

City of Reading Planning Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes: January 25, 2022

PC Members Present

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

Staff and Consultants Present

Jamal Abodalo, Director of Community Development Services
Jerome Skrincosky, AICP, HVA Planning and Zoning Consultant
Tim Krall, PE, Public Works Department
Michelle Mayfield, Esquire, Legal Consultant
Michael Hartman, PE, HVA Engineering Consultant
Emily Diaz-Melendez, Zoning Officer
Shannon Calluri, Zoning Administrator

Others Present

Thomas Ludgate, Ludgate Engineering (Iron Gate)
Marc Geddio, Iron Gate Development (Iron Gate)
Karen Krater, Hoffert Surveyors (O'Neill Storage)
Gregg Bogia, Bogia Engineering (Exeter Hall and Berkshire Building)
Nate Rivera, Resident

- (1) Call Meeting to Order:** Chairman Bealer called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.
- (2) Acknowledgement of PC Members in Attendance**
 - (a) New Planning Commission Member: The Planning Commission welcomed Nelson DeLeon as a newly appointed member on the City of Reading Planning Commission.
 - (b) Planning Commission Members: Jamal Abodalo (Director of Community Development Services) advised the Planning Commission that the total number of members on the Planning Commission has increased from 5 to 7 members.
- (3) Iron Gate Land Development Plan**
 - (a) Application: A Revised Preliminary Land Development Plan has been submitted for review. The Applicant proposes to redevelop a 10,378 +/- square foot property at 228 Moss Street with a 3-story self-storage facility (228 units) with a cumulative total of 19,305 +/- square feet or 6,435 square feet per floor as well as supporting features and improvements. Zoning relief was previously granted by the Zoning Hearing Board via ZHB Appeal 2020-21.
 - (b) Correspondence: Hawk Valley Associates issued a review letter on January 21, 2022 and the Berks County Planning Commission issued a review letter on November 5, 2021.
 - (c) Discussion: The Applicant will need to address issues relating to: site accessibility along Moss Street; parking; stormwater management; emergency management; street trees and landscaping; sanitary sewage disposal; utilities; security gate; the status of the alley; building demolition; and other issues that were presented in the review letters. An informal site meeting will be scheduled in order to discuss these issues in further detail.

- (d) Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to table the plan until the issues contained within the review letters have been resolved by the Applicant to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).

(4) O'Neill Storage Land Development Plan

- (a) Application: A Preliminary Land Development Plan has been submitted for review. The Applicant proposes to redevelop a 15,424 +/- square foot property at 1403 Chester Street with a self-storage facility (34 units) as well as supporting features and improvements. Zoning relief was previously granted by the Zoning Hearing Board via ZHB Appeal 2020-16.
- (b) Correspondence: Hawk Valley Associates issued a review letter on January 21, 2022 and the Berks County Planning Commission issued a review letter on January 7, 2022.
- (c) Discussion: The Applicant will need to address issues relating to: stormwater management; driveway improvements and site accessibility; PennDOT Route 12 corridor improvements; curbs and sidewalks along Chester Street; parking; signs and billboards; erosion and sedimentation control; landscaping; exterior lighting; permitting; and other issues that were presented in the review letters.
- (d) Action: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve the Preliminary Land Development Plan subject to the Applicant resolving the comments in the review letter issued by Hawk Valley Associates, as dated January 21, 2022; Commissioner DeLeon seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).

(5) Albright College: Exeter Hall Annexation and Land Development Plan

- (a) Application: A Final Annexation and Land Development Plan has been submitted for review. The Applicant proposes to develop a 3.98 acre site with a 5-story residential dormitory building with a building footprint of 27,233 square feet of gross floor area or 136,165 total square feet to be occupied by 350 students attending Albright College.
- (b) Correspondence: Hawk Valley Associates issued a review letter on January 21, 2022. The Berks County Planning Commission issued review letters on December 29, 2021 (Land Development Plan) and on January 7, 2022 (Zoning Map Revision).
- (c) Discussion: The Applicant will need to address issues relating to: zoning map revision; zoning compliance notes; internal site accessibility and parking; stormwater management; NPDES permit approval; sanitary sewage disposal; PADEP planning module approval; common deed for annexation; traffic impact compliance; emergency management; landscaping; lighting; historic monument/marker; open space; municipal improvements agreement; stormwater management agreement; campus dormitory closure(s); and other issues that were presented in the review letters.
- (d) Action on Zoning Map Revision: Commissioner Conklin made a motion to recommend that the City of Reading Zoning Map should be revised by changing TPID 17531722195818 from the M-C Zoning District to the R-3 Zoning District. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).
- (e) Action on Final Plan: Commissioner Olsen made a motion to approve the Final Annexation and Land Development Plan subject to the Applicant resolving all comments within the review letter issued by Hawk Valley Associates, as dated January 21, 2022; Commissioner DeLeon seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0). The Applicant shall coordinate the conditions of approval, permits and agreements (stormwater management and municipal improvements) with the Staff and Consultants.

