

Members Present

Lee Olsen, AIA
Robert Conklin, AIA
Wayne Bealer

Staff Present

Jerome Skrinicosky, Hawk Valley Associates, Planning Consultant
Tim Krall, Public Works
David Peris, Planning Manager
Naomi Crimm, Planner

Others Present

Phil Rabena, Castlewood Homeowners Association
BCTV
Gregg Bogia, Bogia Engineering, Inc.
Steve Smith, Spots, Stevens, & McCoy
Dan Laudenslayer, Tarson LLC
Andrea McHenry, Freedom and Restoration for Everyone Enslaved
Jessica Scott, Road to Damascus Crisis Center
Reverend Evelyn W. Morrison, MBA
Thomas Ludgate, Ludgate Engineering
John Stewart, Encompass
Todd, Castlewood Homeowners' Association
Dan Luckey, Castlewood Homeowners' Association
Andrea Schaeffer
Eric Winter, Road to Damascus

Item #1: Agenda

Commissioner Olsen made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Item #2: Subdivisions and Land Developments

PC-2020-114: 114-118 Belvedere Ave (Schaeffer Subdivision)

Mr. Smith said that they submitted signed plans, a stormwater operations and maintenance agreement, and cost estimate. They added the turning radius to the plan set, and added a note to say that the zoning permit will be acquired. He asked about the improvements agreement. He said that Ms. Schaeffer submitted the deposit for the stormwater management inspection fees.

Ms. Crimm said that she will prepare the agreement, have the solicitor review it, and send it to the engineer and applicant. Mr. Smith asked for a final plan approval. He said that Ms. Schaeffer was prepared to submit an escrow check today, but decided to wait for the improvements agreement.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to conditionally approve the plans, conditional to the plans addressing all comments in the review letter, the receipt of the escrow check, and the execution of a developers' improvement agreement. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Chairman Bealer mentioned that the plan approval is good for five years, so the applicant has that time period to build. They would need to resubmit otherwise, but the Planning Commission has done plan reaffirmations in the past.

PC-2021-111-PF: 730-732 McKnight Street (Refuge Home)

Mr. Stewart asked if there were questions or concerns about their submission. Chairman Bealer mentioned the waiver request.

Mr. Stewart said that he did search and found the original land deed – there were never any metes and bounds for these properties. They would need to hire a surveyor. Chairman Bealer said that he does not think it acceptable to have a deed without metes and bounds, but will defer to his colleagues. He would prefer them to hire a surveyor to get the metes and bounds. The City is finding that often properties overlap, which is a major problem for Planning and Zoning.

Commissioner Olsen said that the tax map can identify the areas bounded by both the properties and the area contained within, if everything fits in the outer boundary of the property, he would be open to waiving the site survey requirement, as long as there is a good document referring back to the tax map.

Commissioner Conklin confirmed that the existing two structures are being used. Mr. Stewart confirmed. Commissioner Conklin said that the tax maps would suffice, as there will be no alterations to the existing foundations. Chairman Bealer asked that a note to the plan be added that the tax maps will be used to determine the property dimensions. Mr. Stewart agreed. He said the boundaries shown on the plan came from the deed and the tax map. Commissioner Conklin asked that there be a note to acknowledge that.

Mr. Peris said that as long as the tax maps are referenced, there is no issue. Mr. Krall said that Public Works agrees. The only lot line is between the two lots, which will disappear with the annexation.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made the motion to accept the waiver request for bearing and distances from §515-312-A and §515-312-F. Chairman Bealer seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Action: Commissioner Conklin made a motion to grant the extension request until December 28, 2021 Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

There was a discussion of the correct section of the SALDO to be waiving. Mr. Skrincoosky said that the correct SALDO provisions to waive are § 515-402-D-(11) and § 515-403-A-(2).

PC-2021-119-P: 228 Moss Street (Iron Gate)

Mr. Ludgate said that this is the first time the Planning Commission is seeing this project. It is a self-storage facility with a small parking lot. There is a central corridor system. The units are accessed from the inside. There are some garages in the rear lot on Justice Palace. There is an existing building on site that covers the entire lot. That building will be demolished and a new one will be built.

Chairman Bealer asked if they have received comments from the County. Mr. Ludgate said that they have not. There are other items that need to be addressed before the plan can be approved.

