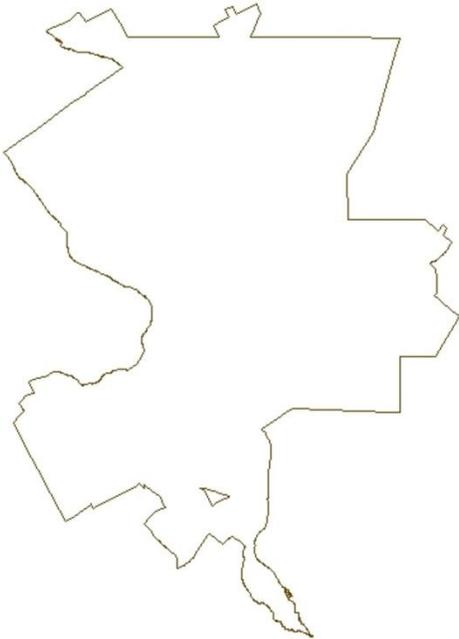


City of Reading  
PLANNING COMMISSION



2015  
ANNUAL REPORT



# CITY OF READING, PENNSYLVANIA

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

March 1, 2016

Jeffrey S. Waltman Sr., 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 Section 207 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 2015. 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 that the Planning Commission (the 'municipal planning agency') 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 twelve regular monthly business meetings in 2015, and an additional meeting on November 4th. The regular meetings convened on the fourth Tuesdays of those months in Room 1-06 (the 'Penn Room') of City Hall. The complete record of the Commission's regular meeting activity is logged in the official written minutes, on file in the Planning Office and available on the City's website. Additionally, recordings of each meeting have been catalogued in digital audio (.wma) format. And, when available, the *Reading Eagle* newspaper's coverage supplements the file.

This report was reviewed, and approved for its general content by the Planning Commission at its February 23, 2016 meeting (resolution no. 9-2016).

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Written reviews, identifying defects and the corrections required by the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO), as well as the suggestions and opinions of the Planning Office staff, were prepared by the Planning Office and mailed (or e-mailed, whenever such addresses were available) in response to all qualified applications for subdivision and/or land development, and ahead of the public meeting presentations to the Planning Commission. Certified copies of approved and recorded plans are on-file in the Planning Office. Scanned images of the same are available on-line, through the Berks County Recorder of Deeds Office website.

## **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 515 of the 'Codified Ordinances'). What follows is a list and brief summary of the proposals brought before the Commission in 2015, organized first by category, then chronologically. Only those proposals having satisfied the preliminary-plan application requirements, at a minimum, have been included in the narrative. For an exhaustive listing of all business considered by the Commission, including proposals in the 'sketch' phase and any since withdrawn, see the '2015 Activity Summary', attached, and/or the meeting minutes.

### **COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL**

#### **Super Natural Produce**

Having been stopped amid their unpermitted construction of an addition in late 2014, the owners of what had been the Brass Lantern pub at 1336 North 12th Street first submitted a land development plan January 12th. It proposed a 1064-square-foot addition and conversion to a grocery store. By then, they had appealed the zoning restrictions and been granted the necessary variances (Appeal No. 2014-16). Work resumed concurrent with the land development review, the latter being complicated by the partially 'as built' nature of the plan and the lack of existing-condition details in the survey. A conditional final approval of the land development plan was granted on February 24th (resolution no. 4-2015). A temporary certificate of occupancy was issued, March 6th, allowing the business to operate ahead of the recorded plan. Its terms, and the building plans it was based on were themselves violated by further construction discovered in May. A stop work order followed on May 22nd. On June 16th, the building inspectors condemned the property. Following a meeting with several City officials on June 17th, another temporary certificate of occupancy was issued June 18th. The plan approval was reaffirmed June 23rd (resolution no. 28-2015). No record plan version was ever submitted, let alone recorded.

*developed by:* Leo J. K. LLC (Leopoldo Sanchez)... *designed by:* Tarson LLC

#### **Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area**

This plan, for a 28-space surface parking lot on the 0.2 acre between 109 Peach Street and 116 South 9th Street, has been covered in the annual reports since its initial application in 2011. This year, the plan finally gained a conditional approval, at the February 24th meeting (resolution no. 8-2015), which was later reaffirmed at the June

23rd meeting (resolution no. 30-2015). The record sets were submitted and endorsed by the Commission in July. It has yet to be recorded, pending a required municipal improvements agreement and surety. The restaurant/club had continued to operate throughout, using the subject parcels to serve its parking needs even in their unfinished condition.

*developed by:* Jet Set Restaurant LLC... *designed by:* DH Enterprises Inc.

#### Mimmo's Restaurant Additions

This plan, proposing 2445 square feet of additions to the existing 4745-square-foot Mimmo's Ristorante at 290 Morgantown Road, and its connection to the 1345-square-foot neighboring residence at 15 Prospect Avenue, was submitted, reviewed and approved within 2014, and its history is more fully detailed in the 2014 annual report. Activity in 2015 was limited to a reaffirmation of the October 2014 approval at the February 24th meeting (resolution no. 12-2015), and its recording May 13th, as Instrument No. 2015015732. A deed consolidating 290 Morgantown Road and 15 Prospect Avenue was recorded April 24th, as Instrument No. 2015013235. In the months that followed, City staff noted inconsistencies with the record plan and work completed without the required inspections. This, in addition to some lingering permitting issues with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), caused some delay. The final occupancy certification is pending.

