



Department of Community Development  
815 Washington Street  
Reading, PA 19601  
610.655.6211

[lenin.agudo@readingpa.org](mailto:lenin.agudo@readingpa.org)

[yohalna.jimenez@readingpa.org](mailto:yohalna.jimenez@readingpa.org)

---

## **CITY OF READING** **MAIN STREET BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **MEETING MINUTES** **APRIL 24, 2012**

#### **Call to Order**

Sam Loth (Coordinator) called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM at the Peanut Bar.

#### **Present**

**Main Street Board of Directors & Sub-Committees:** Johanny Cepeda (Promotion Sub-Committee Chair), Brian Fichthorn (Economic Development Sub-Committee Chair), Lee Olsen (Design Sub-Committee Chair) Ellen Horan (Chamber of Commerce & Industry), Michael Leifer (The Peanut Bar), Donna Reed (Reading City Council MSP Liaison), Sean Moretti (Destination Realty), Marcelino Colon (United Way) and Sam Loth (Coordinator).

#### **Absent**

**Main Street Board of Directors & CD Department:** Chuck Broad (Reading DID), Tony Calvaresi (Wells Fargo Bank), Rene Placido (Josephina's Bakery), Bill Woolworth (Dan's Restaurant), Zane Collings (SMG/Sovereign Center), Lenin Agudo (CD Director) and Yohalna Jimenez (CD Administration).

#### **Committee-of-the-Whole**

- **Motion to approve Jan-Feb-Mar meeting minutes by acclamation. Passed unanimously.**

#### **Bi-Lingual Documents**

- The Board of Directors recommends to the City Administration and to the City Council that a process be established that would automatically generate bi-lingual documents (English/Spanish) for all public documents the City generates. Examples include ordinances, proclamations, program guidelines and invoices/bills/tax documents.
- This recommendation will be forwarded to Lenin Agudo, Director of the Community Development office for review and approval. If approved the recommendation will be distributed to the Mayor and to the President of City Council in the form of an official Memorandum from the Main Street Board of Directors and signed by the Chairman of the Board Chuck Broad and the Director of Community Development Lenin Agudo.

## Main Street Program Sub-Committees

### Design Sub-Committee

#### DT 2020/MSP Design Sub-committee Master Plan

- Lee Olsen presented the comments from the third and final Public Meeting: The Design Sub-Committee will present a report to the City Council and Administration on Monday, May 21, 2012 at Council's scheduled workshop meeting. At that time all public comments and any recommendations will be set forth for review. The Council and Administration may act upon the report at any time thereafter.
- After action is taken on the Master Plan a search for funding resources can begin. The City can then establish a general timetable for actions. The following general comments were made at the April 18, 2012 public meeting in the Peanut Bar:
  - The Parking Authority was conspicuously absent at all three public meetings.
  - Public concerns focused on the need to fill vacant buildings with tenants and the need to bring existing central core district buildings up to current code compliance.
  - Public suggested crime, cleaning and economic development should be the focus of the city first, not redesigning Penn Square.
  - Public suggested that the City & DID cooperate by bringing the existing Friday Farm Market into the Penn Square 400-500 Blocks area. Public encouraged the experiment with small businesses "Fantastico" program to place people in vending businesses within the Penn Square area.

#### Main Street Board Open Forum Commentary

- Michael Leifer said that most conversations he's had with the public believe that the Market House concept is flawed, that parking doesn't tend to be convenient and wouldn't support a Penn Square Market and that normal city traffic would become snarled by the bottlenecking that would occur in the 400 & 500 Blocks of Penn Street.
- Brian Fichthorn said that he believes the City should focus on personal safety perceptions, clean streets, the complacency of the municipal government, property owners, business owners and the general public and also the reuse of existing storefront first floor space in Penn Square.
- Johanny Cepeda said that the City and its various departments and programs should focus on supporting and assisting existing businesses in the central core. There is a need to help generate daytime pedestrian traffic business first and evening traffic business second.
- Marcelino Colon said the vision needs to be both short & long term oriented and that generating economic development activity should be first. He is skeptical of the rotary concept for 5<sup>th</sup> & Penn Streets.
- Donna Reed said that the DID and many other stakeholders in Reading's central core are concerned about the Parking Authority's "Meter Pounce" i.e. Parking Enforcement Officers (PEO) virtually hover near meters about to expire. Secondly the fine for an overtime meter is far too heavy at \$25. Third, there is no uniform approach to meter pricing or when and where meters are enforced. This deters even the most stalwart consumer from parking in downtown to do simple business or shopping. **There will be a "Special Finance Committee" public meeting on Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at 5:00 PM in the Penn Room (1<sup>st</sup> Floor) of City Hall. Members of Council, the Parking Authority and the Administration will discuss publicly the concerns. The public is invited to attend and speak to the issue.**

#### Main Street Board Position Paper on the Master Plan

- The Board of Directors have many comments to make and concerns to air before City Council and the Administration during the May 21<sup>st</sup> Council Workshop session prior to any action being taken by the Council/Administration. These comments and concerns shall be developed into a Reading Main Street Board of Directors position statement to be formally submitted to Council and the Mayor.
- The Board directed Sam Loth to create a first draft of a position paper based upon the following items:
  - Viability of Market Buildings
  - Parking Convenience and Regulation
  - The Traffic Rotary Concept
  - Building Façade Renovations
  - Penn Street Vending Businesses
  - Sidewalk Cafes in the CBD
  - Commercial Building Rehabilitation
  - Ordinance Overhaul & Rewriting
  - Mixed Use Regulatory Controls
- Mr. Loth will write a draft statement and provide it to the Board and Mr. Agudo for review and further editing. Once completed the 'Position Paper' will be distributed to the Administration and to City Council

in advance of the May 21<sup>st</sup> workshop session. The document will be signed by Chuck Broad, Main Street Board Chair and Lenin Agudo, CD Director.