Mr. Peris said that the applicant received relief from Zoning Hearing Board for the use.

Mr. Skrincoosky said that accessibility will be an issue for this project. There are limitations in terms of the amount of parking. It will be more of a neighborhood self-storage facility. He stated that he would like to make sure that there aren't parking spaces removed or eliminated on Moss Street. He said that there would be potential for moving trucks to block Moss Street. He also addressed the stormwater management issues in his review letter. There are limitations in terms of landscaping and lighting that can be added. Public Works will need to review the project for sewer planning.

Mr. Ludgate confirmed that this will be a neighborhood use. That is why it has limited parking – only four spaces. He will talk to the architect and owner about landscaping. This is limited, but they will add more. They will work with the City regarding the parking on Moss Street.

Chairman Bealer said his biggest concern is a U-Haul truck blocking Moss Street.

Mr. Krall confirmed that the existing building will be demolished and a new one built. He asked if a stormwater management plan will be submitted. Mr. Ludgate said that they submitted a plan, but have not had a chance to do soil tests. Mr. Krall said that they will need testing and infiltration. He asked what will be proposed for sewer planning. Mr. Ludgate said that there will be a toilet room, but it will be under one equivalent dwelling unit. Mr. Krall said that the existing lot is one equivalent dwelling unit. He asked for documentation about that.

Commissioner Olsen mentioned the idea of raising the building on columns to be able to drive under it. He stated that the building will need an elevator and stairs. He is concerned about the

traffic in that area that this will produce. He requested elevation drawings. He said that he is looking for creative solutions to parking, aesthetics, and flow in and out of the building by people moving. Commissioner Conklin agreed. He expressed the desire for more greenery or potted plants in the parking area.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to table the plan. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Chairman Bealer expressed support for the project. Commissioner Olsen stated that it is a golden opportunity for the developer and design team to create something that is neighborhood friendly. This could be a template for something to be considered in the future in other neighborhoods.

PC-2021-122-P: 1700 & 1716 N. 12th Street (Exeter Hall)

Gregg Bogia introduced the plan. Albright College is proposing a five story dormitory. This is similar to the Rockland dorms. The colors will match the stadium. Approximately three hundred and fifty students will be at the location. They will revise the parking. They are looking to get the plan approved by January.

Chairman Bealer asked why the project is not being built on N. 13th Street. Mr. Bogia said that he does not know. Chairman Bealer asked about the parking at 12th Street – will they rip out the existing parking lot and put in a new one? Mr. Bogia said that there is an existing basketball court there. They will overlay it and put in some islands. Chairman Bealer said that the previous plan for this site approved that area as basketball courts and a parking lot. He suggested looking at the previous plan to see. It was approved as a dual use about six years ago – basketball court and overflow parking for stadium. Mr. Krall asked if that would explain why there are driveway entrances to the north and east. For stormwater management, this will affect calculations because the pre and post conditions would be the same. He asked that this be noted in the stormwater management report.

Mr. Peris asked if there is a bed count. Mr. Bogia said that there will be three hundred fifty beds. Mr. Peris asked if they will be requesting relief for off-street parking. Mr. Bogia asked if this has been granted before. Mr. Peris said that some reduction has been granted in the past, but not an extensive amount of relief unless there is justification for it. The two parcels are in two underlying zoning districts (M-C and R-3), but both are in the Institutional Overlay. If an annexation takes place and the lots are in two underlying zoning districts, the applicant may want to change the district. Mr. Skrincosky recommended to change both to the R-3 because the use is allowed. Mr. Bogia said that he would anticipate going to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Skrincosky asked the height of the building. Mr. Bogia said that it is sixty feet. Mr. Skrincosky stated that there may be zoning conflicts. He requested that Mr. Bogia check the airport overlay as well to verify height. Mr. Skrincosky said that increasing the height of the building would require the setbacks to be increased as well.

Chairman Bealer said that when the City instituted the Institutional Overlay, the planner at the time took great care that taller buildings would be located towards the center, and less tall buildings located closer to the neighborhoods to not overshadow homes. That's the reason for the setback and height requirements.

Mr. Peris said that if the applicant is presenting a map amendment, then that is a separate application through the Planning Commission, but would go through City Council.

