Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
April 8, 2008 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
David N. Reppert, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary
Edmund Palka
Frederic dep Rothermel, Jr.

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Michelle R. Mayfield, Department of Law
Charles M. Jones, Department of Public Works
William H. Rehr, III, Department of Fire & Rescue Services
Ronald E. Wentzel, Department of Fire & Rescue Services

Others present:

Michael D. Hartman, McCarthy Engineering Associates, PC
Andrew L. Hicks, Tripoint Properties, Inc.
William J. Vitale, Designworks Architects, PC
Mark J. Link, John W. Hoffert, PLS, Ltd.
Marcus R. Fox, Fairview Christian School
David Burkholder, Burkholder Buildings
Peter C. Eisenbrown, Ludgate Engineering Corporation
Barry Sawtelle, Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity, Inc.
Scott T. Miller, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.
Edward M. Mangold, KCBA Architects
Stephen H. Bensinger, Stackhouse Bensinger Inc.
Louis Masciotti, Louis Masciotti Architect
William G. McShane, Willow Holdings, Inc.
Eric G. Burkey, Burkey Construction Company
Eric M. Mountz, Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.
Edward V. Giannasca, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
Edward V. Giannasca, II, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
Alicia F. Giannasca, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
James Burdge, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
Christopher Hickey, Giannasca Development Group, LLC
Richard J. McDougall, Burkey Construction Company
Thomas M. McMahon, City Mayor
Vaughn D. Spencer, City Council President
Christopher J. Fell, United Corrstack, LLC
Jim Morgan, United Corrstack, LLC
Charles Feghali, United Corrstack, LLC
David F. Stauffer, United Corrstack, LLC
David McKeel, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the April 8th meeting to order. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the agenda. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept their April agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for **Barley Square**, demolition of the former Garden State Tanning plant for a proposed redevelopment of 60 apartments and first-floor retail spaces on those parcels known as 125 South Second and 221 Chestnut Street, and a manufacturing space on that parcel known as 122 South Third Street. [0:01.00]

Mr. Hartman reported progress on the design. He said there weren't many remaining concerns with the plat, and requested final approval of subdivision and the Lot #2 land developments. He also suggested a

recommendation to City Council regarding the proposed widening and improvements for Grape Street, and the direction change proposed for Chestnut Street, the required traffic impact and signalization studies forthcoming.

Asked about outstanding issues, Mr. Miller asked that clear disclaimers be noted on the record plan, until the land development plans on Lot #1 and traffic changes to Chestnut Street are finalized. He repeated the need for a formal communication to City Council regarding the Grape Street modifications, at least. He reported the Shade Tree Commission's recognition of Tripoint's attention to landscaping plan suggestions.

Asked for a comparison of the building's eastern and western façades, Mr. Hicks presented renderings, indicating a similar effect, except for the grade-level entrances on the east.

Mr. Bealer wondered if there were concerns about approving the plan ahead of City Council's action on the Grape Street modifications. Mr. Jones expressed his consent to the Grape and Chestnut Street changes alike, provided that any improvements found necessary are implemented at the developer's expense. He felt any approval should be conditioned on City Council's formal action by ordinance.

Mr. Raffaelli complimented the quality, mixed-use proposal. Mr. Bealer moved to recommend City Council's adoption of an ordinance allowing the widening of Grape Street[1], finding no inconsistency between it and the objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission, pursuant to §303.a.1 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, agreed unanimously to forward the recommendation to widen Grape Street.

Resolution #29-2008

Mr. Reppert moved to grant approval to the final plan, conditioned on: their satisfying the remaining comments of the Planning Office and Department of Public Works review memoranda, notes satisfactorily detailing the limits of this first phase approval, City Council's approval of the Grape Street modifications[1], and completion of the sidewalk along the length of their Grape Street frontage. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally-approve the final plan for Barley Square.

Resolution #30-2008

Other business:

minutes-March 11, 2008 Planning Commission meeting [0:15.30]

Mr. Rothermel asked for clarification of some statements made with regard to the DoubleTree Hotel design. Mr. Rothermel then moved to approve the March 11th minutes, as amended. Mr. Palka seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the amended March 11, 2008 meeting minutes.