*developed by:* Domenico & Lucia Brutto... *designed by:* Van Cleef Engineering Associates LLC

#### DoubleTree Hotel Project

This second formal revision to the record plan, for a convention-center hotel, already under construction at 701 Penn Street, was approved at the March 24th meeting (resolution no. 14-2015), and reaffirmed at the July 28th and December 22nd meetings (resolution nos. 40-2015 and 60-2015, respectively). The original plan, and its accompanying parking garage, and its first revision were covered in each of the 2008, 2009 and 2010 reports, and consideration of the latest revisions began in July 2014. This second revision was recorded on February 18, 2016, as Instrument No. 2016005547. The Hotel had since opened on December 8th.

*developed by:* Reading Hospitality LLC... *designed by:* Bogia Engineering Inc.

#### Tank Storage Addition-Building 6 (IFS Industries Inc.)

This plan for a 61- by 28½-foot addition, for material storage, at 700 Arlington Street, was never formally presented to the Planning Commission. The Planning Office staff briefed the Commission at the March 24th meeting, based on the information gathered from February 26th and March 12th 'OneStopShop' meetings with the building-code officials. The Commission resolved to waive the full land development review procedure (resolution no. 15-2015) in exchange for a plan of the final design.

*developed by:* International Foundry Supply Inc... *designed by:* C2C Design Group (Forino Company LP)

#### Lentz Milling Company

This plan, for what amounted to an expansion of the loading area and docks at the distribution center at 2045 North 11th Street, was described at a March 19th OneStopShop meeting. It did not require a 'land development' review, and was instead presented for informational purposes, by the Planning Office staff, at the March 24th meeting. The project did require some grading for elevation adjustments and some alteration of the existing stormwater piping.

*developed by:* Lentz Limited Partnership... *designed by:* John W. Hoffert PLS Ltd.

#### Proposed Material Silos (Brentwood Industries)

This plan, at Brentwood's recently-acquired 825 Morgantown Road – the former Habasit America Inc. property and subject of the 2004 'KVP Falcon' land development plan – proposed four steel silos, each 70-feet high by 12-feet in diameter, for the containment of plastic pellets, and a piped connection to the production facility. It too was presented by the Planning Office staff, on May 26th, based on a OneStopShop presentation May 7th, and was granted a waiver from further land development review (resolution no. 21-2015) in exchange for a plan of the final design and some effort to mitigate the appearance of the silos.

*developed by:* Brentwood Industries Inc... *designed by:* SSM Group Inc.

#### Aramark Parking Lot

This plan for a 76-space off-street-parking lot at 1100 Schuylkill Avenue had its roots in an earlier plan for an 89-space lot presented in 2008. That plan was denied at the March 10, 2009 meeting (resolution no. 11-2009) due to unresolved design and permitting matters, and because of the pending expiration of the time limits imposed by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The revived plan was first presented and tabled at the June 23rd

meeting, before gaining approval at the July 28th meeting (resolution no. 33-2015). That approval has since been reaffirmed, at the November 24th meeting (resolution no. 57-2015), and has yet to be recorded. The site has been vacant, and used as an unfinished parking area since the 2007 demolition of the Sho-Boat restaurant.

*developed by:* Aramark Uniform & Career Apparel LLC... *designed by:* SSM Group Inc.

#### Plastic Compounding Project (Phoenix Technology Division)

This plan for equipment and silage additions, a retaining wall and grade modifications at 850 Laurel Street (formerly home to the Eagle Distributing Company), was presented at the June 23rd meeting on behalf of this subsidiary of Cedarpak LLC, who'd purchased the property about five years earlier. The Commission granted a *partial* waiver of the land development review (resolution no. 25-2015), for the installation of the retaining wall and the electrical interconnection, while reserving action on the installation of the other equipment until the outcome of a zoning hearing (Appeal No. 2015-27). To date, no follow-up presentation has been made. The company's website describes the operation as a 'builder of cost-efficient bio-fuel power plants generating steam & power using residual waste stream materials'.

*developed by:* Phoenix Technology Holdings USA Inc... *designed by:* SSM Group Inc.

#### 3150 S.F. Building Addition at 1001 Lancaster Avenue (Piazza Acura)

This plan for what, at the last review, has come to total 4702 square feet in building additions to the existing Piazza Acura dealership at 1001 Lancaster Avenue, and boundary adjustments between it, 915 Lancaster Avenue and 923 Gregg Avenue, began as two plans in June, showing the proposed construction and subdivision separately. The latter two properties host the Honda dealership and the collision center, respectively. The combined plan was presented at the June 23rd and July 28th meetings, being tabled for unresolved issues concerning the underground utilities and other requisite information. Extensions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code deadline followed, at the September 22nd and December 22nd meetings.

*developed by:* Reading Collision Center (VMDT Partnership)... *designed by:* Edward B. Walsh & Associates Inc.

#### Hydrojet, Inc.

This revision-to-record plan proposed a 19,339-square-foot manufacturing-space addition to the existing facility at 450 Gateway Drive (part of the 'Buttonwood Gateway' industrial park). The existing facility was covered by the 2007-2008 'Hydrojet, Inc. Subdivision and Land Development Plans' (recorded at volume 306, page 433), which had already shown an area reserved for a 19,812-square-foot 'future building'. Following presentations and tablings at the July 28th and August 25th meetings, the plan was approved at the September 22nd meeting (resolution no. 47-2015), and reaffirmed at the December 22nd meeting (resolution no. 61-2015). It has yet to be recorded, pending a municipal improvements agreement.

*developed by:* LR2 LLC... *designed by:* Bogia Engineering Inc.

