

Meeting Minutes
City of Reading Planning Commission
November 23, 2021

Members Present

Lee Olsen, AIA
Bob Conklin, AIA
Wayne Bealer
Will Cinfici

Staff Present

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

Others Present

Byron Anstine, Storage First
Gregg Bogia, Bogia Engineering, Inc.
Mark Koch, Koch & Koch
Jeffrey Goldstein
Marc Geddio, Iron Gate Builders
Dan Becker, Koslov Stoudt
Pete Staz, Storage First
BCTV
Jeffrey Strader, Albright College
Joan London, Koslov Stoudt
Steve Carpey
Scott Miller, SSM
Andrew Goltzman, Heights Real Estate Advisors
Paul Millstein, Douglas Development Group
Lael Shultz
Summer Koch
David Coe
Christopher Regan, Douglas Development Group
Alain Kodsi, Heights Real Estate Advisors
Phil Gardener, Douglas Development Group
Plato Marinakos, Plato Studios
John Loyack, Albright College
Peter d'Aubermont, Heights Real Estate Advisors

Item #1: Agenda

Chairman Bealer called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Commissioner Olsen moved to accept the agenda and Commissioner Conklin seconded. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Item #2: Subdivisions and Land Developments

PC-2021-123-PF: 755 Hiesters Lane (Storage First)

Mr. Anstine introduced himself and Mr. Staz. The property is on two and a half acres. Storage First will take the existing building and convert it to self-storage. The building was previously used for retail. The current owner, Sweet Streets, used it for storage. Mr. Anstine said that he received the review letter from Hawk Valley. They are aware of the issues and will work through them.

Mr. Peris said that city staff have been working with Mr. Anstine to get through the process. This will not require action by the Zoning Hearing Board, so the main issues will be resolved at the land development level.

Mr. Skrincosky said that site accessibility is an issue with this project. There is a perimeter fence that will limit access to the site on Hiesters Lane. There is access along the common driveway. There is an area for truck and vehicle parking. Eliminating the access point along Hiesters Lane would be substantial for this project. He asked why there is a need for security fencing to get into the building.

Mr. Anstine said that he is proposing an eight-foot black chain-link fence that will blend in. He said that people want to know that their belongings are secure with self-storage. He is proposing a gate along Hiesters Lane that could be opened. His security team recommended the side entrance, which will make loading and unloading easier.

Mr. Skrincosky said that the entrance is one area of concern. Blocking a point of ingress or egress would make cars block traffic. Mr. Anstine said that there is an easement recorded for the access route. The gate is only for emergencies.

Mr. Krall asked how people will access the site. Mr. Anstine said that the access is on the common drive on the right. That is currently existing and there is an easement currently. Mr. Krall asked to see the agreement.

Mr. Anstine said that they will submit a zoning permit for the fence. Mr. Peris said that the ordinance does allow fences in the M-C district to go up to eight feet, but anything over that would require a variance on the height.

Mr. Skrincosky asked if there would be other potential uses on the property. Mr. Anstine said that the parking lot will be used for future development. In the meantime, this will be parking for the self-storage use. If this is developed in the future, they would submit a plan to the Planning Commission. Mr. Skrincosky asked if it would be rental parking for RVs or boats. Mr. Anstine confirmed that is a possibility. Mr. Skrincosky asked him to make sure that the plan includes what will be stored on the exterior of the site so that he can provide comments.

Commissioner Olsen said that looking at the agenda, he sees that it is a preliminary/final minor land development. He said that he does not see parking lot layout. He is not comfortable granting any approvals.

Mr. Anstine said that everything that is changing is internal. There is no erosion and sedimentation control plan needed, and there is already sewer and water in the building. Mr. Skrincosky said that parking, striping, and lighting needs to be provided on the plan. The plan needs to be drawn by a design professional. Mr. Anstine said that he is trying to avoid a three to six month process. He will use everything that is already on the site. Mr. Skrincosky said that what was submitted is not up to standards.