Mr. Krall said that Public Works received the sewer will-serve request. The Utility Manager will be concerned with equivalent dwelling units, as there would be a lot on one pipe. Public Works can't guarantee that they will serve. It may need some off-site improvements. Mr. Bogia said that he will prepare a sewer module for the next submission.

Mr. Krall asked if there will be a NPDES permit. Mr. Bogia confirmed. They are disturbing 3.6 acres. Mr. Krall asked what the alternative BMP managed release concept (MRC) is. Mr. Bogia said that it is used to collect stormwater to a large underground basin. There is a rock filter at the bottom of the basin with a weir inside a box to measure the outflows. There is some karst in the area, but they discussed this with the Berks County Conservation District. The District allowed them to continue with the proposed system. The NPDES has been submitted to them. Mr. Krall asked that this information be included in the report, as it is needed to justify the alternative BMP. The ordinance requires infiltration. He asked if this MRC will not include surface depressions. Mr. Bogia confirmed there will be no surface depressions.

Ms. Crimm summarized some of the Berks County Planning Commission comments. They requested that bike racks, more landscaping, and sidewalk connections be put in.

Commissioner Olsen said that the site is the farthest west that the Institutional District allows. It would be taking institutional buildings away from the heart of campus. He said that the forming and massing of buildings facing N. 12th street will cast a shadow on the parking and the access in and out of the building. He expressed the hope that there is a stronger pedestrian walkable tie to the campus so the building is not in a barren section of the campus and disjointed from it. Campus planning is critical. He stated that he wants to see how the building will be integrated into the campus even though it is away from the center of activity. Albright has had difficulties getting people around and in and out of campus because of its location. Mr. Bogia said that he will submit renderings and work on addressing connectivity.

Mr. Krall asked if the midblock crosswalk will stay on N. 12th Street. Mr. Bogia said that it will stay. On the next plan they will put some new sidewalk. Mr. Krall said that the City discourages midblock crossings unless there is justification.

Commissioner Olsen asked about long-range physical planning at Albright, as they are developing to the west. He asked if there will be overhead connectors over 13th Street. He asked if there was any master plan done in the last five to seven years to see if there is any projected

growth. He emphasized that long-range thinking is needed to get people to and from the campus safely.

Chairman Bealer said that this is a replacement for an older dorm. It is not an expansion of student population. Mr. Bogia confirmed. He said that students did not like the older dorm, but the students liked the newer dorm on Rockland.

Chairman Bealer said that there hasn't been an update to the Albright Master plan in almost a decade. He stated that this is an inappropriate location for this project. The dorm should be at the old David Cross building, across 13th Street from the Weis Market. He asked that Mr. Bogia pass this along to the applicant.

Mr. Skrincosky suggested that City staff meet with the developer or engineer to go over technical comments.

Commissioner Olsen said that the Albright team is making these decisions. The Planning Commission does not sit at the table for these decisions. He suggested that the Planning Commission could meet with Albright's staff/leadership.

Chairman Bealer said that the last master plan did not include any new dorms, but there was the Rockland dorm and now this one. Mr. Bogia said that they took feedback from their students. He will pass along the comments and suggest a meeting.

Action: Commissioner Conklin made a motion to table the plan. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

PC-2021-120-S: Castlewood

Mr. Ludgate said that the Homeowners' Association owners want to dedicate the streets. He stated that he does not think there are major objections from Public Works and City staff. The Castlewood roadways are designed to have side swales and no sidewalks. He asked for waivers of street trees, curbs, and sidewalks. The streets would be dedicated as is without further improvements.

Mr. Krall said that this was left in the hands of the prior acting director, Charlie Jones. There were some areas of concern, but it never got drafted into a letter and issued. He has a draft and has discussed it with Stan Rugis, interim Public Works director. Public Works has no concern with the conditions, but there is a concern about the existing conditions of the stormwater system. The stormwater system would not be dedicated. He wants to make sure the existing system is studied, and an assessment provided to the City for any repairs needed. He asked for a metes and bounds description so that it can be added to the official topographic survey of the City. He asked if the owners own the roadway. Mr. Ludgate said that the lots might be written to the right of way, not to the centerlines, but he will look into it.

Mr. Luckey said that the deed has all of the terms and conditions included.

Mr. Krall said that the City will need an ordinance for the dedication initiated by the Homeowners' Association. The Association should cover all costs.