#### 117 Marion Street (otherwise known as '1200 Center Avenue')

This plan proposed a parking lot reconfiguration and expansion for a *net* gain of ten additional spaces at 117 Marion Street, and its annexation to the existing parking and businesses at 1220 Centre Avenue: the Sotomayor Medical Practice, Reading Discount Pharmacy and Mercy Diagnostics. The surveyor titled the plan '1200 Center Avenue' which, besides the misspelling, with 1214 Centre Avenue represents the residential property at the corner, in common ownership, but otherwise unrelated to the plan presented. The Commission waived further review at the July 28th meeting (resolution no. 35-2015), based on the count of additional spaces and the terms of the Zoning Ordinance.

*developed by:* Asiul LLC... *designed by:* Tarson LLC

#### Warren Street Dunkin Donuts

This plan showed a 1885-square-foot restaurant, with a drive-through service and 10 off-street parking spaces at 1343 Allegheny Avenue. It was reviewed and tabled at the September 22nd meeting, before eventually being withdrawn November 18th. The Commission expressed its doubts and concerns regarding the traffic interface with the Warren Street Bypass, and the queue patterns on the site itself.

*developed by:* Laxmi Donuts Inc. (Rajeshkumar Patel)... *designed by:* Berks Surveying & Engineering Inc.

#### S. 6th Street Family Dollar

This plan proposed a 9180-square-foot retail building at 400 South 6th Street and a total of 29 off-street parking spaces between there and 401 South 6th Street. This was the first real move to redevelop the site of the former

South Reading Markethouse destroyed in a May 14, 2005 fire. It had been vacant and in the marketing hands of the Reading Redevelopment Authority for most of the time since. The plan, originally designed by Ludgate Engineering Corporation, was reviewed and tabled at the September 22nd and October 27th meetings, before being granted a preliminary approval at a special November 4th meeting. The plan was somewhat complicated by its situation in the City's Prince Historic District, requiring some 'back and forth' with the Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB). With the final plan being tabled at the November 24th meeting, the developer opted to change design consultants, hiring Larson Design Group as of December 1st. The plan was granted a conditional final approval at the February 2, 2016 meeting (resolution no. 1-2016), and is presently being revised toward a record version. The 'HARB' reviewed and conditionally approved the architecture at their October 20th meeting (resolution no. 71-15), following it with a revised and clarifying 'certificate of appropriateness' at their February 16, 2016 meeting (resolution no. 09-16).

*developed by: LGN Management LLC... designed by: Larson Design Group*

#### LGN: Lancaster Ave. Family Dollar

This plan proposed an 8320-square-foot retail store and 27 off-street parking spaces at the to-be-combined 231 Lancaster Avenue, 238 Brookline Street and 229 Lancaster Avenue. The existing buildings affiliated with Veterans Car Sales and the vacant Duron building will be demolished. The plan, originally designed by Ludgate Engineering Corporation, was reviewed and tabled at the September 22nd and October 27th meetings, before being granted a preliminary approval at a special November 4th meeting. There were additional permits required, from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), for the work and driveway design within Lancaster Avenue. With the final plan being tabled at the November 24th meeting, the developer opted to change design consultants, hiring Larson Design Group as of December 1st. The plan was tabled again at the February 2, 2016 meeting, and is presently being revised to satisfy the PennDOT requirements.

*developed by: LGN Management LLC... designed by: Larson Design Group*

#### Russell Plywood Building Addition

This plan proposed a 5576-square-foot building addition and 630-square-foot loading dock addition at 401 Old Wyomissing Road. It was reviewed and tabled at the December 22nd meeting, before its final approval at the February 2, 2016 meeting (resolution no. 3-2016) The Commission raised some concern regarding the volume of delivery trucks passing through the adjacent residential area, and their overnight idling practices. The company projects a slight reduction in the trucking activity as a result of the expansion, as it consolidates a step in the production currently located at a leased facility in West Reading Borough. The plan is currently under revision toward a record version.

*developed by: Russell Plywood Inc... designed by: Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.*

### **RESIDENTIAL**

#### Homes at Riverside

Covered more extensively in the 2014 report, this plan proposed a 47-unit-townhouse development and a 2413-square-foot community center at 1001 Weiser Street. It was granted the final approval at the February 24th meeting (resolution no. 6-2015), and reaffirmed at the May 26th meeting (resolution no. 22-2015). It was recorded on August 14th, as Instrument No. 2015028318, and is currently under construction. The 46 townhouse units will be leased, to low-to-moderate-income tenants, with the 47th unit an apartment reserved as a superintendent's residence on the second floor of the community center.

*developed by: HAR Associates LP... designed by: Ludgate Engineering Corporation*

### **INSTITUTIONAL & UTILITY**

#### Pendora Park Olivet Boys & Girls Club

Beginning in 2011, with the City Council actions supporting the project (Resolution No. 51-2011) and authorizing a lease (Bill No. 44-2011), this plan for a 16,104-square-foot recreation center in Pendora Park (part of 1801 Forrest Street, but since assigned 330 South 19th Street), really got underway with a zoning appeal in mid-2014. The preliminary land development plan was reviewed and tabled at the September 23, 2014, November 25, 2014, and January 27th meetings, with the necessary extension agreements along the way, before gaining a preliminary approval at the February 24th meeting. The final approval followed at the March 24th meeting (resolution no. 13-2015). The Olivet Club had determined this location as an underserved section of the City, relative to its existing

facilities. The plan approval was reaffirmed at the June 23rd meeting (resolution no. 31-2015) and recorded on July 28th, as Instrument No. 2015025922.

*developed by:* Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading & Berks County... *designed by:* Impact Engineering Group

#### Arrival Court at Francis Hall (Alvernia University)

This plan proposed some enhancement of the formal entrance to the University, from Saint Bernardine Street through the Bernardine Sisters' side of the campus, and some modifications to the off-street parking design on account of grading issues and expense. It represented a revision to the 2008 'South Campus Project' plan (Instrument Nos. 2010003647 and 2011036745). The Commission considered the plan at the March 24th meeting, and again in more detail at the April 28th meeting, whereupon they waived any further or formal review (resolution no. 17-2015).