Mr. Krall said that for the eventual final plan, the Municipalities Planning Code requires a certificate of accuracy – only a registered engineer or surveyor can sign off on that. Mr. Skrincosky said that in January or February of this year the city adopted revisions to the subdivision and land development ordinance that would provide an expedited review process and provisions to submit a combined preliminary/final plan as long as they comply with the requirements for a final plan. He said that a plan in this shape cannot be recorded. Mr. Anstine said that his understanding was that revisions could be submitted to the current plan. Mr. Skrincosky said that in the past when this was done, it was the same engineer or surveyor as the original recorded plan.

Mr. Anstine asked if action would be taken. Chairman Bealer said that there are a number of missing items on the plan. The plan of record is likely not the most recent plan. Mr. Krall said that if the most recent recorded plan cannot be located, then he would recommend contacting SSM. They might be able to help him locate the plan. There was a discussion of which plan to use.

Mr. Skrincosky said that there are about twenty items the city is looking for in revisions to plans of record.

Commissioner Cinfici said that the building was the baby outlet in the past. He asked if there will be a manager on site during regular business hours. Mr. Anstine said there will be no one there full-time. It will largely be automated, though someone will be checking on it. There will also be cameras on site. Commissioner Cinfici asked if the building will be climate controlled. Mr. Anstine confirmed.

Commissioner Conklin said that he would like to see the parking plan. There are probably about two hundred and fifty units in the building. Mr. Anstine said that there will never be twenty-five cars there at once. The parking requirement is per employee, so it would be one to two spaces. He will put in five parking spaces.

Chairman Bealer asked if Sweet Streets will continue to store trailers on site. Mr. Anstine said that once he buys it, Sweet Streets will not use the site. Chairman Bealer asked for the sign to be displayed on the site. He asked if the arborist has reviewed it. Ms. Crimm said that the arborist approved the plan. Mr. Staz said that they hired a landscape architect for the landscaping plan. Chairman Bealer said that a sewer planning narrative will be needed. Mr. Krall said that the city

needs to see a note on the plan regarding what the proposed flow is. Most storage facilities are less than one equivalent dwelling unit (two hundred sixty two gallons per day). That should be documented on the plan.

Mr. Krall said that there was a question about stormwater management. Since there is no proposed site improvement, so there will be no regulated activity with respect to the city's stormwater management ordinance.

Chairman Bealer said that Mr. Anstine will need to provide a will-serve letter from Reading Area Water Authority. A note should be provided on the plan. A dumpster is required to be on the plan. It should be fenced-off and locked. A lighting plan is also needed to show the foot-candle spread. This should include the type of fixture and the engineered specifications.

Action: Commissioner Conklin made a motion to table the plan. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Chairman Bealer said that these plans are usually approved within ninety days. This should go quickly if Mr. Anstine can resubmit something that addresses staff and Commissioners' comments.

PC-2021-118-PF: 10 S. 2nd Street (RACC Penn Street Lot Annexation)

Ms. London said that this project was in front of the Zoning Hearing Board last week for the wayfinding signage. They received the review letter and are prepared to comply with all the comments.

Ms. London said that the vacation of the Penn Street right of way was approved by ordinance last month by City Council. That was approved on October 14. Today was day thirty after the vacation and ten days after the ordinance. There have been no appeals filed, so they are prepared to record the quitclaim deed tomorrow.

Mr. Krall said that there was some confusion from staff on note eight – the vacated parcel will be annexed to the contiguous lots. He asked if the lot would be annexed to the parent tract. Mr. Bogia confirmed.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to grant preliminary/final plan approval conditional to the resolution of staff comments. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

RACC Welcome Home Project

Mr. Bogia introduced the Welcome Home project. He noted areas where crosswalks will be added. Some will be raised crosswalks. They have been working with Public Works on the design, and will comply with the PennDOT Smart Streets program. They will also work on the city for the Schuylkill River Trail project. There are a lot of problems with speeding in this area. They will put in a pergola with vegetation, paving, and walkway enhancements. He said he wanted to show the Commission to let the group know about the beautification planned.

