

**Minutes**  
**Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission**  
**November 26, 2013 at 7:00 pm**

**Members present:**

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman  
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman  
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary

**Staff present:**

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office

**Others present:**

Kenneth V. Farrall, CMC Engineering  
Tod W. Bettenhausen, Eagle River Consulting Inc.  
Christopher H. Schubert, Riley Riper Hollin & Colagreco PC  
Stephen H. Bensinger, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.  
Albert R. Boscov, Our City-Reading Inc.  
Garreth Donly, Our City-Reading Inc.  
Carole Duran, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the November meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the November 26th agenda as presented. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the November agenda.

**Subdivision and Land Development:**

RDG North Reading Cell Site – final land development plan [0:00.22]

Mr. Farrall gave a brief recapitulation of the previous consideration at the September meeting, and the progress since. He reported that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation determined the use of the driveway to be covered under an existing occupancy permit. The Berks County Conservation District had approved the erosion controls. In response to the last Planning Office review, he distributed ‘half sets’ of the plan with his revisions highlighted. He indicated the requested landscaping added, and placed just outside the driveway’s clear-sight triangle. He thought the plan eligible for a final approval, and confirmed that the changes to the grading plan reflect the comments of the Conservation District. Mr. Lauter offered his thanks and satisfaction with the landscaping effort. The transition to building permitting was briefly discussed.

On Mr. Miller’s recommendation, Mr. Lauter moved to grant final plan approval, conditioned on the revised plans satisfying the latest Planning Office review. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the RDG North Reading Cell Site final plan.

**Resolution #35-2013**

315 Pear Street Subdivision – final subdivision plan [0:08.08]

Mr. Bensinger recalled the presentation at the October meeting, and the Commission’s questions about the configurations of the subdivisions and annexations. He said his client prefers the original arrangement proposed for the various reasons set forth in a letter provided. He said the plans had been revised as directed by the Planning Office review, and sought final plan approval. He added that the County Planning Commission had issued a review without substantive comments. Mr. Miller concurred with that assessment, and intended to verify the corrections. Referring to the letter, Mr. Lauter took issue with the supposition that the other neighboring property owners should have known to contact Our City-Reading with their interest. He felt that dividing the vacant parcel in-line with the neighboring lot lines ‘made more sense’, but signaled his approval as long as the intended grantees understood their responsibilities.

Mr. Burket moved to grant final plan approval. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted 2 to 1 to approve the 315 Pear Street Subdivision final plan, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent. Mr. Boscov spoke to the challenge of handling abandoned properties.

**Resolution #36-2013**

Weigh-Up Room Addition (AkzoNobel) – sketch land development plan [0:14.36]

Mr. Miller presented a plan for an 812-square-foot addition to the powder-coating facility at 1156 Clarion Street. He mentioned their presentation at the November 14th ‘OneStopShop’ meeting, and characterized the

expansion as one which would otherwise likely go unnoticed; it is proposed on the 'railroad side' of the existing facility, and so screened from the neighboring residential area. Its purpose is to isolate a potentially hazardous stage of the process – the inclusion of aluminum powder – from the rest of the operation, and in a building meeting or exceeding the building code and industry standards. He explained that the addition will require a minimum of grading, and won't require separate utility connections. He offered to present the plan on the applicant's behalf and recommend a 'small projects' waiver, seeking a basic record of the project and the Planning Commission's consideration in return.

Mr. Lauter moved to waive further land development review, in exchange for a set of the latest site plan as it may be further revised until the building permit approval. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to waive 'land development' for AkzoNobel's Weigh-Up Room Addition project, based on the Commission's resolution of March 20, 1998 (No. 8-98) exempting certain building additions based on size and impact.

**Resolution #37-2013**

#### **Other business:**

##### §609.c review-zoning map amendment, rezoning 15 Prospect Avenue from R2 to CH [0:19.19]

Mr. Miller explained that the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code affords the Planning Commission an opportunity to make recommendations to City Council regarding any proposed zoning change. He expected a public hearing to be scheduled sometime in January. Mr. Raffaelli discussed the history of the property, its relation to 290 Morgantown Road (Mimmo's Ristorante), and what was *approved* versus what was *constructed*. He mentioned the City's intermittent enforcement efforts. Mr. Miller mentioned building code issues; different buildings interfacing across different parcels and different uses. He was unclear of the whole back story, but considered the petition to involve 'spot zoning', and advised against it. He didn't see anything in the application to merit a map change. Mr. Lauter wondered what circumstances had changed since the last consideration.

Mr. Burket moved to recommend City Council deny the zoning change. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to discourage the zoning map change for 15 Prospect Avenue.

**Resolution #38-2013**

A brief discussion followed about the required 'neighborhood meeting', and its part in the zoning amendment process.

##### §603.c.2 conditional use review-34 North 6th Street (banquet hall) [0:34.31]

Mr. Miller noted that the Zoning Ordinance didn't specify much in terms of supplemental regulations for 'banquet halls', characterizing his comments as a 'comprehensive planning' perspective. Mr. Raffaelli noted the lack of any neighboring residential concerns. Asked about the leasing arrangement, and any potential detriment to the future use of the property, Mr. Miller said he understood the change to be one of *use* and hours of operation, rather than *construction* or physical alteration. He added that lessees cannot apply for any zoning permit without the written authorization from the record owner.

Mr. Burket moved to recommend approval of a banquet hall at 34 North 6th Street. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward that recommendation for City Council's consideration at a hearing scheduled for December 17th.

**Resolution #39-2013**

##### §603.c.2 conditional use review-918 Lancaster Avenue (conversion) [0:39.01]

Seeking to convert a former insurance office to a residential apartment, Mr. Miller noted the Commercial-Highway (CH) zoning, and the Ordinance's provisions for residential uses therein. Mr. Lauter recognized the obvious residential character of the building itself, and the many others along the Lancaster Avenue corridor.

Mr. Burket moved to recommend approval of the apartment conversion at 918 Lancaster Avenue. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward that recommendation for City Council's consideration at a hearing scheduled for December 17th.

**Resolution #40-2013**

##### review the draft October 22, 2013 meeting minutes [0:41.37]

Mr. Lauter moved to accept the October meeting minutes, as presented, subject to any forthcoming grammatical corrections. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the October 22nd meeting minutes.

**Resolution #41-2013**

Mr. Raffaelli reminded the members of the holiday conflict with the normal meeting date in December. Mr. Miller confirmed that they had advertised it for the 'third Tuesday' (December 17th) at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the November meeting. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the November 26th meeting. - 7:45p