*developed by:* Alvernia University... *designed by:* Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.

#### Fritz Island WWTP Facilities Upgrade Project

This plan, covering the consent-decreed upgrades and modernizations of the liquid and solid treatment and handling systems in the City's Fritz Island Wastewater Treatment Plant at 899 Morgantown Road, was submitted, reviewed and approved within 2014, and its history is more-fully detailed in the 2014 annual report. A late interpretation regarding those features located within the regulated floodplain compelled a February 11th special exception hearing before the Zoning Hearing Board (Appeal No. 2015-04). The Planning Commission's consideration in 2015 was limited to a reaffirmation of the December 2014 approval at the June 23rd meeting (resolution no. 27-2015), and its recording July 22nd, as Instrument No. 2015025204. Additional low-interest loans from the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVEST) were approved in April and July. The project remains in the procurement phase, following the rejection of the first few rounds of bidding.

*developed by:* City of Reading... *designed by:* Rummel Klepper & Kahl LLP

#### Parking Lot Expansion Emmanuel's House Property

This plan proposed a 19-space surface parking lot and improvements to the adjacent alley at 1224 Carbon Street, to serve the parking needs of the church and vocational school uses of 1216 Carbon Street, a condition of the latter's approval by a May 14th Zoning Hearing Board decision (Appeal No. 2015-15). It had already been in use as an unfinished (gravel) parking area. The Commission reviewed and tabled the plan at the August 25th meeting and granted approval at the October 27th meeting (resolution no. 51-2015). The approval was reaffirmed at the February 2, 2016 meeting (resolution no. 5-2016) and recorded February 5, 2016, as Instrument No. 2016004197.

*developed by:* Emmanuel's House (Rev. Dr. Nilson Assis)... *designed by:* OTM LLC

#### RDG Warren Street Cell Site (Verizon Wireless)

This plan proposed a 122-foot telecommunications tower at 364 Blair Avenue, behind (the river side of) the Axis self-storage facility. The plan's name was explained as having been the starting point in the 'search ring' by the radio-frequency engineers. The Commission reviewed and tabled the final plan at the October 27th meeting, before approving it at the following November 24th meeting (resolution no. 54-2015). Additional revisions were received in early February 2016, for a final check ahead of the record plan preparation.

*developed by:* Cellco Partnership (Verizon Wireless)... *designed by:* CMC Engineering

### **Modifications**

Section 512.1.d of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code requires the Planning Commission to keep a written record of its action on any requests for modification/waiver of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO). Those waivers formally granted are 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 600-301.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 five (5) such applications reviewed in 2015, each of them proposing the addition of 'units' to existing residential buildings.

#### 845 North 8th Street (conversion)

On July 28th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's denial (resolution no. 37-2015) of the conversion, due to confusion over the information given in the application and the lack of floor plans. Additional information was later provided to the Planning Office. Council held its hearing August 3rd, and ultimately approved the additional rental unit while relieving the parking requirement (their Resolution No. 79-2015, August 24th), for a total of one commercial unit and three residential units, conditioned on the applicant consolidating the 841 and 845 North 8th Street parcels, owner occupancy of one of the dwelling units, delineation and assignment of the available parking, dumpster screening, a buffer strip and securing of other required permits.

#### 508 North 9th Street (conversion)

On July 28th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's approval (resolution no. 38-2015) of the one-to-three unit conversion, and on the same conditions recommended by the Zoning Office. The same property was the subject of a conditional-use application in 2006, under a previous owner, for even more units, and then denied by City Council. Council held this latest hearing September 8th, and ultimately approved the conversion (their Resolution No. 87-2015, September 28th), conditioned on a satisfactory building-code review and inspection, separate electric services, a landscaping plan and designated parking spaces.

#### 549 North 10th Street (conversion)

On July 28th, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's approval (resolution no. 39-2015) of the additional units, while noting their concern with the distance to the designated parking and its temporary lease arrangements. The same property was considered in a conditional-use application in 2010, when City Council denied the conversion due to testimony revealed to be conflicting with the application. Council held this latest hearing August 17th, and ultimately denied two of the four additional apartments sought, limiting the expansion to two new units on the second floor (their Resolution No. 81-2015, September 14th), and ordering the removal of a dwelling in the basement level. The decision further required inspections and permits from the Building & Trades and Property Maintenance divisions.

#### 922A Franklin Street (conversion)

On October 27th, and having already considered and recommended the denial of an earlier application at their December 23, 2014 meeting, the Planning Commission recognized a reduction in the number of proposed units and, considering it a more reasonable proposal, recommended City Council's approval (resolution no. 52-2015), while noting some questions about the means of achieving required separations and other building-code minimums. Council held its hearing November 4th, and ultimately approved the conversion (their Resolution No. 103-2015, November 23rd) for two additional residential units, for a total of three residential units and the one commercial. Conditions included the typical building-code reviews and inspections, a parking and driveway plan and landscaping.

#### 403 Elm Street (conversion)

On December 22nd, the Planning Commission recommended City Council's denial (resolution no. 59-2015) of the additional dwelling unit, citing errors and deficiencies within the application and the unpermitted construction. Council held its hearing January 6, 2016, and ultimately denied the conversion (their Resolution No. 12-2016, January 27, 2016), requiring the removal of the second unit within six months and inspections verifying a single-unit layout.

### **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 were four (4) such proposals considered by the Commission during 2015.

