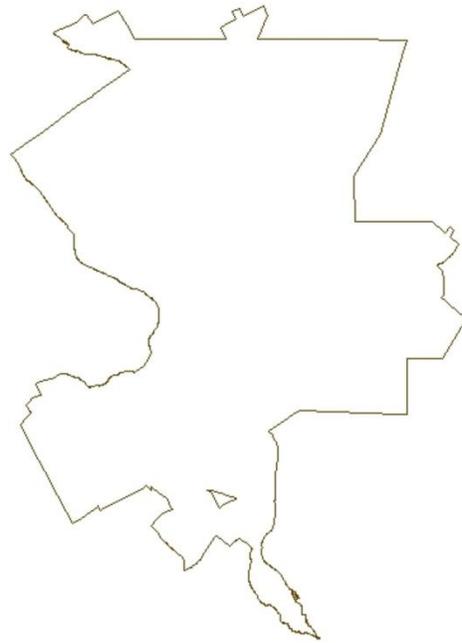


City of Reading
PLANNING COMMISSION



2012
ANNUAL REPORT



CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA

PLANNING COMMISSION
815 WASHINGTON STREET
READING, PA 19601-3690
(610) 655-6443

March 1, 2013

Francis G. Acosta, President
City Council
Room 2-24, City Hall
815 Washington Street
Reading, PA 19601-3690

Dear President and members of City Council:

In accord with the provisions of the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code* (Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended), the City of Reading Planning Commission respectfully submits its Annual Report for 2012. The Report outlines the Commission's activities throughout the year.

The Planning Commission will continue to administer the City's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and those other functions delegated to it, in an effort to improve the quality of life in the City of Reading.

Sincerely,

Andrew W. Miller
Planning Office



SUMMARY

Section 207 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires the Planning Commission (the “municipal planning agency”) to keep a full record of its business and submit an annual, written report of those activities to City Council (the “governing body”), by March 1st of the following year.

The City of Reading Planning Commission held nine (9) regular monthly business meetings in 2012. The meetings convened on the fourth Tuesdays of those months in Room 1-06 (the “Penn Room”) of City Hall. The scheduled July 24th, October 23rd and December 18th meetings were cancelled for a lack of applications. The complete record of the Commission’s regular meeting activity is logged in the official written minutes, on file in the Planning and City Council offices. Additionally, recordings of each meeting have been catalogued in digital audio (.wma) format.

This report was reviewed, and approved for its general content by the Planning Commission at its February 26, 2013 meeting (resolution #4-2013).

Written reviews, identifying defects and corrections required by the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, as well as the suggestions and opinions of the Planning Office staff, were prepared by the Planning Office and sent (typically by electronic mail) in response to all qualified applications for subdivision and/or land development. Certified copies of approved and recorded plans are on-file in the Planning Office.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Commission’s primary role continues to be the administration and enforcement of the City’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (Chapter 22 of the “Codified Ordinances”). What follows is a list and brief summary of the proposals brought before the Commission in 2012, organized first by category, then chronologically. Only those proposals having satisfied the preliminary-plan application requirements, at a minimum, have been included. For an exhaustive listing of all business brought before the Commission, including proposals in the ‘sketch’ phase and any since withdrawn, see the “2012 Activity Summary”, attached, or the meeting minutes.

COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL

Queen City Diner – Proposed Building Addition – final land development plan

This plan, for an 1864-square foot addition proposed for the existing restaurant on that parcel known as 100 Lancaster Avenue, was granted a conditional, final approval at the January 24th meeting (resolution #1-2012). The expansion included several enhancements to the façade, especially at the entrance, in an effort to make it more ‘inviting’. Some of the added interior space would allow for an expanded salad bar. A revised, and more-detailed plan was presented at the June 26th meeting, and approved again (resolution #22-2012). To date, the plan has not been recorded. Section 513.a of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires developers to record plans (with the county recorder of deeds) within ninety days of final approval. The owner’s intentions, as of this report, are not clear.

930-942 Pike Street Subdivision (Pike Café Inc.) – final subdivision plan

This plan, for the consolidation of parts of those parcels known as 936, 938, 940 and 942 with 930, 932 and 934 Pike Street, was approved at the January 24th meeting (resolution #2-2012). The plan covered subdivisions and annexations only, and proposed a garden/green space adjacent to the restaurant in what had been the rear yards of 936, 938, 940 and 942. An alley between the rears of the Pike Street parcels and the side of 1351 Moss Street, also under the same ownership, would be incorporated and closed. The new boundaries mirrored those of a 2009 plan, when and where the owner had intended to construct an outdoor, cabana-style dining area. Building-code realities complicated that plan, and it was never recorded. The latter plan was recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds April 12th; Instrument No. 2012014606. The deed for the consolidated parcel is Instrument No. 2012015267. The area has since been fenced in, including a gate at the Moss Street end of the alley.

