch land development plan. She said that this is an empty lot that was purchased by Reading Soda Works and Carbonic Supply for a warehouse and parking area utilizing the existing driveway. The applicant has gone through the Zoning Hearing Board application and was granted a series of variances in March 2020, which are listed on the plan.

Mr. Krall stated that they have addressed most of the items that concerned Public Works. The big issue is the driveway, as it does not meet the city's standards. Zoning and Public Works weigh in on driveways, but the Zoning Hearing Board granted a waiver for this driveway. The applicant would need to reconstruct the eastern portion of Angelica Street to make the driveway conforming. Charlie Jones, director of Public Works, agreed with leaving the driveway as is per the surveyor's (John Hoffert) argument to do so. There is no indication that it has created a safety or drainage problem. The project wouldn't be able to happen without this. The Reading Area Water Authority confirmed that the water was disconnected in 2011, so the property must have a sewer connection. Therefore, no sewer planning module is required, as it would be less than one Equivalent Dwelling Unit. Mr. Krall asked for a note about that to be put on the plan, and Ms. Krater confirmed that will be done. For the stormwater operations and maintenance agreement, Ms. Krater submitted a separate document. Mr. Krall stated that the city will need a developer's approval agreement. Ms. Krater did not submit a cost estimate yet. Mr. Krall asked Ms. Krater if she had submitted an application and fee for stormwater management. Ms. Krater stated that she will double check that.

Mr. Skrincosky stated that as long as Public Works is satisfied with the driveway, planning is satisfied with it. In terms of landscaping, there is little opportunity for street trees, and for internal landscaping as well. The only opportunity is along Brookline Street, but street trees are not going to work because of the retaining wall. However, there is an opportunity for other

plantings. Ms. Krater said that there is one shade tree along Brookline Street within the parking area.

Ms. Mayfield said that she is comfortable with the plan, but that any approval should be conditional to the agreements and escrow.

Commissioner Bealer said that there are residences across the street on Brookline Street. Usually a planting strip is required to shield headlights from neighboring properties. Ms. Krater stated that there is a six-foot chain link fence with privacy slats to address that problem. Commissioner Bealer said that if the Zoning Hearing Board approved the fence then he is fine with it.

**Action:** Commissioner Bealer made a motion to approve the preliminary/final land development plan for the Reading Soda Works with the conditions that the stormwater management plan and the developer improvements agreement meet the requirements of staff, and all planning and public works review letters are applied to the plan. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0, ([Resolution 05-2021](#)).

#### PC-2020-1133-PF: 1001 Scott Street (Reading Housing Authority)

Mr. Otero stated that he received the review letters and that there are a couple of items he'd like to discuss.

Mr. Krall said that there are some small items to still be addressed, but no major issues. Reading Housing Authority has been coordinating with SSM group for the intersection realignment. The alignment needs to be finalized for the lot consolidation and land development plan to happen. The realignment, vacation, and annexation of the property now in the right-of-way of Liggett Avenue is still outstanding. Public Works now has a more refined realignment from SSM. Stackhouse Bensinger has redone the description and design accordingly. Mr. Krall still hasn't seen the final design of the realignment from SSM, but expects to have it soon.

Mr. Otero requested a conditional approval. Mr. Krall said that he is hesitant to recommend that – if the Reading Housing Authority does not own the property, he does not want to grant approval, even if conditional. Ms. Mayfield said that she has seen it done, but it complicates some of the agreements. Mr. Krall stated that there still isn't approval by City Council. Ms. Mayfield said that there are many conditions, so that by the time the applicant gets through all of that, they won't be able to record within 90 days as Berks County requires. Mr. Talarico asked when SSM would have the realignment ready. Mr. Krall thinks that they have it ready. The deadline to go to Council would be Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ms. Mayfield said that the improvements and stormwater agreements can be worked out in the interim. Mr. Otero said that he included the escrow for public improvements, and had included the stormwater management agreement block on the plans. Mr. Otero asked if they would be asking for another submission for March. Mr. Krall asked for an annexation plan. Mr. Otero said they are proposing that the vacation exhibit and an annexation plan will be placed on the plan set. Ms. Mayfield said that any required filing of a deed be a condition of approval. Mr. Krall and Mr. Otero discussed lighting requirements and locations.

Mr. Peris confirmed that any decision about the plan should be tabled until the street vacation is approved.

Mr. Skrincosky said that the title of the plan needs to be revised to include the annexation plan. He said that this property is a nonconformity right now in regards to parking. The applicant needs ten more spaces, but they are on the street. He wants to make sure that there are no zoning conflicts.

**Action:** Commissioner Cinfici made a motion to table the plan for thirty days so that the unresolved items can be resolved. Commissioner Cinfici stated that the group has been focusing on the intersection, but he wants to make sure that the group considers the building as well. Chairman Olsen agreed and seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0. Mr. Skrincosky made the recommendation that the annexation plan be sent back to the Berks County Planning Commission for review.

#### PC-2021-101-S: Miltimore Street (Buttonwood Gateway)

Chairman Olsen recused himself and Commissioner Bealer took over as chair.