Mr. Krall said that the city is working on the Schuylkill River Trail project with RACC. A raised crosswalk is intended to reduce speeding. This is a midblock crossing. He is in favor of the speed humps. The trail depicted on the plan is the current configuration. This will be moved off of private property and onto River Road and North Front Street. The goal is to move it onto the street. North Front Street and River Road will lose two lanes, as they will be designated for pedestrian use. The contract was just awarded, and they will get started on the relocation in the spring. They will start on the northern section first.

Commissioner Olsen thanked Mr. Bogia. The project is a long-overdue pedestrian improvement plan for the campus. The campus is bisected by traffic. The more traffic calming, the better. He complimented the organic walkway design. The center of campus is lacking in trees and shrubs above three feet. He'd encourage RACC to put more money into planting trees. There needs to be more visual communication from the campus to the river.

Mr. Bogia said that there will be additional trees and shrubs as part of the project.

Commissioner Cinfici said that the Commission reviewed the RACC master plan. The plan shown is in accordance with the master plan. He asked about potential improvements to the area under the Penn Street Bridge by the parking lot.

Ms. London said that RACC is planning on additional parking improvements in addition to wayfinding and signage improvements. This is part of the phased improvement plan.

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

Mr. Bogia said that city staff have had several discussions with Albright after the last meeting, and he submitted a revised building concept. The building was relocated to address the shadow and setback issues. The project is the same size. There are walkways from the building to 12th Street and Exeter Street. For the next submission, they will have a traffic impact study. He mentioned the fifteen foot setback for the rear yard by the Humane Society. He will add a second access off of Exeter Street, close the access off of N. 12th Street, and change the rear yard to a side yard to address that. They will comply with the rest of comments. The applicant's attorney will work with the city on the zoning change.

Mr. Skrincosky said that the twenty-five-foot setback would still apply. A corner lot still requires a rear lot. Mr. Bogia said that the main lot line was stated that way because of the location of the main access. With the change to the main access, the setback issue would be resolved.

Mr. Peris said that the rear yard setback is based on where the building has its address. Any changes to the address need to be approved by the Public Works department. Currently, the address is on 12th Street so that would need a twenty-five-foot setback.

Mr. Skrincosky said that emergency access will be needed in the back. Mr. Bogia said that he ran the plan by Jeremy Searfoss several times and he was fine with it.

Commissioner Cinfici said that 1700 N. 12th Street has been used as a practice field. He said the 1716 N. 12th Street is the former Department of Defense site. There was a factory there during

WWII that produced parachutes. He asked about historical signage on the 1716 address to recognize that. He echoed Chairman Bealer's and Commissioner Olsen's concerns about a lack of a master plan. Mr. Bogia said that he will take his comments back to Albright.

Commissioner Olsen thanked Mr. Bogia for incorporating the Commissioners' comments into the second plan. The concept is much improved, as it opens itself up to the campus. He said that he would like to clarify his comments from last month. He acknowledged that representatives for civic entities often want to be careful in their thinking about expansion, especially if plans involve land that they do not own.

Mr. Bogia showed the renderings that Summer Koch made on screen. Ms. Koch said they are looking to use party panels with reveal joints. The brick and stone will match the stadium across the street.

Chairman Bealer and Commissioner Conklin concurred that the revised building concept looks good. Chairman Bealer said that it moves the project away from the residential area on Exeter Street. He asked about the mid-block crossing on 12th Street. Mr. Bogia said he is in process on that item. Mr. Krall said that they have been talking about it. It will be a part of the pedestrian impact report that Mr. Bogia will put together. Chairman Bealer expressed appreciation to Albright for asking for a meeting with him.

Mr. Bogia said that they will tidy up the plan and submit for preliminary plan approval for the December meeting.

Mr. Peris said that the December meeting is on December 21, so the submission deadline is November 30.