Gehris Self Storage – final land development plan

This plan, for 16 garage units and 12 surface parking spaces at that parcel known as 612 McKnight Street, was reviewed and tabled at the February 28th meeting, granted preliminary approval at the March 27th meeting (resolution #11-2012) and final approval at the April 24th meeting (resolution 14-2012). Landscaping and screening measures were included. And gabled-roof angles were intended for the units in order to orient photovoltaic panels. The site was formerly occupied by a warehouse destroyed in a September 2001 fire. It had been used as an unfinished and informal neighborhood parking area since. The plan was recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds on June 29th; Instrument No. 2012026907). A grading permit (No. 36510) was issued January 2, 2013 and, later, a fence permit. To date, nothing has changed on-site, but for a posted parking restriction.

Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion – final land development plan

This plan, for a 2280-square-foot expansion of the existing C-Town Reading Plaza Supermarket at that parcel known as 610 Greenwich Street, was tabled at the August 28th meeting and approved at the September 25th meeting (resolution #29-2012). It would accommodate additional produce space and a relocated deli section. To satisfy stormwater regulations, certain areas of the near-totally-impervious site would be developed as tree-planting beds. The plan was recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds on September 26th; Instrument No. 2012040294). The building permit (No. 35699) was issued September 26th. The expansion was completed and occupied sometime during December.

Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area – parking lot land development plan

This plan, originally for a 28-space surface parking lot on that 0.2 acres known as 109 Peach Street and 116 South 9th Street, was required by the Zoning Hearing Board as a condition of approving the adjacent restaurant (Appeal No. 2011-27). The plan was officially tabled pending a highway-occupancy permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) for the already-constructed driveway from South 9th Street (SR2007). There were other questions regarding the ownership of the property. Requests for extension of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code’s time limits (§508.3) for plan review have been provided by the applicant and approved by the Commission, on at least four occasions, the last (resolution #24-2012) for an indefinite period.

RESIDENTIAL

Schleicher-LeGrande Subdivision – final subdivision plan

This plan, for a 5021-square-foot annexation from that parcel known as 1802 Hill Road to that known as 1813 Steuben Road, was granted final approval at the June 26th meeting (resolution #21-2012). The owner of 1813 Steuben Road had invested in landscaping the subdivided area, and wished to secure the area when 1802 Hill Road became subject to a tax sale. The plan was recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds on August 1st; Instrument No. 2012031742). No new construction was proposed.

Acevedo Downing St. Subdivision – final subdivision plan

This plan proposed a subdivision of 8895 square feet from an existing 27,011-square-foot parcel at 2316 Downing Street, and the construction of a home thereon for the owner’s daughter. The plan review has been extended repeatedly since the end of 2010, pending the resolution of on-lot-sewage disposal issues and the boundary encroachments by the neighbor at 2312 Downing Street. Requests for extension of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code’s time limits (§508.3) for plan review have been provided by the applicant and approved by the Commission, twice in 2012, the last on May 22nd (resolution #19-2012) for an indefinite period. According to the surveyor, the owner hasn’t given any recent direction.

INSTITUTIONAL & UTILITY

9th & Green Streets Apartments (Berks County Redevelopment Authority) – final subdivision and land development plan

This plan, for a five-lot annexation/consolidation and a six-unit apartment building on those parcels known as 503-513 North 9th Street, was first reviewed at the November 22, 2011 meeting. After a few delays it was reviewed again at the May 22nd meeting, but ultimately withdrawn. An agreement of sale with the record owner was not renewed.

Renovations to the Dining Services (Albright College) – sketch land development plan

This plan proposed two additions, of 530 and 676 square feet, and a loading area for the College’s existing dining hall (Campus Center) on that parcel known as 1601 North 13th Street. The additions were part of a total, interior renovation of the food services. Planning Commission review was required because the new construction exceeded an established threshold for “land development”. But, owing to the limited project size, the Commission waived further review following the February 28th sketch presentation (resolution #6-2012). The building permit (No. 34659) was issued on May 30th.