Resolution #31-2008

Mr. Bealer reported on the Blighted Property Review Committee's plan to meet in May with its peer organizations from Allentown and Harrisburg, hoping to benefit from their experiences and case studies. He said Harrisburg's board had been in-place since the mid-1970s. He also mentioned having trained, with some of the other Committee members, on the City's mapping software, for its potential aid in tracking the 1400-some properties identified as blighted to the Committee.

Mr. Rothermel took issue with the *Reading Eagle's* recent characterization (March 29, 2008) of the history of planning for City Park, or more-specifically, a lack thereof. He recalled numerous plans, including one in 1980, directly influencing improvements in the Park. He alluded to a broader role of the Planning Commission at the time, and thought the article should have been more-thoroughly researched. He complimented the scope of the recently-adopted Simone Collins plan.

Subdivision and Land Development: (continued)

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for the **Berks County Community Foundation – Headquarters and Community Conference Center**, an office headquarters and conference center proposed for those parcels known as 33-37 Thorn, 28-34 North Third and 237 Court Streets. [0:23.44]

Mr. Vitale apologized for lacking a comprehensive presentation, noting the untimely sickness of the project

[1] On April 28, 2008, City Council approved the Grape Street modifications by its Bill No. 31-2008.

engineer. He said the final drawings had been submitted, addressing those comments previously-raised. He said the layout hadn't changed, except for a 3-foot buffer strip, added to screen the off-street parking area from Court Street, and to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator who issued a letter to that effect. He said they plan to reuse two existing light standards, with cut-off measures added. He recalled the waiver of the Thorn Street sidewalk requirement, granted at the March 11th meeting. He proposed a 6-foot shadowbox fence to screen the parking area from properties north. He characterized the remaining issues as administrative.

Mr. Miller noted their request for waivers of the solid waste planning details required, while they make arrangements with haulers. He thought it "a delay" more than a waiver, doubting the Community Foundation would cause a solid waste management concern.

Mr. Raffaelli recalled the extensive presentation offered in the preliminary stage. Mr. Rothermel asked about the Department of Public Works input. Mr. Miller mentioned the need for: curb cut permits, handicapped-accessible curb ramps, and a trench drain at the driveway opening. He said the Community Foundation had already agreed to provide a final landscape plan from the landscape architect. He noted some Shade Tree Commission concerns with the size and rooting characteristics of those varieties proposed for the sidewalk pits, but called the current plan sufficient for approval purposes. He said, with those few exceptions, the Shade Tree Commission was very complimentary of the landscaping designs.

Mr. Bealer moved to modify the solid waste planning requirements of §§22-402.5.G and -403.2.I, in order to allow the Community Foundation to further explore its disposal/recycling options. Mr. Rothermel seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to temporarily-waive §§22-402.5.G and -403.2.I.

Resolution #32-2008

Mr. Rothermel moved to approve the final plan, conditioned on the updated zoning information, satisfying the Department of Public Works concerns, provision of a final landscaping plan, and submission of municipal improvements agreement. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally-approve the final plan for the Berks County Community Foundation – Headquarters and Community Conference Center.

Resolution #33-2008

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for the **Fairview School Subdivision**, an annexation from that parcel known as 421 South 13th Street to that parcel known as 410 South 14th Street, and the construction of a recreational/multi-purpose building thereon. [0:37.08]

Mr. Link summarized the scope of the project; annexation of the two Dolan-owned parcels, and construction of an 80- by 90-foot multi-purpose building. He anticipated no increase in the current 150-student enrollment. He mentioned having received the latest Planning Office review, and responding in-turn with an updated plan. He said the Department of Public Works was now satisfied with stormwater planning, and mentioned the Conservation District's approval of the erosion and sedimentation controls as the last outstanding design issue.

Pastor Fox updated the Commission on the color palette; now a grey tone, as opposed to the lighter color previously proposed.

Mr. Miller verified that the approval of the erosion and sedimentation control plan, and some miscellaneous notes and certifications, were the extent of the remaining requirements. He said he would have to check the latest corrections prior to releasing any endorsed sets for record. He said he had no objection to a conditional approval. Ms. Mayfield indicated that no municipal improvements agreement was necessary.