Mr. Frantz gave an overview of the project. This project with Habitat for Humanity is on the four-hundred block of Miltimore Street. It is also known as the Buttonwood Gateway Project. The plan is to redevelop twenty-nine existing lots, most of which are currently vacant. The existing houses in the neighborhood are two and a half-story row homes. The intention of Habitat for Humanity is to de-densify and modernize the neighborhood. The existing lots need to be consolidated and subdivided to make them larger to meet the planned residential units. The applicant is proposing ten single family semi-detached units, and one detached unit. The units are two stories, with no basement. They will each have a front porch and a bump out in the rear. Each unit will have access to two off-street parking spaces, some of which will be on-site, and some of which will be off-site. The current plan differs from the original submission, which had eight attached units. Now, the applicant has put in semi-detached units. This was a budget-driven change based on feedback received in the last One Stop meeting. There is a need for a variety of zoning variances, which were presented to the Zoning Hearing Board, but the plan presented to them was the one with the detached units. This new version will require less zoning relief. Mr. Frantz has notified the zoning solicitor and staff of the change. The applicant is awaiting the decision from the Zoning Hearing Board and are planning to bring a preliminary plan before the Commission during the April meeting. Mr. Frantz asked the Commission to consider a preliminary/final plan submission.

Mr. Krall stated that the city has included Miltimore Street in the improvements it will do in this neighborhood. The ten-foot wide alley is an issue with parking. The ordinance prescribes using the alley for off-street parking, but it will be difficult to maneuver. Mr. Frantz acknowledged the concern and said that they are willing to work with city staff about it.

Mr. Skrincosky said that there are some parcels that are either very close or possibly encroaching on lots one, ten, and eleven. Mr. Frantz stated that what is left are the common walls from when the unit was demolished. Habitat for Humanity is focusing on lots two to nine. The other lots will

likely be created but they won't pursue building permits yet. Habitat for Humanity has verified the deeds and property lines.

Mr. Krall said that not all parcels are owned by Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Frantz stated that for anything that isn't owned by Habitat for Humanity, the majority is owned by Our City Reading. Habitat for Humanity either has control or is in the process of gaining control through an agreement or acquisition. Mr. Krall said that the alley is semi-improved and will need some improvements. Ms. Mayfield stated that the applicant will need to have a maintenance agreement with the other owners along the alley.

Mr. Peris asked if Habitat for Humanity will be building the parking at the same time as the units. Mr. Frantz confirmed they would be.

Commissioner Cinfici stated that he is favorable to the concept and appreciates that the applicant is seeking to improve appearance to the neighborhood without making it too dense.

Commissioner Ashear asked if the nine by eighteen parking meet the city's requirement. Mr. Peris confirmed that it does meet the requirement for angled parking. Mr. Ashear asked if elevations have been submitted.

Commissioner Bealer asked for staff opinion on granting approval to review the plan as a preliminary/final plan. Mr. Skrincosky said that this proposal would require a preliminary and then a final plan based on SALDO revisions. There are requirements for this now because of the SALDO amendments, which this project would exceed. Mr. Peris agreed.

### **Item #3 Other Business**

Commissioner Olsen took over as chair.

There was some discussion regarding the January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Bealer asked that the Commission approve the minutes for content and then he and Ms. Crimm can work out the details. Commissioner Bealer made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as corrected. Commissioner seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0.

Mr. Peris thanked Mr. Skrincosky for his edits to the SALDO amendments. He stated that Hawk Valley Associates drafted the edits, and Ms. Crimm drafted the ordinance that incorporated the Berks County Planning Commission and Michelle Mayfield's comments. Mr. Peris confirmed that action is requested from the Planning Commission for the amendments to be submitted to City Council. Commissioner Cinfici asked if there is a time limit for the requirement for developers to submit an as-built plan upon completion, or if it would be better to leave it open. Mr. Skrincosky replied that as-built means that there are improvements, so there is an incentive for them to finish.

Commissioner Bealer said that he sent out an email with two minor edits. He wanted to clarify Section 515.307.G which stated preliminary instead of final. Mr. Peris confirmed that it was a copying error.

Commissioner Bealer made a motion to approve the SALDO amendments as presented with the few minor corrections discussed and be submitted for approval to City Council. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0 (**Resolution 02-2021**).

There was a discussion of the 2020 Annual Report. Mr. Peris and Ms. Crimm will make edits and send it back to the Planning Commission.

Chairmen Olsen reported that the Blight Remediation Committee has two upcoming meetings, one in March and one in May. He will attend and report back.

Commissioner Bealer reported that he sent the January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes to the Planning Commission members and will have the January 28<sup>th</sup> and February, 2020 meeting minutes ready soon. Commissioner Cinfici made a motion to approve the Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 minutes. Chairman Olsen seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously, 5-0.

Chairmen Olsen stated that the pending/future cases are included in the agenda for reference. The dates are their expirations.

Commissioner Conklin gave a montage presentation of some of the projects in which Larry Greene of Muhlenberg Green Architects was involved.

Chairmen Olsen proposed a small workshop in the future with staff, consultants, and the Planning Commission members to evaluate their work in order to make things simpler and easier.

Commissioner Conklin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Naomi Crimm, Planner*