Mr. Ludgate said that the Association does not want to go down this path if the Planning Commission thinks curbs, sidewalks, and street trees are needed.

Commissioner Conklin asked Mr. Krall if Public Works is alright with the width. Mr. Krall said that Charlie Jones, former director of Public Works, was fine with the dimensions of the road and the conditions of the road. The road would never be approved today, as it is a long cul-de-sac road.

Commissioner Olsen said that if there is good access in and out of the development then he is fine with cosmetically fixing it. He asked for something more concrete from Mr. Ludgate.

Mr. Rabena thanked everyone in the City to take the plan this far. The Association would appreciate a letter to work from. They want to become part of the City. They have City water, and the City plows the streets and picks up the trash. Mr. Luckey said that Castlewood is an unofficial part of the City already and would like to officially join.

Mr. Ludgate said that they will submit a formal plan to the Planning Commission.

PC-2021-123-PF: 1010 Elm Street (1010 Elm Street Daycare Center)

Mr. Laudenslayer said that he received the Hawk Valley review letter. He submitted revised plans to Ms. Crimm this afternoon. The property was a mill that has no current equivalent dwelling units. He submitted sewer planning modules to the City. He added an additional sheet for a lot consolidation. They will add monuments to the site along Mulberry Street, and a pin along Saul's alley. The other corners would be in paved or building areas.

Commissioner Bealer asked if the playground areas have been designed according to standards. Mr. Laudenslayer said that they will remove the concrete surface and put in a new surface with a playground.

Mr. Skrincosky said that the area will be enclosed with a fence. The Zoning Hearing Board decision makes reference to the number of children that can occupy the play area.

Mr. Peris said that this went through the Zoning Hearing Board. Relief was granted with some conditions, one of which was an annexation plan. For the play area, the amount of space provided is adequate. The play area should be secured with a fence. In terms of dimensional nonconformities, the Hearing Board approved the plan as presented.

Mr. Laudenslayer said that the City's arborist approved the plan. He said that it is very difficult to put such a large clear sight triangle on Saul's Alley. Mr. Skrincosky said that this is an existing nonconformity.

Mr. Laudenslayer said that he submitted the sewer planning modules and information to the historical commission, which noted that there were no issues with the site. City staff noted that they had not received the submission.

Mr. Krall asked about exterior improvements. Mr. Laudenslayer said that they will paint the building. Mr. Krall confirmed that there are no site improvements so the stormwater management ordinance would not apply. A waiver would not be needed. Mr. Laudenslayer said that any disturbance will be below five thousand square feet.

Mr. Krall asked about pick-up and drop off. Mr. Laudenslayer said that the zoning decision stipulated that everything needs to be done off of Mulberry Street.

Chairman Bealer asked about actions. Mr. Skrincosky and Mr. Krall confirmed that the sewer modules are still pending.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to table the plan. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

PC-2021-107-P: 243 N. 4th Street (Super Natural Foods)

Mr. Laudenslayer said that he is working on the truck turning movements. The other item is disconnecting the roof drains from the sanitary sewer.

Mr. Krall asked for an update on the highway occupancy permit. Mr. Laudenslayer said that he needs to hire a new consultant. It is on hold right now.

Chairman Bealer asked about the widening of Madison Avenue. Mr. Laudenslayer said that he submitted a request to the City. He added eight feet of widening to the Avenue. Mr. Krall said that Public Works has looked at it. The concern is the traffic movements – the backing up of the truck on Madison Avenue and onto the ramp. The turning movements need to be more defined to show safety in that area. Mr. Laudenslayer said that he needs to analyze the overhang swing. On Thursdays, the north side of Elm Street is no parking in the morning for street cleaning, and on Friday mornings the south side of Elm Street is no parking for street cleaning. That would give an opportunity to do deliveries off of Elm Street. Mr. Krall said that it is a range of times when the street sweeper goes through. It is very common for cars to follow the street sweeper to park. He would not recommend using that as part of the plan for scheduling loading.

Mr. Skrincosky said that his project memo provides a summary of the project updates to make sure everyone is on the same page. There was a Phase One and Phase Two Environmental

Assessment. A Phase One report is on file, but the City is still waiting to get the Phase Two report.