Mr. Raffaelli thanked the Fairview School for its responsiveness to the Commission's suggestions on color.

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the final plan, conditioned on satisfying the remaining Planning Office comments. Mr. Palka seconded. Mr. Link reported that Renae Wood, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, had indicated that no further sewer planning was required. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the final plan for the Fairview School Subdivision

Resolution #34-2008

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for **Habitat for Humanity – 1449 Monroe Street**, a subdivision and four attached dwellings proposed for that parcel known as 1449 Monroe Street. [0:49.17]

Mr. Eisenbrown recalled the previous presentations, and said they have since worked diligently to address the Planning Office concerns. He alluded to an update emailed to the Planning Office earlier that day. Mr. Miller acknowledged receiving it, but yet to read its attachments. Mr. Eisenbrown felt he could work out the details of the municipal improvements agreement with the Department of Public Works. Ms. Mayfield suggested that if they anticipated delays in the paving and landscaping installations, as was the experience with the "1428/1430 Monroe

Street" in early 2007, they consider that in their improvements agreement.

Mr. Rothermel moved to approve the final plan, subject to execution of a municipal improvements agreement, and addressing the remaining points of the Planning Office review. Mr. Reppert seconded. And the Commission voted, 5 yeas to 1 nay, to conditionally-approve the final plan for Habitat's 1449 Monroe Street subdivision, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #35-2008

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for **Habitat for Humanity – 1131-1135 Luzerne Street**, a subdivision and four semi-attached dwellings proposed for those parcels known as 1131-1135 Luzerne Street. [0:55.51]

Mr. Eisenbrown repeated that this project was Habitat's priority, among the three. Mr. Sawtelle hoped to have it completed by year's end. Mr. Bealer asked if the access concerns had been properly addressed. Mr. Miller thought so, and noted the alley paving finally shown. Mr. Bealer wondered if Habitat was pursuing the properties neighboring to the north. Mr. Eisenbrown didn't believe so, thinking twelve homes enough to keep them busy for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Palka asked if Habitat ever installs a second bath in their homes. Mr. Sawtelle said only where required by code. He said it is their goal to build as many houses as possible "bare bones", making the most efficient use of their resources. He noted that the City code does not require it, and resisted including such "extravagances".

Mr. Reppert moved to approve the final plan, on the condition that all outstanding Planning Office and Public Works comments are satisfactorily addressed. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted, 5 yeas to 1 nay, to conditionally-approve the final plan for Habitat's 1131-1135 Luzerne Street subdivision, Mr. Raffaelli casting the dissent.

Resolution #36-2008

Review the **final** subdivision/land development plan for **Habitat for Humanity – 1415 Montgomery Street**, a subdivision and two semi-attached dwellings proposed for that parcel known as 1415 Montgomery Street. [1:02.17]

Mr. Eisenbrown called the project similar in design to the other two plans, and garnering similar comments from the Planning Office. He said no curb or sidewalk was required, and no alleyway/access issues of concern, thinking it probably the "cleanest" of the three plans considered. Asked if it met the requirements, Mr. Miller mentioned a couple of notational corrections to be made, needing to check each of the plans before endorsement. Mr. Eisenbrown noted that the Montgomery Street homes could be easily-made handicapped accessible, with level access from the rear yards, at least.

Mr. Bealer moved to approve the final plan, with the proviso that all remaining Planning Office comments are satisfied. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally-approve the final plan for Habitat's 1415 Montgomery Street subdivision.

Resolution #37-2008

Review the **preliminary** land development plan for the **Department of Fire and Rescue Services – Southwest Station**, a new fire house proposed at that parcel known as 101 Lancaster Avenue. [1:06.51]

Scott Miller recalled their sketch presentation at the March 11th meeting. He described the site, and its former use as a gas station. He said the plan was essentially the same as that presented for the sketch, and acknowledged receipt of the Planning Office and Public Works reviews. He said he met with the Zoning Administrator that morning, to prepare the appeal for variances and the conditional use, confident that the zoning issues were being addressed. Andrew Miller asked if the application included at least those issues identified in his review. Scott Miller indicated it did, along with some others, depending on interpretations of the yard definitions. He said East Wyomissing Boulevard had been vacated, and the plan already updated with the new topographic lines. Mr. Bealer asked about the controls and signalization for approaching traffic. Scott Miller mentioned Lancaster Avenue's status as a state highway, intending to confer with the Department of Transportation for the occupancy permit and signalization plans, when finalized. Ms. Mayfield, recognizing that the Zoning Hearing Board won't hear the appeal until May, suggested they be prepared to offer extensions of the Planning Code's Section 508 time mandate.