#### 'alternative energy' zoning ordinance amendment

At the January 27th and August 25th meetings, and having considered an early draft at the May 2014 meeting, the Planning Commission considered revisions to the Environmental Advisory Council's proposed amendment to regulate the installation and operation of alternative energy systems, such as solar, wind, water, geothermal and wood-fueled energy sources. By the time of the August version, references to 'wood-fired' systems had been removed due to realizations about meeting the minimum sizing and buffering requirements. The Commission offered its feedback, and went on to recommend City Council's enactment (resolution no. 43-2015). Council,

following the required public hearing on October 19th, passed the amendment (their Bill No. 58-2015, October 26th).

#### 'riparian buffer overlay' zoning ordinance amendment

At the January 27th and August 25th meetings, the Planning Commission considered the Environmental Advisory Council's drafts of a proposed amendment to require 15- to 35-foot riparian-buffer setbacks along waterways, for the environmental protection benefits. The Commission members advised clearer identification of the so-regulated waterways. Called an 'overlay district', the planning staff recommended that clear mapping accompany the amendment. The Commission recommended City Council's enactment (resolution no. 44-2015). Council, following the required public hearing on October 19th, passed the amendment (their Bill No. 57-2015, October 26th).

#### 'steep slope overlay' zoning ordinance amendment

Also at the January 27th and August 25th meetings, the Planning Commission considered drafts of a proposed amendment to regulate development of the City's topography, increasing restrictions on the steeper grades. The Commission sought a number of clarifications on its reach and implementation. The planning staff again criticized the lack of a definitive 'overlay' boundary, and warned of the possible unintended consequences for even small building additions and improvements. By the time of the August version, a draft map of the City's slopes was attached, if only for informational purposes. Other questions and concerns regarding the language, its formatting and fit within the body of the existing Zoning Ordinance, led the Commission to forego action pending further revisions from the Environmental Advisory Council.

#### 'conditional use procedures' zoning ordinance amendment

At the February 24th meeting, the Planning Commission considered a proposed amendment which would modify the application and hearing procedures for uses classified as conditional uses in the Zoning Ordinance schedules. Earlier legislative efforts toward an alternative, and more-expedient processing of such applications, especially those proposing additional residential units within existing buildings, had faltered in its implementation, continuing a backlog. The Commission recommended City Council's enactment, as a start, and recommended further amendments to clarify the roles and procedures (resolution no. 9-2015). Council held a public hearing on March 23rd and passed the measure, at their regular meeting later that evening (their Bill No. 13-2015, March 23rd).

## **REDEVELOPMENT**

#### Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (Reading Redevelopment Authority)

At the April 28th meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed what the Reading Redevelopment Authority called its 'Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program', proposing to establish a not-for-profit Authority subsidiary allowing them additional flexibility in their financing of their own projects. Provided for by Pennsylvania's Urban Redevelopment Law of 1945, the Berks the County Redevelopment Authority had created its own such subsidiary a couple years earlier. The Commission expressed some reservations, having only been provided a narrative that left unanswered many questions regarding its use and implementation, but ultimately resolved its support at the May 26th meeting (resolution no. 20-2015).

## **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 in 2015.

#### **ADOPTION OF MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** per Section 302.a.

At the June 23rd meeting, the Planning Commission hosted the 'public meeting' required before a comprehensive plan revision is forwarded to City Council. Rather than the Planning Commission itself, the draft plan was prepared by a hired consultant, and based on the recommendations of a 25-member steering committee which included the representation of two Commission members. The Commission offered its feedback and, at the July 28th meeting, indicated its support (resolution no. 41-2015).

**STREETS & PUBLIC GROUNDS** per Section 303.a.1

**Reading Bicycle Pump Track (Reading Bike Hub)**

At the July 28th meeting, the Planning Commission heard the presentation of the Reading Bike Hub – a nonprofit community bike shop & advocacy venture of the Redesign Reading Community Development Corporation – for what they’re calling the ‘Reading Bicycle Pump Track’, a rider-development trail system proposed for the vacant properties at 924, 926 and 928 Penn Street. Owned by the Reading Redevelopment Authority, who will continue to market the property for some future permanent use, the Pump Track is intended as a temporary occupancy of the otherwise vacant and unattended land, a concept successfully employed in other cities. It also represents a step in achieving a local ‘ride center’ recognition from the International Mountain Bicycling Association. The Commission was already somewhat familiar with the concept, having been presented with a similar plan for Pendora Park at the May 26th meeting. They voiced their support for the Penn Street option (resolution no. 34-2015) and received an update at the November 24th meeting.

**18th Ward Oakbrook Neighborhood Development and Economic Revitalization Project**

At the June 23rd meeting, the Planning Commission heard the presentation of the Redesign Reading Community Development Corporation, on behalf of a project steering committee, for some beautification and alternative transportation enhancements in the City’s Oakbrook neighborhood. The group was pursuing a planning grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PADCED) ‘Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program’, and needed the local planning agency’s position. The Commission offered its tentative support, with a request for more-specific proposals and more public participation (resolution no. 26-2015).

**Angelica Park parking lot reconstruction (Berks Conservancy)**

At the July 28th meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed some materials provided by the Berks Conservancy, proposing some replacement and repair of the deteriorating parking lot and other amenities in Angelica Park. The plan prefaced an anticipated expansion of the former boathouse building serving as the Conservancy’s ‘environmental exploration center’ since 2010. The Commission offered its support, making clear that a separate plan of the expansion would be required (resolution no. 36-2015). The land development plan for that 4785-square-foot office and educational building was recently submitted, on February 8, 2016, by ‘Berks Nature’, the Conservancy’s new identity unveiled September 18th.