Chairman Bealer said that the recommendation from staff is to table the plan. Commissioner Olsen asked about the airport overlay. Mr. Bogia said that they determined the elevation to see if it was under the required height threshold.

Commissioner Cinfici expressed appreciation that Albright is proposing a dorm, as there is a need for the facility.

Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to table the plan. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

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

Marc Geddio introduced himself from Iron Gate Builders. He shared a powerpoint used during the Zoning Hearing Board process earlier in the year that show renderings. They have not yet engaged a design professional. Thomas Ludgate will assist with engineering. They will then engage an architect. He showed some renderings on screen. They are planning to put garages off of the alley.

Chairman Bealer expressed appreciation for the additional information from Mr. Geddio.

Mr. Peris said that this is in a residential district but it has a history of non-conforming use. They received approval from the Zoning Hearing Board.

Mr. Skrincosky said that he issued comments previously, and provided comments on the truck turning. This remains an issue for the site. The stormwater management issues also need to be addressed. Mr. Geddio said that Mr. Ludgate is working through the issues. Mr. Krall said that everything he talked about before still applies. He is looking forward to seeing updated plans.

Commissioner Cinfici expressed appreciation for the project, as the building has been an eyesore for years. Mr. Geddio says that the proposal includes a complete demolition and rebuilding of the structure, as the existing building is too far gone. They will open up the corner on Moss and the alley, and get rid of the courtyard.

Chairman Bealer asked him to email the presentation to Mr. Peris.

Mr. Geddio confirmed that all comments previously noted to Mr. Ludgate still need to be rectified. Mr. Krall agreed.

Action: Commissioner Cinfici moved to table the plan. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

PC-2021-121-S: 600 Spring Street (Reading Station) & 650 Spring St. (GoPuff)

Dan Becker introduced the project team. He shared his screen to show where GoPuff would go on the site. Mr. Gardiner explained that GoPuff is a cross between a CVS and 7-11. It is web and app-based. People order via the web or app and pick up their items or have them delivered via a third party contractor. There will be two to five staff on site. No vehicles will be housed on-site. Consumers can access the site directly to pick up orders. Mr. Becker said that the other use is called Three Rivers, which is a related company. It is a restaurant that is largely delivery. Mr. Gardiner said that is also for dine in. It is fast-casual. You can purchase beer for delivery there as well. Mr. Becker said that the current building will be fit-out for the two proposed uses. They received a review letter from Hawk Valley and have gone over it with staff. They will comply with the letter. The biggest issue is parking. They can enter into agreements for the parking with other portions of the property that are also owned by Douglas Development.

Mr. Peris asked if the plan shown on screen had been submitted. Mr. Miller said that the plan was not submitted. Mr. Peris said that the concept plan shows that there will be more parking spaces to the east of the current building. He asked if the development of the parking spaces will be in conjunction with GoPuff. Mr. Becker said that there are significant parking spaces on the site that extend almost to Hope Rescue Mission. They would enter into an agreement with Douglas Development to make sure that the spaces are available for the proposed uses. Mr. Peris asked about the spaces to the east of the building. That area is not used for parking currently, and will not become parking right now. He said he believes there are enough spaces in front of the property for GoPuff, but will need more for Three Rivers.

Mr. Skrincosky asked why they are not considering an annexation. Mr. Becker said that they are looking to subdivide the parcel for the self-storage use. Separate Douglas entities will own them, so that they are not all under the same financing and mortgages. Mr. Gardiner said that there are different lenders for different pieces. The residential lenders will be different from the

CubeSmart lender. They envision each parcel being different lots because there will be different lenders, however, Douglas Development will own all of them. Mr. Becker said that GoPuff is a national franchise. This will be under a different name, but owned by the same company.

Mr. Skrincosky said an annexation would resolve parking issues. Mr. Krall asked if a cross-easement already exists. Mr. Becker said they will look into that. Mr. Skrincosky said there is a non-conforming building that would be eliminated if it was annexed.

Mr. Peris said that a zoning permit application has been submitted for the use. This has come before the Planning Commission to revise the recorded plan.