Mr. Mangold described the architecture as a masonry exterior, with some metal cladding on the projecting front corner. He said they were attempting to create a gateway presence, characterizing the design as "open", adding that the building would be illuminated internally. He described a 6500-square foot footprint with a 3000-square foot

second floor, with overnight accommodations for eight, a conference room and mechanical spaces. He called it a tight space with a tight footprint designed in it.

Chief Rehr stepped in with a video-taped demonstration of fire-fighting apparatus performing the necessary maneuvers. He admitted his own trepidation when they weren't able to secure the permission to build in Schlegel Park, wondering how they'd maneuver into a station fronting the often-congested Lancaster Avenue. He said the 54-foot apron designed is sufficient to make those maneuvers on-site, and attempted the same prior to purchasing property. He said the former building had the same setback. Turning toward the video, he explained that Burkey Construction Company had outlined the planned footprint, and set up traffic cones. Using the same vehicles intended to be housed there, as well as "a 53-foot hook 'n ladder just in case", the video clearly showed each piece maneuvering adequately, and without once encroaching on the Lancaster Avenue cartway. Adding to the challenge, Chief Rehr pointed out the clothing donation boxes, a light pedestal and utility pole, all to be removed, drivers not normally assigned to those vehicles, and additionally, the challenge of not having the actual building as a frame of reference, but merely traffic cones. He hoped the demonstration would alleviate any remaining concerns, insisting he would never have recommended the site otherwise. He acknowledged the difficulty of the intersections with Morgantown Road and the West Shore By-pass, highlighted in a recent *Reading Eagle* article, but called the current arrangement, coming from the Oakbrook or Liberty stations worse, as those responses often involve travel into opposing traffic lanes to negotiate the back-ups common to Lancaster Avenue. He expected most responses would now travel opposite the typical patterns of congestion.

Mr. Palka moved to table the preliminary plan. Mr. Rothermel seconded. Mr. Palka asked if this would result in their closing the Oakbrook Station. Chief Rehr affirmed, and explained that the City doesn't even own it, or the Liberty Station, but will relocate the apparatus and their personnel stationed there. And the Commission voted unanimously to table the Southwest Station preliminary plan.

Review the **sketch** land development plan for **Parcel 2 - RiverView at Reading**, a "mixed-use building" proposed for that parcel known as 601 Canal Street. [1:29.57]

Mr. Giannasca[2] greeted the Commission and distributed some "handout materials". He described the former Reading Hardware Company buildings as the project's "nucleus". Sensing nothing special architecturally about the larger, foundry building (No. 11), he intended a thorough renovation, relying on design cues from the smaller building (Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5, collectively "the Butt Works")[3], especially its brick and corbelling details. He said it would serve as a reference for that renovation, and in the design of the new buildings, as well. He estimated the total 'build-out' at 2000 residential units, 300,000 square feet of commercial space and 150,000 square feet in retail. He intended the base of each building for retail activity, with commercial (office) spaces above them, for the enhanced, and extended, street life. He said those first two floors would double as a "screen" for the three levels of structured parking behind them, explaining that the higher ceilings typical of retail and commercial spaces would allow for the design of an extra parking level within the same height. As for a starting point, he indicated the renovation of Building 11, with a new public park/plaza space to be built over that parking area between the existing buildings, which would remain beneath as a partially underground parking level (vis-à-vis an approximately ten-foot elevation change between the bordering Willow and Canal Streets). He included improvements to Heritage Park, hoping to begin the necessary clearing "in the next few weeks".