**Paris Companies Healthcare Linen Services – transportation enhancement project**

At the August 25th meeting, the Planning Commission was apprised of a commercial laundry business’s interest in one of two ‘brownfield’ redevelopment sites within the City. The anticipated land development application was preceded by an application to the Commonwealth Financing Authority’s ‘Multimodal Transportation Fund’ for some on-site transportation amenities. The Commission communicated its support (resolution no. 45-2015), but has yet to receive plans for the operation said to already have a contract with the Reading Health System.

**100 block of North 2nd Street – transportation improvements (Wyomissing Foundation)**

At the September 22nd and October 27th meetings, the Planning Commission considered a proposal to reduce the segment of North 2nd Street between Washington Street and Penn Street by one of its existing four lanes, and install other ‘traffic calming’ features in the approach to the Penn Street Bridge. The width reduction would provide for some on-street parking in the block and sidewalk corner ‘bump outs’ facilitating easier pedestrian crossings. The Commission declined to take a formal position, citing concerns and unanswered questions in the project’s relation to other proposals for the area, some conceptual and others committed, including: the Reading Area Community College’s suggested street and traffic changes to the south of the Penn Street intersection, the City’s own plans for crosswalks at the 2nd Street and Penn intersection, and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation’s planned rehabilitation of the Bridge itself.

**PUBLIC STRUCTURES** per Section 303.a.2

No proposals concerning the ‘the location, erection, demolition, removal or sale’ of a public structure were presented in 2015.

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

Refer to the “Zoning Ordinance Amendments/Zoning Map Changes” section, under the ZONING heading. No capital improvements budget was presented to the Planning Commission in 2015.

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

### **Sewage Treatment Plant – Influent Screen Replacement (Wyomissing Valley Authority)**

At the January 27th meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed information provided by the Municipal Authority for improvements to the ‘headworks’ screening and grinding processes in the sewage treatment facility at 601 and 701 Old Wyomissing Road. The outwardly-visible development was limited to a new machine, spanning between the openings of two existing buildings. The Commission offered its support toward whatever permitting and funding applications required it (resolution no. 2-2015).

### **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) – overview presentation**

While not involving any specific ‘construction, extension or abandonment of any sewer line’, the Planning Commission, at the May 26th meeting, heard a presentation from the Berks County Conservation District or, more specifically, the County’s MS4 Steering Committee, regarding the current regulations and requirements for the management of stormwater in municipal separate storm sewer systems. The presentation was one of many in a County outreach and education effort for affected municipalities. No formal action was either requested or taken.

## **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 (Resolution No. 115-2012, October 8, 2012)
- Wayne Jonas Bealer, Vice Chairman – reappointed to the Commission with a term ending April 1, 2018 (Resolution 76-2014, June 23rd)
- Michael E. Lauter, Secretary – reappointed to the Commission with a term ending April 1, 2013 (Resolution No. 76-2011, May 9, 2011)
- William F. Cinfici, Assistant Secretary – appointed to the Commission with a term ending April 1, 2016 (Resolution No. 117-2014, October 27th)

The officer positions were assigned by an ‘election’ at the May 26th meeting (resolution no. 23-2015), in accord with Section 207 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

### **Community Involvement**

Ermete Raffaelli serves on the board of directors at the South Mountain YMCA. Mr. Raffaelli also serves as the President of Reading Hose Company No. 1 and on the board of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Pennsylvania. He was a member of the comprehensive plan steering committee.

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

Michael Lauter serves as the Executive Director of the Centre Park Historic District Inc. He was also a member comprehensive plan steering committee

William Cinfici serves on the board of the Italian-American Cultural Center of Pennsylvania.

### **2016 PROJECTIONS**

The schedule of the next year’s regular monthly meetings was advertised in the *Reading Eagle* newspaper, on December 16th and December 23rd, continuing with the same ‘fourth Tuesday’ pattern established in 2009.

As of the date of this report, the projects under active consideration and not already summarized elsewhere within this report (in other words, those first submitted in 2016), include plans for a self-storage-unit facility at 245 West Greenwich Street, in place of an existing car wash ('Egan Storage'), building additions and a grass-to-artificial turf conversion of the adjacent stadium at 955 East Wyomissing Boulevard (Berks Catholic's 'Building Addition-Stadium Upgrades') and a new office and environmental education building for the recently-renamed Berks Nature – formerly the Berks Conservancy – at 575 St. Bernardine Street (the 'Nature Place at Angelica Creek Park').

The Planning Office continues to schedule the Thursday-morning 'OneStopShop' appointments – an advisory forum offered since early 2006, giving developers an opportunity to consult directly with zoning, planning and building-code officials, and simultaneously – in an attempt to provide early direction and promote better 'first time' applications.

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The Planning Commission will continue to administer the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO), and perform those other functions delegated it by law, ordinance and request.