Mr. Skrincosky said that he issued comments relative to off-street parking and loading. These could be eliminated with a cross-easement agreement.

Mr. Becker asked for a conditional approval to address the comments in the review letter for the GoPuff plan. They applied for and received a zoning permit.

Mr. Skrincosky asked about the balance of sewage flows. Mr. Becker said the CubeSmart would be one equivalent dwelling unit at the most. Three Rivers would be mostly delivery. Mr. Krall asked if a sewer planning narrative had been submitted. Mr. Miller said that he will submit a narrative to address the gallons per day for each use. Mr. Krall asked what was on the site in 2012, and if there was an approved planning module. Mr. Miller said he has not found anything. Chairman Bealer said that the site was a home improvements store in 2012, which had only three employees and bathrooms not accessible to the public.

Mr. Krall said that Railroad Street is a private street. He asked if there was an approved highway occupancy permit. Mr. Miller said that it was approved as part of the original project for Reading Station, but he may need to approach PennDOT about it.

Commissioner Cinfici asked about the retaining wall on Spring Street. Mr. Krall said that it will need to be addressed. He asked if the condition of that wall will impact the structural integrity of the building. Mr. Becker said that the retaining wall is below the building. Mr. Krall said that the wall gets shorter but it gets worse closer to the building. It is in need of repair. He will work with Mr. Miller to see if that has any bearing on the improvement of the building itself. It looks like the retaining wall is in the right of way. Mr. Miller said that he will look into it.

Chairman Bealer asked if the loading docks are still located by building two by the northern façade of the building. Mr. Miller said that there are no docks in the front where the parking spaces are, but they are on the raised platform area on the other side of the building. They are not accessible at this point. Chairman Bealer said that a separation from Norfolk Southern is needed so that people do not walk on Norfolk Southern's property. Mr. Skrincosky recommended using the east side of the property for loading. He asked if it could be abandoned as part of the property. Mr. Miller said that it's a remnant from when they owned the whole property.

Chairman Bealer said he thought it was a sketch plan. Mr. Becker said that they are trying to get conditional approval for a revised plan of record. Mr. Miller said that he submitted a plan for the whole property, but it was split into two projects. Mr. Becker said that the plan on screen would

be used as the base, to which they would add plan notes. They are trying not to lose the GoPuff tenant. It is a fairly simple plan. Mr. Gardiner said that the building permit was issued on August 3rd, 2021.

Chairman Bealer said that a formal submission has not been made. The Commission cannot act on something that has not been formally submitted. Mr. Becker said the Commission could request that a plan be submitted that should comply with their comments and the Hawk Valley review letter. He said that is what he is asking the Commission to do.

Commissioner Conklin said that earlier in the meeting the Commission did not act on a request that had hand-drawings. Here, there is not a formal submission so it would be setting a bad precedent. Commissioners Cinfici and Olsen and Chairman Bealer agreed that there would be no action on the plan tonight.

Mr. Skrincosky asked what the ground floor use of building D would be. It is occupied by Family Dollar. He asked if that use will stay. That plan is further along than the GoPuff plan because it was formally submitted.

PC-2021-125-S: 601 Penn Street (Heights Real Estate Advisors)

Mr. Koch introduced the project team. The 601 Penn Street building is largely vacant. They have been working with City staff to move the project forward.

Mr. Goltzman shared a presentation about the property. It is located in a historic district. Much of the property is vacant office space. They will convert the property into residential uses, but Santander will stay. Medical uses have been in discussion for that space as well. Currently, the ground floor is occupied by Santander. The second floor has been vacant for a while. There is a desire for a loading dock along Penn Street. The second floor may be a medical space. Floors three through ten will be residential, two hundred forty units total. There would be thirty units per floor (twenty-five studios and four two-bedrooms). This would house Alvernia students. They would not want approval to be tied to parking leases.