Focusing on Building 11, Mr. Giannasca continued with samples of the brick he proposed for the new "brick skin" façade, again relating its color to that on the Butt Works building. He explained that the window frames would be white, powder-coated aluminum. Explaining the large concrete frame, he planned to replace the fenestration with floor-to-ceiling glass, for the dramatic interior effect, and expansive views. He said the lower floors weren't high enough for a loft design, but still enough for 12-foot ceilings. He said the top-floor units would be three-level lofts, when counting the butterfly-shaped clerestory at the top. He said the boiler house section would become an "amenity building" for the residents, including a fitness center, and again, with "retail life".

For the Redevelopment Authority's parcel, and the part atop the retail/commercial/parking levels, Mr. Giannasca described two "c-shaped" buildings side-by-side, with a courtyard space between. He said, once perfected, the design would be repeated in four more buildings between the River and Canal Street, heading west. He pegged those buildings at eight stories each. He said Building 11 stands at 120 feet; only seven physical floors,

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[2] This, and references to "Mr. Giannasca" hereafter, refers to Edward V. Giannasca, II, President & CEO of Giannasca Development Group, LLC.

[3] These building numbers were taken from an October 1924 survey of the Reading Hardware Company's property by Associated Mutual Insurance Company of Boston, Massachusetts.

but the height of a twelve-story building. He said that established the pattern: eight stories for those buildings along the River, twelve stories for buildings behind them, and 16 stories for those another step back, including one already being considered for the southwest corner of South Fifth and Laurel Streets. He recalled past successes in residential projects with rooftop access, designed as a gathering and entertaining space for its tenants. He noted the interesting orientation of Parcel 2, and the potential views of the River. He again explained, and more specifically, the arrangement of the mixed uses.

In describing some of the amenities planned, Mr. Giannasca mentioned the potential of glass awnings for the balcony spaces, which could double as photovoltaic collectors. He segued to explain that RiverView would be the City's first LEED-certified community, if not Pennsylvania's too. He described the residential component as five levels of condominiums, at twelve units per floor, and a sixth level for six larger loft units, and with rooftop access.

Mr. Bensinger turned to the site parameters, describing the surrounding streets, the designed access from Canal and New Canal Streets to the parking levels. Mr. Giannasca interjected that they've considered a possible fourth, and underground, parking deck. He said they'll be excavating anyway, to remove some old foundations and fill, and depending on some forthcoming cost analyses, may elect to use the space. Mr. Bensinger acknowledged receipt of the Planning Office letter, understanding the zoning challenges to be best addressed through a "planned residential development" or an overlay district, of some kind. He explained the challenge of the 96-inch storm sewer traversing the site, intending to "design around" it and other unique features on-site. Mr. Giannasca mentioned his prior experiences in having to work around existing infrastructure, especially in New York City, and saw an opportunity to improve access via manholes in the garage floor itself. He said the pile foundation would at-once support the building, and preserve the integrity of the sewer pipe. He recognized that any project of such size would bring obvious zoning challenges. He supported the idea of a planned residential development, and intended a phased approach, designating those phases as parcels: #1 - the former Reading Hardware properties, #2 - the Redevelopment Authority's 601 Canal Street, #3 – that small block between New Canal, South, Minor and South 7th Streets (currently occupied by Reading Elevator Service, Inc. and Paragon Optical Company), #4 – the Heritage Park and UGI Utilities, Inc. properties, #5 - the block between Bingaman, Laurel, Canal and South 5th Streets (currently occupied by Berks Packing Company, Inc., Industrial Plywood, Inc., Northeast Spring, Inc. and Columbian Cutlery Company, Inc.).

Chief Rehr broached the subject of flood hazards, recalling the area's partial inundation in June 2006. Mr. Giannasca responded with the example of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, the bulkheads engineered along it, and the remapping by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. He estimated the slope between Canal Street and the River's edge at about 8 feet, on average, and proposed steel sheet piling as a means of raising the elevation above the regulated floodplain. He agreed it presents a challenge, but felt the 8 to 10 feet of fill required would provide for a waterfront promenade, to be offered for public dedication once constructed. Chief Rehr noted the tendency of flooding to follow Canal Street beginning at points north of the Bingaman Street Bridge. Mr. Giannasca understood the need to divert flood waters for the protection of the project. He said he had considered the flood rate maps and historical maps of prior floods. He suggested that the filling/re-grading may include South Street where it passes between Parcel 2 and the railroad.