#### Penn Street Pedestrian Lighting Project

- The project is to be rebid from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The installation is completed from 9<sup>th</sup> Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street. Tree trimming in advance of installation has been completed.
- The Board of Directors will request an estimated delivery date on the entire project from the City Public Works Department (Charles Jones).

#### Penn Street Medians & Planters

- The Penn Street Planter Posse includes representatives of the Blue Mountain Sports Car Club, Senator Schwank's office, Permacultivate, City Churches, the Main Street Program, City Council and the DID.
- The Committee is focusing on downtown hanging planters, the Penn Street medians, the four round planters at 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> & Penn Streets and the planting triangles at 2<sup>nd</sup> & Penn Streets. Greater Reading nurseries will support the plans by adopting planters for the season.
- **Main Street Board Members on the Design Sub-Committee are Rene Placido and Mike Leifer.**

### **Economic Development Sub-Committee**

#### City of Reading Sidewalk Café Ordinance

- Michael Leifer said that the City's Sidewalk Café Ordinance makes it virtually impossible for him to set up outdoor tables at his Penn Street restaurant address.
- Johanny Cepeda agreed with Mr. Leifer stating she also has difficulty complying with the ordinance.
- Lee Olsen said that Greensboro, SC voided most of their downtown ordinances and began rewriting the regulatory controls with a new vision and goals & objectives set in place.
- Marcelino Colon said that other municipalities have literally razed existing buildings leaving only the existing historic façade and rebuilding using modern standards in the razed space.
- The Board of Directors agreed that new ordinances for economic development within Reading's downtown need to be enacted. To begin the Board assigned the task of researching, reviewing and recommending a new sidewalk café ordinance to the Main Street Economic Development Sub-Committee, Brian Fichthorn, Chair. Mr. Fichthorn is to report to the Board on progress at the May 2012 meeting.

#### General Ordinance Overhaul

- The Board believes there is a need to review and rewrite many of the ordinances that exist to regulate commerce and economic development in the City's central core. The Board especially believes there is a need to establish a mixed use philosophy that includes retail activities in 1<sup>st</sup> floor spaces, business, professional and commercial uses for 2<sup>nd</sup> and upper floor spaces and access to or direct use of upper floors for parking of vehicles. This need will be discussed beginning with the May 2012 meeting.

#### Fantastico Program for Penn Square

- This program identifies small business operators who are willing to receive business training and then operate businesses from sidewalk carts provided by the DID.
- Lenin Agudo and Chuck Broad will prepare a presentation on the program for the May 22<sup>nd</sup> Main Street Board Meeting.

#### DID/MSP HUB Quarterly Meeting

- Jon Scott and Rick McDougal of the PCI (Penn Corridor Initiative) have been asked to schedule a round robin meeting with smaller organizations including neighborhood groups. The meeting announcement will be generated shortly.

#### MS Toolbox

City Micro-Loan Program (\$3,000 & Up)  
City One-Stop Weekly Development Meeting at City Hall  
City CDBG Façade Improvement Grants Program  
City Economic Resource Profile Guide  
City Citizens Service Center, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor City Hall

- **Members of the Economic Sub-Committee are Brian Fichthorn, Donna Reed, Ellen Horan, Bill Woolworth and Zane Collings.**

## **Promotion & Marketing Sub-Committee**

### *DID/MSP Downtown Historic Architectural Tour*

- The tour titled, "A Walk Through History" was a success at the March Jazz Fest event. This tour will be scheduled again this year.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Downtown Treasure Hunt*

- The DID is hosting its 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Downtown Treasure Hunt event on Saturday, May 5<sup>th</sup> beginning at 11:00 AM. The DID seeks more teams of 5-8 people to compete and is asking for additional volunteers to support the event. Contact Lynn Patton at 610.376.6424 for details.
- **Members of the Promotion Sub-Committee are Johanny Cepeda, Donna Reed and Chuck Broad.**

## **Old & New Business**

- The Board believes a representative from the Reading Parking Authority should attend MSP meetings.
- The Board agrees that it would benefit from a 2-3 hour training session sponsored by the PDC.
- The Board encourages support for the efforts of Sheila Miller, Director for the Penn Street Farmers Market running each Friday from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM starting June 1<sup>st</sup>. Contact: [smiller@countyofberks.com](mailto:smiller@countyofberks.com) Telephone 610.898.5482 or Fax 610.378.7961. Office at the Agricultural Center, 1238 County Welfare Road, Suite 110, Leesport, PA 19533.
- Alternate meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month will occur as follows:
  - Tuesday MAY22 at 8:00 AM – Outside In Café
  - Tuesday JUN 26 at 4:30 PM – Peanut Bar
  - Tuesday JUL 24 at 8:00 AM – Outside In Café
  - Tuesday AUG28 at 4:30 PM – Peanut Bar
  - Tuesday SEP25 at 8:00 AM – Outside In Café
  - Tuesday OCT23 at 4:30 PM – Peanut Bar
  - Tuesday NOV27 at 8:00 AM – Outside In Café
  - No December 2012 Meeting

## **Adjourn**

**Motion to adjourn by Brian Fichthorn. Second by Ellen Horan. Meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.**

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Tuesday, May 22, 2012 @ 8:00 AM**  
**Outside In Café, 6<sup>th</sup> & Penn Streets 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**Reading, PA 19601**