Kenhorst Boulevard Reserve Center Redevelopment Plan – final subdivision plan

This plan, to subdivide 2.548 acres from the 7.06-acre military facility at that parcel known as 615 Kenhorst Boulevard, was granted final approval at the April 24th meeting (resolution #15-2012). The property had most-recently been home to a Marine Corps Reserve artillery unit. The plan divided the 34,736-square-foot main building, for an eventual occupancy by Mary’s Shelter, a social-service agency serving pregnant women. The plan was recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds on May 24th; Instrument No. 2012021417. But the title has yet to be conveyed. And no building permits have been sought. (see also: the “Mary’s Shelter” conditional-use review summarized under the “ZONING” section of this report)

South Campus Project (Alvernia University) – modifications to the record land development plan

At the August 28th meeting (resolution #26-2012), the Commission approved alterations to the Francis Hall parking and the convent promenade. The plan is a relatively minor change to the previously-approved and -recorded land development plans (County instrument nos. 2010003647 and 2011036745) for the University’s development of four new residence halls, a campus community center and related improvements at their Greenway Terrace campus. It also addresses a campus master plan goal of connecting the formal convent driveway (the Bernardine Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis) from Saint Bernardine Street to the University’s campus. The Commission accepted the plan as it was presented, and without a formal, recorded revision, in exchange for an updated plan set, among a few other conditions.

Modifications

Section 512.1.d of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires the Planning Commission to keep a written record of all action on all requests for modification/waiver of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Those waivers formally granted may be summarized in this report, but are further explained and notated in the meeting minutes and on the title sheets of the record plans themselves.

ZONING

Conditional Uses

Sections 603.c.2 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and 27-301.B.3 of the City’s Zoning Ordinance give the Planning Commission an opportunity to comment on any applications for “conditional uses” as classified by the Zoning Ordinance. There were three (3) such applications reviewed in 2012.

Mary’s Shelter, 615 Kenhorst Boulevard – §603.c.2 conditional use review (group care home)

On February 28th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council’s approval (resolution #7-2012) of the Shelter’s bid for the vacated Marine Corps Reserve center on Kenhorst Boulevard. The conditional-use application was little more than a formality, when considering that a special, *ad hoc* authority had been established to consider redevelopment options in the wake of the Marine Corps’ use. Council held its hearing March 6th, and ultimately approved the application on March 26th (their Resolution #53-2012). Their decision limited the Shelter to a maximum of twenty residents, including staff, and anticipated a subdivision plan which would see the remaining land conveyed to the Reading Redevelopment Authority. The Planning Commission reviewed and approved the related “Kenhorst Boulevard Reserve Center Redevelopment” subdivision plan at their April 24th meeting (detailed in the “SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT” section of this report).

Metropolitan Apartments, 918 North 4th Street – §603.c.2 conditional use review (conversion)

On June 26th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council’s approval (resolution #23-2012) of the owner’s application for a 36th unit in an otherwise residential building. There had been a retail space in one of its first-floor spaces. Council held its hearing July 17th, and ultimately approved the additional apartment on July 23rd

(their Resolution #99-2012), on the condition that the owner pay rental-housing fees for the years 2005 through 2010.

912 Amity Street – §603.c.2 conditional use review (conversion)

On November 27th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's conditional approval (resolution #30-2012) of an application for a two-unit recognition of a row home. A former and abandoned retail space, the owner wanted to convert the first floor to an apartment. The Commission's suggested conditions concerned the independence of the first and second floor spaces, building-code issues which would require an interior inspection to verify. Council held its hearing December 5th, and ultimately denied the conversion on January 14, 2013 (their Resolution #3-2013). Their refusal was based on work found to have been done without building permits, but left open the possibility of another application once certain renovations are completed and *under permit*.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments / Zoning Map Changes

Section 609.c of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code gives the Planning Commission a 30-day period in which to comment on proposed zoning ordinance amendments and/or map changes. There was only one (1) such proposal considered by the Commission during 2012.

the "amendment to the Zoning Ordinance's Part 18 floodplain regulations" – §609.c zoning ordinance amendment review

On May 22nd, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's adoption of an ordinance drafted by the Department of Public Works (resolution #18-2012). The revisions were required in order to synchronize the language used with that of the federal regulations and ensure the City's continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The draft ordinance was based on a 'model ordinance' suggested by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). The Planning Commission had numerous questions regarding the practical effect, and advised preparation of a revision that would better reflect local conditions and fit the framework of the Zoning Ordinance. A public hearing was held June 4th. Council enacted the amendment on June 11th (their Bill No. 64-2012), with an effective date of January 3rd, to match the date on the revised flood insurance rate maps.

REDEVELOPMENT

The Planning Commission took no official actions related to the activities of either the Reading Redevelopment Authority or the Blighted Property Review Committee.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Section 303 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires the Planning Commission to review certain public actions as they relate to policies set forth in its Comprehensive Plan. The following entries detail the extent to which such review opportunities were given.