Asked about environmental contamination and clean-up issues, Mr. Giannasca indicated the UGI properties, at a minimum, and proposed to import clean fill. He recognized an active distribution point for natural gas to Reading-area customers. He said the locations of mains along the River's edge further demonstrate the benefit of reserving the area for recreation, to preserve access.

Mayor McMahon asked them to address the Sixth and Canal Pumping Station. Mr. Giannasca mentioned an upcoming meeting scheduled with Black & Veatch Corporation representatives, regarding their preference to enclose and screen the facility. He said the plaza level designed between the Reading Hardware buildings would extend across Canal Street and over the Pumping Station.

Mr. Bealer wondered about the effect of United Corrstack's nearby biomass power project on the marketability of RiverView. Mr. Giannasca shared the concern, recognizing the potential adverse effects on a planned riverfront community. He briefly repeated the planned recreation amenities and pedestrian-oriented lifestyle envisioned. His concern focused on the traffic impacts and hazards of the trucks, and he intended to conduct his own studies.

Mr. Rothermel noted the dramatic potential for traffic from RiverView itself. Mr. Giannasca estimated 3300 structured off-street parking spaces planned at build-out. He envisioned a slower, more pedestrian-friendly Canal Street, replete with boulevard separations, and brick pavers throughout. He believed all hardscaped areas should be finished in unit pavers, again referring to the HarborView project in Baltimore, and its 1½ million square

feet of Balcon pavers. He noted that pavers in the streets have a calming effect on traffic, and intended to use them in patterns marking travel lanes and crosswalks. He said offering contained and secured parking was critical to the marketing effort. He recounted his experience in building subterranean parking adjacent to water bodies; an 1100-car capacity garage in HarborView's first phase, 55 feet below the harbor level, using the former graving dock of a ship yard. He said traffic engineers were already on-the-job, considering the transformation of Canal as a tree-lined boulevard, with lots of pedestrian activity, narrower roads and wider sidewalks. Mr. Rothermel reminded that Canal Street was designed and intended as an "industrial collector", and without consideration of pedestrian traffic. He clarified that his original question about traffic generation was motivated by recognized problems at the Lancaster Avenue/West Shore By-pass intersection, already experiencing increased pressure from the United Corrstack developments. He felt that it should be studied specifically, as well the potential effects on other interchanges, like Penn Street's to the north. Mr. Giannasca agreed that it would be voluminous, but felt the impact manageable. He felt the project would present a lower demand for municipal services, all around, as services are provided, or at least supplemented privately.

Mr. Giannasca turned to an explanation of the estimated economic benefits, even during construction, with its 6- to 8-year build-out: $2.5 million and 4,100 jobs City-wide, $22.5 million and 12,500 jobs State-wide, inclusive of material suppliers, et alia. He said the real benefits follow the construction: $25 million/year and 900 permanent jobs for the City, $17.5 million/year and 1,700 jobs for the State. He said the real estate taxes alone would generate $17 million/year, calling it a "tremendous economic machine".

Mr. Lauter asked if their parking arrangements cover the anticipated visitors, in addition to the residents. Mr. Giannasca explained that the first levels of the proposed buildings would contain 100-110 stalls, all for the visitors/patrons, while the next two levels would be reserved exclusively for the residents, at about a 1½-space per unit ratio. He said, in any mixed-use project, you can figure in some shared use, based on demands at different times of the day. Mr. Lauter asked if that meant the lower levels could be used by residents. Mr. Giannasca indicated that would be "paid parking".