Commissioner Olsen asked about Hawk Valley's comment six. He asked if a record set of architectural MEP signed and sealed drawings were submitted for building permits. Mr. Peris said that only an initial zoning submission was received. The Zoning Office has not received those drawings, but he cannot speak to what the Building department has received.

Commissioner Olsen questioned why the City should widen Madison Avenue when there is not yet a building plan. He expressed that he would not be in favor of widening the street.

Commissioner Conklin said that he saw some architectural drawings but did not see if they were stamped and sealed. Permits are needed for the project if work has commenced. Mr. Skrincosky said that comment six in his letter was intended to address concerns that the Planning Commission brought up in previous meetings.

Commissioner Olsen said that it is incumbent on the design team to bring a full set up documents so that the Commission can look at the complete project and give informed opinions, instead of the piecemeal way that the project has proceeded. Part of the challenge of this project is to ensure that the city grid is not disrupted and deliveries do not impede the flow of traffic and people. He asked for a plan that shows how the site will function as a retail food distribution center.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to table the plan. Chairman Bealer seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Conditional Use Application 2021-03: 238 N. 6th Street

Mr. Peris said that the project came to the Planning Commission originally as 234 and 238 N. 6th Street. The application has been modified. 234 N. 6th Street will now be a nonresidential use as a clinical office. This use is existing, so a conditional use is not needed. 238 is for a temporary shelter so it will need Planning Commission review and approval by City Council. The Planning Commission's role is to make a recommendation to City Council. He shared the standards for conditional use on screen.

Chairman Bealer asked if there are any restrictions on the use, as there is a daycare across the street. Mr. Peris said that he will confirm.

Mr. Winter said that the facility is owned by a non-profit. This is a temporary shelter for individuals displaced from their homes. Residents have to commit to living there for at least fourteen days, after which time they are required to begin paying rent and find other housing between sixty to ninety days. The doors to the shelter will be locked at 8pm and people need to be out by 8am. There are twenty parking spaces which should cover the staff. The facility has nine rooms, with ten to twelve beds total.

Ms. Scott said that the original application was for the rear of 234 N. 6th Street to be a crisis center. 238 N. 6th Street has nine bedrooms. There are other similar scenarios where housing development took place, for example the Women in Crisis Center, Family Promise Center, Berks Coalition, and Opportunity House. The proposed shelter is not big as those, but she is committed to decreasing homelessness in the City of Reading. She expressed the desire that a conditional use be applied to both 234 and 238 N. 6th Street to decrease homelessness.

Chairman Bealer confirmed that the Planning Commission is only dealing with 238 N. 6th Street. Mr. Peris confirmed that the application for 234 N. 6th Street was withdrawn.

Commissioner Olsen asked if there were other criteria for admission aside from homelessness. Mr. Winter said that residents need to participate in programming. Pastor Scott will work with local churches. Ms. Scott said that they will need to have some form of identification and two references. Commissioner Olsen asked if residents will be eating in the facility. Ms. Scott confirmed. She has her Serve Safe license to serve food in the facility.

Commissioner Conklin asked if Ms. Scott will assist with cooking, or if she will bring in catered food. Ms. Scott said that she will be assisting the residents with cooking.

Commissioner Olsen said that the program is well-defined. He asked about counselling. Ms. Scott said that residents need to go through spiritual counseling and financial advising.

Chairman Bealer said that Ms. Scott may need to register with the city health department.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to recommend the approval of the conditional use application to City Council, based on everything presented at the meeting. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Item #2: Other Business

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to accept the September 2021 Planning Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Chairman Bealer said that there are a few minor edits. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 3-0.

Ms. Morrison said that she saw good interactions between developers, applicants, and the Commission. She reminded the group that even if people have personal reactions, they should not make things personal. She asked that City Council choose more women on to be on planning and zoning commissions. She asked the Planning Commission to be more conscious of environmental toxins.

Chairman Bealer said that he and Commissioner Olsen are Planning Commission members to the Redistricting Committee. No meeting has been called yet because census materials were

delivered that day. He congratulated Mr. Skrincosky on his new hires. Mr. Skrincosky said that Jim Dimmerling and Michael Hartmann were added to his staff as contract employees.

Chairman Bealer said that the Blighted Properties Review Committee committed twenty-eight properties.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08pm.

Respectfully submitted by Naomi Crimm, Planner