STREETS & PUBLIC GROUNDS per Section 303.a.1

Penn Corridor Initiative: Way Finding Signage Study – §303.a.1 review

On January 24th, the Planning Commission heard a presentation on behalf of the Penn Corridor Initiative for a coordinated signage program along the Penn Avenue/Penn Street corridor spanning the City and the boroughs of Wyomissing and West Reading. It would guide visitors to the main attractions in each municipality. An earlier presentation was made to the Historical Architecture Review Board, which issued a "certificate of appropriateness" (their resolution 01-12). A later presentation was made to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), who determined that a permit was unnecessary. City Council reviewed the concept, but took no formal action. The City's share of the signage was installed in early February of 2013. Installation of the Wyomissing and West Reading shares is anticipated within the following two months.

South 2nd and Franklin Street "Reading Rising" park project (Entrepreneurs' Connection) – §303.a.1 review

On February 28th, a local group presented their plan to renovate the 'pocket park' at the northeast corner of South 2nd and Franklin Streets. The park is on two parcels; one owned by the Reading Redevelopment Authority, and the

other by ATV Bakery Inc. They each entered into five-year leases, with options to renew, for the work and continued maintenance. City Council had previously authorized leases between the City (lessee) and the Redevelopment Authority and ATV Bakery (lessors), and the maintenance of the “community park” (their Bill No. 59-2011). The plan included re-grading, an artwork, new furnishings and landscaping. The work has yet to commence, though the ‘Connection’ did some immediate clean-up and tree trimming. Fund raising efforts continue toward the realization of the project.

City Park ‘September 11th’ memorial (Department of Fire and Rescue Services) – §303.a.1 review

On September 25th, the Fire Marshal presented his vision for a local commemoration of the September 11th terrorist attacks, notably the 343 firefighters killed responding to the World Trade Center in New York City. It included an elm tree, a monument and matching benches. And because he had only recently learned of the Planning Commission’s role, the pieces had already been ordered and were ready for installation. Those that had attended the ceremony two weeks prior had seen the monument in a temporary placement. Later that same evening, the Historical Architecture Review Board considered the plan, and issued a “certificate of appropriateness” (their resolution 69-12). It was permanently installed shortly thereafter.

PUBLIC STRUCTURES per Section 303.a.2

Nothing of the “public structure” category was presented to the Planning Commission during 2012, though those projects summarized under the “STREETS & PUBLIC GROUNDS” heading include structures as well.

ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS per Sections 303.a.3 and 609.c

See also, the “Zoning Ordinance Amendments/Zoning Map Changes”, under the ZONING heading, for details of the amendments to the floodplain regulations. No capital improvements budget was presented to the Planning Commission in 2012.

PUBLIC WATER & SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE per Section 303.a.4

No water or sewer projects were presented to the Planning Commission during 2012. However, the Reading Area Water Authority did begin installation of a new 16-inch water main through Cumru Township. They also moved their offices out of City Hall and into 1801 Kutztown Road, and took over their own billing. The City itself began real construction on the long-awaited upgrades to the Fritz Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. The most-visible of the work involved the site preparation for a new 42-inch force main running the 8400 feet between the Sixth and Canal streets pumping station and the Treatment Plant.

OTHER BUSINESS

Membership and Offices

The Planning Commission is currently short one of the five billets established by ordinance. The current, active members and their terms are as follows:

- Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman – reappointed to the Commission, with a term ending April 1, 2016 (Council’s Resolution No. 115-2012)
- Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman – appointed to the Commission, with a term ending April 1, 2014 (Council’s Resolution No. 108-2010)
- Michael E. Lauter, Secretary - reappointed to the Commission with a term ending April 1, 2013 (Council’s Resolution No. 76-2011)
- Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary – reappointed to the Commission with a term ending April 1, 2014 (Council’s Resolution No. 121-2010)

Community Involvement

Ermete Raffaelli serves as a member of the South Mountain YMCA Board of Directors. Mr. Raffaelli also serves as the President of the Reading Hose Company No. 1.

Michael Lauter serves as Executive Director of the Centre Park Historic District Inc.

Wayne Jonas Bealer serves as the Planning Commission's representative on both the Blighted Property Review Committee and Vending Licensing Board, and serves as Acting Executive Director of the Violence Prevention Center of Berks.

Brian Burket is a member of the Greater Reading Young Professionals network (GRYP), serving on its Legislative Impact Committee.

2013 PROJECTIONS

The Commission anticipates increasing land development activity, including the reuse of several former industrial/outlet buildings or their sites, ground-breaking on the downtown convention-center hotel, renewed efforts to complete the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and update the Comprehensive Plan, and the renovation/reconstruction of the Fritz Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The Planning Commission will continue to administer the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and perform those zoning functions delegated it by law and/or ordinance.

