

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
September 25, 2012 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Todd M. Jaeger, Department of Fire and Rescue Services

Others present:

Trisha Qualio, Kutztown University
Jacob Wallace, Kutztown University
David S. Johnson, Reading Eagle Company

In Chairman Raffaelli's absence, Vice Chairman Burket called the September meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Miller made note of an editing error, and suggested revising the schedule to allow the Fire Marshal's presentation first.

§303.a.2 review-City Park 'September 11th' memorial (Department of Fire and Rescue Services) [0:00.35]

Fire Marshal Jaeger thanked the Commission for its accommodation, and briefly explained the background of the City's attempt to memorialize the September 11, 2001 emergency response to the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center in New York City. A local ceremony has been held every year since the attacks. A tree, planted in 2003 in memory of the 343 firefighters killed, was damaged in the October 31, 2011 snow storm. It was recently replaced for this year's ceremony and, as a part of that process, Mr. Jaeger said he first learned of the extent of the review process. One issue with the previous tree was its anonymity, now to be solved by a commemorative plaque and seating area. He realized the need to make it theft- and vandal-proof. He said they were ready to install that when they found out about the Planning Commission and historic preservation reviews. An American Elm has since been planted; the rest temporarily installed for the ceremony, then removed to the Public Works building. Mr. Jaeger distributed some location maps, tried to illustrate the relation to other park monuments, and suggested there was sufficient illumination from an existing path light. A marker stone and plaque will explain the tree's purpose. It and its matching benches will be installed on permanent footers. A brick path, with mulched and landscaped borders, is also planned.

By this time, Mr. Raffaelli had arrived, and recalled some history of the memorials in the park: one monument after World War I was alone for over 40 years until the Vietnam War era, and the beginning of a monument proliferation. Some families installed their own personal memorial stones, without any formal applications or approvals. Later, as other wars and groups were memorialized with larger installations, Fritz Rothermel, a former city planner, attempted to design a 'grove' to organize and focus the monuments. Mr. Raffaelli noted that several administration officials either don't understand the process or willfully ignore it. Mr. Miller said there isn't a lot of guidance on what must be reviewed by the Planning Commission, in terms of scope, contrasting individual tree plantings to permanent hardscape installations. Mr. Raffaelli noted the close proximity to the memorial grove. He felt it raised certain questions: whether future installations should be confined to the grove, or allowed to spread, if a numerical limit should be set, and how the inevitable future requests should be considered. He wondered if they'd consulted an architect in their design. Mr. Miller assumed the project budget didn't allow for it. Mr. Jaeger agreed, and thanked the City Arborist for his support and direction. He said he inherited the responsibility for planning the annual event when he took over as Fire Marshal. Asked about a placement near the firefighters' memorial, Mr. Jaeger said there was no space for it, and noted that many of those attending the ceremony are 'on-call' at the time (necessitating the ready staging of their vehicles). He said the design of the path, its landscaping and some other finishing touches had yet to be finalized. Sensing some changes to come, Mr. Lauter suggested they be presented. Mr. Jaeger said they were hoping to clear the review hurdles first.

Asked about an action, Mr. Miller clarified that it wasn't the Commission's role to *approve* the project, but to offer recommendations on design. As the design had been all but completed, he preferred the Commission didn't issue a formal resolution. The Commission members and Mr. Jaeger thanked each other for the time and presentation.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion – final land development plan [0:43.50]

Mr. Miller, by the prior agreement of the Commission members, presented the revised land development plan. It had been tabled at the August meeting based on a few technicalities, namely the County Planning Commission's review and some missing 'OneCall' utility information. He reported the necessary corrections had been made, and the certifications completed. He said nothing changed about the footprint or façade design, and that demolition activity had started. He recommended final plan approval, with no conditions other than its recording.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the final land development plan for the "Reading Plaza Supermarket Expansion". Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final Reading Plaza plan.

Resolution #28-2012

Other business:

review the draft August 28, 2012 meeting minutes [0:47.03]

Mr. Burket moved to accept the August meeting minutes, as presented. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the August 28th meeting minutes.

Resolution #29-2012

Mr. Miller reminded the Commission that they needed to sign the 'Reading Plaza' plan. He mentioned an expected plan for a new wireless tower on the Yeager Supply property at North 6th and Spring Streets, purportedly to resolve a 'dead zone' in the area. The members discussed its possible interference with the lumber company's driveway/curb cut, which had been installed to preserve access in case a current arrangement and route across the (Norfolk Southern) railroad property is ever eliminated. Mr. Lauter mentioned some of the other wireless towers in the vicinity, and suggested 'co-location' as an alternative to another tower. Mr. Miller acknowledged that the Zoning Ordinance requires applicants to first prove why that isn't feasible, but wondered how the City would verify or contest such findings. He said the cooperation of the Zoning Hearing Board, in setting some conditions on an approval, would give the Commission more opportunity to influence the landscaping and screening.

Mr. Raffaelli shared an invitation to an upcoming "municipal law forum" sponsored by Kozloff Stoudt PC.

Mr. Miller recognized the guests: students from Kutztown University on a class assignment.

On Mr. Lauter's motion, and Mr. Burket's second, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the September 25th meeting. – 8:03p