**City of Reading Planning Commission  
2015 Activity Summary**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>RES#</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>PLAN BOOK</u>
Jan. 27	n/a	Super Natural Produce - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0	
Jan. 27	1-2015	Pendora Park Olivet Boys & Girls Club - preliminary land development plan	agreed to review period extension, 4-0	
Jan. 27	n/a	Homes at Riverside - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0	
Jan. 27	2-2015	\$303.a.4 review-Sewage Treatment Plant - Influent Screen Replacement (Wyomissing Valle	affirmed Comprehensive Plan consistency, 4-0	
Jan. 27	n/a	\$609.c review-'alternative energy' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisory Cou	heard the presentation, and offered comments	
Jan. 27	n/a	\$609.c review-'riparian buffer overlay' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisor	heard the presentation, and offered comments	
Jan. 27	n/a	\$609.c review-'steep slope overlay' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisory Co	heard the presentation, and offered comments	
Jan. 27	3-2015	review the draft December 23, 2014 meeting minutes	approved the December 23rd minutes, 4-0	
Feb. 24	4-2015	<b>Super Natural Produce - final land development plan</b>	approved the final plan, 3-0	<b>(instrument x)</b>
Feb. 24	5-2015	Homes at Riverside - final land development plan	denied the final plan, 1-2	
Feb. 24	6-2015	<b>Homes at Riverside - final land development plan</b>	approved the final plan, 2-1	<b>2015028318</b>
Feb. 24	7-2015	Pendora Park Olivet Boys & Girls Club - preliminary land development plan	approved the preliminary plan, 3-0	
Feb. 24	8-2015	<b>Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area - parking lot land development plan</b>	approved the parking plan, 3-0	<b>(instrument x)</b>
Feb. 24	9-2015	\$609.c review-'conditional use procedures' zoning ordinance amendment	made recommendation to City Council, 3-0	
Feb. 24	10-2015	review the draft 2014 Planning Commission Annual Report	approved the 2014 Annual Report, 3-0	
Feb. 24	11-2015	review the draft January 27, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the January 27th minutes, 3-0	
Feb. 24	12-2015	\$513.a approval reaffirmation-Mimmo's Restaurant Additions	reaffirmed final plan approval, 3-0	2015015732
Mar. 24	13-2015	<b>Pendora Park Olivet Boys &amp; Girls Club - final land development plan</b>	approved the final plan, 4-0	<b>2015025922</b>
Mar. 24	14-2015	<b>DoubleTree Hotel Project - revision-to-record land development plan</b>	approved the revision plan, 4-0	<b>2016005547</b>
Mar. 24	15-2015	Tank Storage Addition-Building 6 (IFS Industries Inc.) - sketch land development plan	waived further review, 4-0	
Mar. 24	n/a	Lentz Milling Company - sketch land development plan	heard the staff presentation	
Mar. 24	n/a	Arrival Court at Francis Hall (Alvernia University) - parking lot land development plan	heard the staff presentation	
Mar. 24	16-2015	review the draft February 24, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the February 24th minutes, 4-0	
Apr. 28	17-2015	Arrival Court at Francis Hall (Alvernia University) - parking lot land development plan	waived further review, 4-0	
Apr. 28	n/a	Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (Reading Redevelopment Author	heard the Authority's presentation	
Apr. 28	18-2015	review the draft March 24, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the March 24th minutes, 4-0	
May 26	n/a	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) - overview presentation	heard the Conservation District's presentation	
May 26	19-2015	Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (Reading Redevelopment Author	resolved no recommendation, 2-2	
May 26	20-2015	Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (Reading Redevelopment Author	recommended Authority's approval, 3-1	
May 26	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-Pendora Park Pump Track (Reading Bike Hub)	not formally presented, took public comment	
May 26	21-2015	Proposed Material Silos (Brentwood Industries) - sketch land development plan	waived further review, 4-0	
May 26	22-2015	\$513.a approval reaffirmation-Homes at Riverside	reaffirmed final plan approval, 4-0	2015028318
May 26	23-2015	\$207 election-2015 Planning Commission office holders	elected the proposed slate, 4-0	
May 26	24-2015	review the draft April 28, 2014 meeting minutes	approved the April 28th minutes, 4-0	