**City of Reading Planning Commission
2012 Activity Summary**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>RES#</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>PLAN BOOK</u>
Jan. 24	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-Penn Corridor Initiative: Way Finding Signage Study	heard the concept presentation	
Jan. 24	1-2012	Queen City Diner - Proposed Building Addition - final land development plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	xxx page xxx
Jan. 24	2-2012	930-942 Pike Street Subdivision (Pike Café Inc.) - final subdivision plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	2012014606
Jan. 24	3-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area	agreed to review period extension, 4-0	
Jan. 24	4-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-9th & Green Streets Apartments	agreed to review period extension, 4-0	
Jan. 24	5-2012	review the draft November 22, 2011 meeting minutes	approved the November 22nd minutes, 4-0	
Feb. 28	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-South 2nd and Franklin Street "Reading Rising" park project	heard the concept presentation	
Feb. 28	6-2012	Renovations to the Dining Services (Albright College) - sketch land development plan	waived additional review, 4-0	n/a
Feb. 28	n/a	Gehris Self Storage - preliminary land development plan	tabled the preliminary plan, 4-0	
Feb. 28	7-2012	\$603.c.2 conditional use review-Mary's Shelter, 615 Kenhorst Boulevard (group care home)	recommended City Council's approval, 4-0	
Feb. 28	8-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Acevedo Downing St. Subdivision	agreed to review period extension, 4-0	
Feb. 28	9-2012	review the draft 2011 Planning Commission Annual Report	approved the 2011 Annual Report, 4-0	
Feb. 28	10-2012	review the draft January 24, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the January 24th minutes, 4-0	
Mar. 27	11-2012	Gehris Self Storage - preliminary land development plan	approved the preliminary plan, 3-0	
Mar. 27	12-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area	agreed to review period extension, 3-0	
Mar. 27	13-2012	review the draft February 28, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the February 28th minutes, 3-0	
Apr. 24	14-2012	Gehris Self Storage - final land development plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	2012026907
Apr. 24	15-2012	Kenhorst Boulevard Reserve Center Redevelopment Plan - final subdivision plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	2012021417
Apr. 24	16-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-9th & Green Streets Apartments	agreed to review period extension, 4-0	
Apr. 24	17-2012	review the draft March 27, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the March 27th minutes, 4-0	
May 22	n/a	9th & Green Streets Apartments (Berks County Redevelopment Authority) - final subdivisio	tabled the final plan, 3-0	
May 22	18-2012	\$609.c review-proposed floodplain ordinance (amending the Zoning Ordinance's Part 18)	recommended City Council's adoption, 3-0	
May 22	19-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Acevedo Downing St. Subdivision	agreed to indefinite review extension, 3-0	
May 22	20-2012	review the draft April 24, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the April 24th minutes, 3-0	
Jun. 26	21-2012	Schleicher-LeGrande Subdivision - final subdivision plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	2012031742
Jun. 26	22-2012	Queen City Diner - Proposed Building Addition - final land development plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	xxx page xxx
Jun. 26	23-2012	\$603.c.2 conditional use review-Metropolitan Apartments, 918 North 4th Street (conversio	recommended City Council's approval, 4-0	
Jun. 26	24-2012	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area	agreed to indefinite review extension, 4-0	
Jun. 26	25-2012	review the draft May 22, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the May 22nd minutes, 4-0	
Jul. 24		<i>- the July 24th meeting was cancelled -</i>		
Aug. 28	n/a	Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0	
Aug. 28	26-2012	South Campus Project (Alvernia University) - modifications to the record plan	approved changes, 4-0	
Aug. 28	27-2012	review the draft June 26, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the June 26th minutes, 4-0	
Sep. 25	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-City Park 'September 11th' memorial (Department of Fire and Rescue Servic	heard the concept presentation	

**City of Reading Planning Commission
2012 Activity Summary**

Sep. 25	28-2012	Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion - final land development plan	approved the final plan, 4-0	2012040294
Sep. 25	29-2012	review the draft August 28, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the August 28th minutes, 4-0	
Oct. 23		- <i>the October 23rd meeting was cancelled</i> -		
Nov. 27	30-2012	\$603.c.2 conditional use review-912 Amity Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's conditioned approval, 4-0	
Nov. 27	31-2012	review the draft September 25, 2012 meeting minutes	approved the September 25th minutes, 4-0	
Dec. 18		- <i>the December 18th meeting was cancelled</i> -		

n/a = no action, not applicable, or not assigned

xxx page xxx = recording required