Mr. Lauter asked how and when the public improvements would be phased in. Mr. Giannasca said he had been pleasantly surprised by interest in the project, so far. He said the planning of those improvements is already underway, for consideration with the planned residential development process. He said he is already engaging the necessary consultants. Asked if that meant it would come ahead of the new buildings, Mr. Giannasca said the approval process for the first buildings is already underway. He said the timing realities of the planned residential development approval make it impossible finalize in-time for a ground-breaking they hope for late June/early July. He thought it important to maintain their momentum, to "silence the naysayers", and be visible. He affirmed his, commitment to the project and to Reading, and hoped to begin the improvements to Heritage Park even earlier. Mr. Lauter wondered about the possibility of completing the first phase and realizing that they had over-burdened the infrastructure and resources. Mr. Giannasca intended to prove otherwise. He called such an undertaking the "epitome of smart growth", believing urban infrastructure across the country to be generally underutilized. He understood the risks, but repeated his commitment.

Mr. Palka asked how they selected the area. Mr. Giannasca said they had been looking at it, for over two years, liked the challenges and the appeal of the sound residential neighborhood on its fringe. He said, once he realized that renovating the Reading Hardware buildings alone wouldn't be enough, that he had to get ambitious, and change the face and fabric of the whole area. He expected that they'd seek to grow the project even further, taking the potential of other riverfront initiatives into consideration. He said he was familiar with the direction of Sasaki Associates, having worked with them on other projects.

Council President Spencer introduced himself, and asked if the intended phasing would restrict later phases until earlier ones are occupied. Mr. Giannasca said the terms of financing would require a 50% presale before continuing. He understood it was a new product for Reading, but had seen it work successfully elsewhere, and recognized the wealth in the greater Reading area. He described the new buildings as a commercial platform, under 70 units in each "c" half, which can be built separately, so that only 35 presales are necessary to build. He intended manageable steps.

Mayor McMahon expressed the City's full commitment and support. He reminded that there is a process to be followed, but promised, "We're not going to have people put stumbling blocks in your way. If they are, we're going to remove them".

President Spencer asked about the economic benefits from condominiums on Parcel 2, as it sits in the Keystone Opportunity Zone, offering local tax abatement through 2013. Mr. Giannasca acknowledged that delayed realization. He clarified that Building 11 would be constructed with eventual condominiums in-mind, but sought to offer both rental and ownership options, instead of having two simultaneous projects competing with one another.

Ms. Mayfield asked about their legal counsel. Mr. Giannasca identified Barley Snyder LLC, as a local representative, and already at-work on the sales agreement approved by the Redevelopment Authority. He named Nixon Peabody LLP in Washington, DC as additional legal counsel, citing their experience in tapping program funding, including "workforce housing" incentives.

Mr. Rothermel asked if the layouts/orientations of the subsequent buildings were fixed. Mr. Giannasca said they were roughly placed with respect to the River on one side and Canal Street on the other. Mr. Rothermel suggested turning them with viewsheds in-mind, as he felt Parcel 2's orientation better provides. Mr. Giannasca called it a great point. He characterized the master plan as a basis to generate the dialogue necessary to refine the site design. He encouraged the continued input, and even an informal dialogue.

Mr. Raffaelli thanked them for the presentation, looking forward to the next.

Review the **sketch** land development plan for the **CedarPak #4 Paper Mill (United Corrstack, LLC)**, a new paper mill proposed for the former Reading Tube Corporation building on that parcel known as 800 South Street. [2:46.39]

Mr. Fell called the proposal a continuation of their April 2006 efforts on the property they acquired in December 2005 from Cambridge-Lee Industries. He referred to a height variance previously granted by the Zoning Hearing Board (Appeal 2006-26, rendered April 12, 2006). He explained the location of the site, in relation to the RiverView proposal. He thanked the Planning Commission for their support in the Evergreen Community Power project, now under construction. He said the Cambridge-Lee site is now called "CedarPak", roughly 19.1-acres for the proposed second paper machine. He explained the variance for the increased height was necessary to support the paper-making operation. He indicated areas of expected demolition on the building's north, east and south sides, though still planning the internal set-up of the material flow. He proposed a second access from South Street, and anticipated some building expansions and additional truck docks.

Asked about an area shown to the west of the building, on the plan, Mr. Fell explained the enlargement of the electric substation, and Metropolitan Edison Company's ring bus. He said the Evergreen project required a second 69-kilovolt transmission line across the River. He said United Corrstack "takes possession" once the voltage is stepped down to 13.2 kilovolts.