Mr. Koch asked if there are preliminary comments from staff. Mr. Skrincosky said he submitted a draft review letter. He said that adaptive reuse could be a possibility for this building, which is permissible by special exception. Zoning variances may be necessary to accomplish this.

Mr. Peris said that zoning relief would be needed for the duration of the parking lease requirements. He asked about the loading zone and the curb cut onto Penn Street. Mr. Goltzman said that the Santander branch occupies the rest of the first floor. The retailers they have spoken with have asked about loading inventory and food and garbage disposal. Mr. Skrincosky asked if there was on-street loading on Penn Street. Mr. Krall said that there is no designated area, but Public Works and the Reading Parking Authority can put in a loading zone or twenty minute parking if there is a request for it. There is a cut-out on Penn Street now for parallel parking. He asked if it would be retail or residential. Mr. Goltzman said that both uses are driving this, as well as the actual construction.

Mr. Peris said that he checked the Penn Square Overlay district, and it looks like the prohibition on curb cuts would not apply to this location. This is a heavy pedestrian corridor, though, which could generate conflicts with the pedestrian use, especially considering the park areas nearby.

Commissioner Olsen said that Penn Street was originally narrowed to make room for this building. His suggested having specific times for loading. He acknowledged the potential safety issues with pedestrians, but the location on Penn Street would be the only potential place for loading. He requested separate meetings for sketch plans. He noted that it is late. Mr. Koch said that they would welcome the opportunity to do a workshop session.

Mr. Krall suggested they touch base with Cindy Castner, the downtown coordinator, as she is working on park improvements in that area. Commissioner Olsen expressed concern that something has been designed for park improvements in that area, and that the Commission has not heard about it yet. Mr. Marinakos asked how loading is handled at the building now. Commissioner Olsen said that there is a curb cut along Penn Street where three to four vehicles can pull up to load and unload.

Commissioner Cinfici asked for clarification on parking leases. Mr. Peris said that the ongoing zoning approval is tied to having adequate parking under the ordinance. You would not be locked into the same agreement for perpetuity. Commissioner Cinfici asked if there would be storage proposed. Mr. Goltzman said that there will be storage in the basement.

Chairman Bealer said that he would ask the applicant to go through the Zoning Hearing Board first in case there are changes to the layout of the drawing.

Mr. Skrincosky said that he will finalize his comments soon so that the applicant can get started.

Item #3: Other Business

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to reaffirm the plan approval for Buttonwood Gateway until February 22, 2022. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Cinfici moved to reaffirm the plan approval for 810 Windsor. Until February 22, 2022. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Olsen move to grant the time extension request for Overlord Real Estate until February 22, 2022. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

There was a discussion of the length of the time extension request for the Medical Arts Building.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to grant the time extension request until May 22, 2022. Chairman Bealer seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to grant the time extension request for 1010 Elm until March 28, 2022. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Cinfici moved to grant the time extension request for Prince and Princess Daycare until March 28, 2022. Commissioner Olsen seconded. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Conklin moved to grant the time extension request for Iglesia Pentecostal until March 28, 2022. Commissioner Bealer seconded. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to grant the time extension request for Super Natural Foods until March 28, 2022. Chairman Bealer seconded. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Commissioner Cinfici said that he has no comments on the October 2021 meeting minutes. Chairman Bealer said that he did not get an opportunity to look at the minutes. He will let Ms. Crimm know of any changes needed.

Action: Commissioner Olsen moved to accept the October 2021 meeting minutes. Chairman Bealer seconded. The vote on the motion was unanimous, 4-0.

Commissioner Cinfici said that he reviewed the September minutes and submitted three minor edits to Ms. Crimm.

Chairman Bealer said that he and Commissioner Olsen attended the first redistricting committee meeting. They went over some questions and got to know each other. Chairman Bealer said that he sent out his notes about the transit oriented development meeting hosted by Berks Alliance.

Mr. Peris shared that he has accepted a new position, so this will be his last meeting with the City. He expressed his thanks to all. The Commissioners expressed their gratitude for the work that he did with the City.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Naomi Crimm, Planner