(6) Alvernia University: Berkshire Building Revised Plan of Record

- (a) Application: A Final Land Development Plan has been submitted for review. The Applicant proposes to redevelop the Berkshire Building, which is located on a 21,022 +/- square foot lot at the northeast corner of North 5th Street and Washington Street. The Applicant proposes to apply adaptive reuse techniques in order to permit commercial/retail uses on the first and second floors and residential apartment units on the upper floors that will house foreign exchange students attending Alvernia University as part of the “College Towne” initiative. Zoning relief (special exception and variance) was previously granted by the Zoning Hearing Board as part of ZHB Appeal 2020-18, as approved on November 18, 2020.
- (b) Correspondence: Hawk Valley Associates issued a review letter on January 21, 2022. The Revised Plan of Record will need to be reviewed by the Berks County Planning Commission.
- (c) Discussion: The Applicant will need to address issues relating to: land use discrepancies between ZHB Appeal 2020-18 and the Final Plan; required plan notes, information and documentation required for the Revised Plan of Record; traffic impact and site accessibility; parking and loading; sanitary sewage disposal flows; landscaping; lighting; floor plans; permitting; and other issues that were presented in the review letters.
- (d) Action: The Applicant was advised that the Zoning Hearing Board will need to review the conceptual plan as well as the architectural renderings and floor plans since the proposed use and residential density/occupancy of the Berkshire Building has been revised. Commissioner Cinfici made a motion to table the plan until all issues referenced within the review letter issued by Hawk Valley Associates have been resolved by the Applicant to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Bealer seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).

(7) Old Business and Pending Plans

- (a) Medical Arts Annexation and Land Development Plan: A 90 day time extension was granted by the Applicant. Commissioner DeLeon made a motion to accept the 90 day time extension. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).
- (b) Overlord Real Estate 916 North 9th Street Land Development Plan: A 90 day time extension was granted by the Applicant. Commissioner Olsen made a motion to accept the 90 day time extension. Commissioner Conklin seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0).
- (c) Storage First Land Development Plan: The Applicant has notified the Planning Office that the revised plan of record has been withdrawn and that the proposed self-storage use will no longer be considered for the site located at 755 Heisters Lane.
- (d) Other Projects: The Consultants and Staff

(8) Announcements and Other Business

- (a) Alvernia College Town Pottsville: Commissioner Bealer informed the Planning Commission that Alvernia University has expanded “College Towne” to the City of Pottsville.
- (b) Redistricting Committee: Commissioners Bealer and Olsen provided an update on the redistricting efforts that are being considered by the City of Reading.

- (9) Approval of the PC Meeting Minutes from December 21, 2021:** Commissioner Cinfici made a motion to approve the meeting minutes with a minor correction. Commissioner Olsen seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (4-0; Commissioner DeLeon abstained).

(10) Upcoming Planning Commission Meetings:

- (a) Special Planning Commission Meeting: Jamal Abodalo (Director of Community Development Services) requested that the Planning Commission consider scheduling a special meeting in February to consider a few pending projects (Super Natural Produce and Dream Ventures), which may have submitted plans, reports or documents to the Planning Office prior to the deadline. After a discussion, it was determined that a Special Planning Commission Meeting shall be scheduled on Saturday, February 12, 2022 at 9:00 am at the Double Tree Hotel located at 701 Penn Street. This Special Planning Commission Meeting shall be properly advertised and the meeting agenda will be established by the Planning Office.
- (b) Regular Planning Commission Meeting : The next regularly scheduled meeting for the Planning Commission will be on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:00 pm

(11) Adjournment: Commissioner DeLeon made a motion to adjourn the Planning Commission Meeting. Commissioner Cinfici seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimously approved (5-0). The January 25, 2022 Planning Commission Meeting concluded at 8:45 pm

Respectfully submitted by Jerome Skrincosky, Planning Consultant