Mr. Rothermel asked about the building height. Mr. Fell estimated the A-building at 40 feet to its peak. He said the B, C, and D bays, built later, were all at the same elevation, but at a 5-foot difference from A, where the new paper machine would likely sit. He said the variance allows up to 70 feet. Mr. Rothermel asked about the potential noise. Mr. Fell called it an extension of the activities already operating, expecting that advances in the technology would result in fewer nuisances. Mr. Rothermel asked about traffic generation. Mr. Fell said that was still being examined, but counted 60 trucks/day from United Corrstack currently, expecting another 60 trucks/day once the Evergreen project commences regular operation, which he explained amounts to only 20 more than Cambridge-Lee's/Reading Tube Corporation's operation. He estimated the CedarPak mill to generate another 100 trucks/day. He said United Corrstack has tried to schedule the trucking activity for off-peak hours, being easier on their drivers and the neighborhood. Mr. Rothermel asked if their trucks prefer the Lancaster Avenue/West Shore By-pass interchange, and if they've had trouble with it. Mr. Fell again cited their off-peak scheduling. Mr. Stauffer confirmed that almost all of their traffic uses that intersection. He recalled the study recommending improvements to the southwest corner of the South 5th and Laurel Streets intersection. Mr. Miller asked when those improvements were intended. Mr. Stauffer said shortly. Mr. Fell mentioned a conversation with the property owners, regarding their needs.

Mr. Burdge asked about the possibility of using the rail. Mr. Fell called it an excellent question, recognizing the dormant spur along the property's southern end, which would require improvements. He said they've previously considered it, but had no definitive plans. He said they had also approached the Norfolk Southern Corporation about access to the mainline, but deemed a spur topographically prohibitive. Mayor McMahon called the transportation issue his biggest heartburn, demanding that rail be purposefully studied, and if impractical, proven so. He knew the lower spur line was out of the question.

Mr. Giannasca expressed his frustration, early on, when attempting to gather information about the power plant, its height and color specifically, and the inability of City officials to provide details. He found it equally difficult to communicate with United Corrstack, when asking about the cladding intended for the structure, even after speaking with a contractor on-site. He offered his help and experience as an architect, hoping to pursue visual treatments that would de-emphasize the structure's height, rather than accentuate it, which the vertically-banded siding since delivered would certainly do. Mr. Feghali mentioned a meeting in December, where he invited a meeting with Giannasca, which never happened. Mayor McMahon recommended they begin meeting regularly.

Mr. Lauter called the two projects exciting, but noted serious problems to be solved. He recalled other proposals forced through the planning process, but felt these issues too important to be addressed 'later'. He indicated his personal discomfort with even preliminary approvals ahead of real answers to these questions. Mr. Giannasca offered the assistance and participation of his traffic professionals. Mr. Mountz called pedestrian safety the "biggest concern" in a community designed around it. He expected the recommended solution would include a re-routing, but needed additional information on truck types, and roadbed construction, in addition to the numbers. He asked if any existing studies were available. Mr. Fell referred to a larger study, in which United Corrstack was considered. He said assumptions were predicated on the continued use of the "industrial collector". He said recommendations were limited to those agreed-to improvements for the South 5th and Laurel Streets intersection. He said it recognized a problem at the Lancaster Avenue/West Shore By-pass interchange, but made no further recommendations.

Mr. Giannasca indicated his own interest in acquiring and developing the property at South 5th and Laurel Streets (500 South 5th Street), for a new building. He hoped to work with United Corrstack toward their mutual benefit, rather than compete for site control. Mr. Feghali called it a "timing issue", unable to delay the improvements for additional studies. He asserted United Corrstack's long-time presence at their location.

Mr. Raffaelli expressed the Commission's hope to find an amicable solution, but recognized incompatible transportation practices. He recalled the pressure on the Commission in August 2007 to approve the Evergreen project, and their offense at learning the boiler had already been ordered, a year earlier. He remembered discussing the rail option before, and expected it to become more attractive as fuel prices continue to climb.

Mayor McMahon, relying on the intelligence of those involved, was confident in a solution. Mr. Rothermel stressed the importance of involving the County's Transportation Planner, early on.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the April meeting. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the April 8th meeting. – 10:25 pm.