**City of Reading Planning Commission  
2015 Activity Summary**

Jun. 23	n/a	Aramark Parking Lot - parking lot land development plan	tabled the parking plan, 4-0
Jun. 23	25-2015	Plastic Compounding Project (Phoenix Technology Division) - sketch land development plan	waived partial review, 3-1
Jun. 23	n/a	Piazza Acura Building Addition - sketch subdivision and land development plan	heard sketch presentation
Jun. 23	n/a	§302.a review-draft comprehensive plan public meeting	heard consultant's presentation, offered comments
Jun. 23	26-2015	§303.a.1 review-18th Ward Oakbrook Neighborhood Development and Economic Revitalization	affirmed Comprehensive Plan consistency, 3-1
Jun. 23	27-2015	§513.a approval reaffirmation-Fritz Island WWTP Facilities Upgrade Project	reaffirmed final plan approval, 4-0      2015025204
Jun. 23	28-2015	§513.a approval reaffirmation-Super Natural Produce	reaffirmed final plan approval, 4-0      (instrument x)
Jun. 23	29-2015	position regarding the plan review and meeting agenda deadlines	authorized draft communication, 4-0
Jun. 23	30-2015	§513.a approval reaffirmation-Jet Set Restaurant Parking Area	reaffirmed parking plan approval, 4-0      (instrument x)
Jun. 23	31-2015	§513.a approval reaffirmation-Pendora Park Olivet Boys & Girls Club	reaffirmed final plan approval, 4-0      2015025922
Jun. 23	32-2015	review the draft May 26, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the May 26th minutes, 4-0
Jul. 28	n/a	3150 S.F. Building Addition (Piazza Acura) - final subdivision and land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0
Jul. 28	n/a	Hydrojet, Inc. - revision-to-record land development plan	tabled the revision plan, 4-0
Jul. 28	33-2015	<b>Aramark Parking Lot - parking lot land development plan</b>	approved the parking plan, 3-0      (instrument x)
Jul. 28	34-2015	§303.a.1 review-Reading Bicycle Pump Track (Reading Bike Hub)	affirmed Comprehensive Plan consistency, 4-0
Jul. 28	35-2015	117 Marion Street - sketch parking lot plan*	waived further review, 4-0
Jul. 28	36-2015	§303.a.1 review-the Angelica Park parking lot reconstruction (Berks Conservancy)	affirmed Comprehensive Plan consistency, 4-0
Jul. 28	37-2015	§603.c.2 conditional use review-845 North 8th Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's denial, 4-0
Jul. 28	38-2015	§603.c.2 conditional use review-508 North 9th Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's approval, 4-0
Jul. 28	39-2015	§603.c.2 conditional use review-549 North 10th Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's approval, 4-0
Jul. 28	40-2015	§513.a approval reaffirmation-DoubleTree Hotel Project	reaffirmed revision plan approval, 4-0      2016005547
Jul. 28	41-2015	§302.a review-draft comprehensive plan public meeting	offered City Council recommendations, 4-0
Jul. 28	42-2015	review the draft June 23, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the June 23rd minutes, 4-0
Aug. 25	n/a	Parking Lot Expansion Emmanuel's House Property - parking lot land development plan	tabled the parking plan, 4-0
Aug. 25	n/a	Hydrojet, Inc. - revision-to-record land development plan	tabled the revision plan, 4-0
Aug. 25	43-2015	§609.c review-'alternative energy' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisory Commission)	recommended City Council's adoption, 4-0
Aug. 25	44-2015	§609.c review-'riparian buffer overlay' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisory Commission)	recommended City Council's adoption, 4-0
Aug. 25	n/a	§609.c review-'steep slope overlay' zoning ordinance amendment (Environmental Advisory Commission)	heard the presentation, and offered comments
Aug. 25	45-2015	§303.a.1 review-Paris Companies Healthcare Linen Services - transportation enhancement plan	affirmed Comprehensive Plan consistency, 4-0
Aug. 25	46-2015	review the draft July 28, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the July 28th minutes, 4-0
Sep. 22	n/a	Warren Street Dunkin Donuts - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0
Sep. 22	47-2015	<b>Hydrojet, Inc. - revision-to-record land development plan</b>	approved the revision plan, 4-0      (instrument x)
Sep. 22	n/a	S. 6th Street Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	tabled the preliminary plan, 4-0
Sep. 22	n/a	LGN: Lancaster Ave. Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	tabled the preliminary plan, 4-0
Sep. 22	n/a	§303.a.1 review-transportation improvements, 100 block of North 2nd Street (Wyomissing)	heard the presentation, and offered comments
Sep. 22	48-2015	§508.3 agreement to extension-3150 S.F. Building Addition at 1001 Lancaster Avenue	agreed to review period extension, 4-0

**City of Reading Planning Commission  
2015 Activity Summary**

Sep. 22	49-2015	\$508.3 agreement to extension-Parking Lot Expansion Emmanuel's House Property	agreed to review period extension, 4-0
Sep. 22	50-2015	review the draft August 25, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the August 25th minutes, 4-0
Oct. 27	51-2015	<b>Parking Lot Expansion Emmanuel's House Property - parking lot land development plan</b>	approved the parking plan, 4-0 <b>2016004197</b>
Oct. 27	n/a	RDG Warren Street Cell Site (Verizon Wireless) - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0
Oct. 27	n/a	S. 6th Street Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	tabled the preliminary plan, 4-0
Oct. 27	n/a	LGN: Lancaster Ave. Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	tabled the preliminary plan, 4-0
Oct. 27	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-transportation improvements, 100 block of North 2nd Street (Wyomissing)	discussed, and offered comments
Oct. 27	52-2015	\$603.c.2 conditional use review-922A Franklin Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's approval, 4-0
Oct. 27	53-2015	review the draft September 22, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the September 22nd minutes, 4-0
Nov. 4	54-2015	S. 6th Street Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	approved the preliminary plan, 4-0
Nov. 4	55-2015	LGN: Lancaster Ave. Family Dollar - preliminary land development plan	approved the preliminary plan, 4-0
Nov. 24	n/a	S. 6th Street Family Dollar - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 3-1
Nov. 24	n/a	LGN: Lancaster Ave. Family Dollar - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 3-1
Nov. 24	56-2015	<b>RDG Warren Street Cell Site (Verizon Wireless) - final land development plan</b>	approved the final plan, 3-1 <b>(instrument x)</b>
Nov. 24	n/a	\$303.a.1 review-Reading Bicycle Pump Track (Reading Bike Hub)	heard the presentation, and offered comments
Nov. 24	57-2015	\$513.a approval reaffirmation-Aramark Parking Lot	reaffirmed final plan approval, 4-0 <b>(instrument x)</b>
Nov. 24	58-2015	review the draft October 27, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the October 27th minutes, 4-0
Dec. 22	n/a	Russell Plywood Building Addition - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0
Dec. 22	n/a	S. 6th Street Family Dollar - final land development plan	tabled the final plan, 4-0
Dec. 22	59-2015	\$603.c.2 conditional use review-403 Elm Street (conversion)	recommended City Council's denial, 4-0
Dec. 22	60-2015	\$513.a approval reaffirmation-DoubleTree Hotel Project	reaffirmed revision plan approval, 4-0 <b>2016005547</b>
Dec. 22	61-2015	\$513.a approval reaffirmation-Hydrojet, Inc.	reaffirmed revision plan approval, 4-0 <b>(instrument x)</b>
Dec. 22	62-2015	review the draft November 4, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the November 4th minutes, 4-0
Dec. 22	63-2015	review the draft November 24, 2015 meeting minutes	approved the November 24th minutes, 4-0
Dec. 22	64-2015	advertisement-the 2016 Planning Commission regular meeting dates	approved the 2016 meeting dates advertised, 4-0
Dec. 22	65-2015	\$508.3 agreement to extension-3150 S.F. Building Addition at 1001 Lancaster Avenue	agreed to review period extension, 4-0

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

instrument x = recording required

\* = titled '1200 Center Avenue' by the design professional